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Preparing Your Home For An Inspection

Identify areas that may pose problems during a home inspection.

As you prepare for the home inspection, use the following guide to assist in identifying problem areas a home inspector may point out as deficiencies. The only tools you will need are a flashlight, an electrical outlet tester, a pen, some paper and about an hour of your time. Keep in mind that this list is not exhaustive and will not identify ALL of the items a home inspector will look for or find, but it will help you to identify areas that may need attention.



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HOMETEAM'S GENERAL GUIDE TO INSPECTION PREP

CEILING AND WALLS

- ❑ Check closely for any water stains. This is one of the most important items a home inspector checks.
- ❑ Any signs of water staining, indicated by light brown water marks, should be investigated to identify where the water came from and if it is an ongoing issue from leaky plumbing or a leaking roof.
- ❑ Have any leaks repaired. Once all repairs have been made and no more leakage exists, paint over any staining.

DOORS AND WINDOWS

- ❑ Open and close each (if accessible), checking for proper operation.
- ❑ Note any that are stuck or any that do not properly latch, and adjust as needed.
- ❑ For crank windows, open and be especially mindful of any rotted wood at the base of the window frame.
- ❑ Look for any deficiencies with the locks, tensioners, glass (broken panes), or glazing (exterior of wood windows).
- ❑ Look for signs of previous water intrusion around windows, which is most noticeable on the sill or under the window on the walls at the corners of the windows.
- ❑ Take a look at any double-pane windows to check for broken thermal seals. A broken thermal seal often appears as a "fogging" effect between the panes. Sometimes it just looks dirty, so try to rub the "dirt" off. If it won't come off, it's probably on the inside between the panes, which means you have a broken thermal seal. Some buyers may ask to have these windows repaired or replaced.
- ❑ Check all exterior doors to ensure they lock properly and are well sealed. Deadbolts should have a twist handle that you can unlock from the inside. Make sure you don't have any deadbolts that lock with a key from the interior. This can be a safety concern if you need to exit the home quickly in an emergency.

ELECTRICAL

- ❑ At a minimum, GFCI's should be located in bathrooms and kitchens. These are the "push to test" type outlets you can get at a hardware store for about \$20. If you have GFCI's in your home, test each by pushing the "test" button and ensuring they cut the power. Then hit the reset button to properly reset.
- ❑ Check for proper security (no movement), grounding and polarity of all accessible outlets with a plug checker (you can get these at a hardware store also. They are about \$7. Ask the sales person for an "electrical receptacle tester").
- ❑ Look for wires and note any that are not secured or are not properly protected, and any open splices (wires that are connected to each other but are not fully enclosed in junction boxes).

FLOORS

- ❑ Check for major dips or bumps that may indicate structural issues.
- ❑ Check for any indications of water intrusion by looking for stains and warped or soft areas.

MAIN WATER SHUT OFF

- ❑ Do not operate it, but locate it and feel underneath the shut off valve handle to see if it has a leak. Sometimes they have very slow drips.

HOT WATER HEATER

- ❑ Ensure drip leg (pipe running down the side of the tank which is a pressure release) is present, and is not wet where it terminates near the floor.

FURNACE AND AIR CONDITIONER

- ❑ This check should be left to the pro's. Contact a reputable heating and cooling company and have them come out to do routine cleaning and servicing. This is the best possible prep for the home inspection.

KITCHEN

- ❑ If a dishwasher is present, run it. Look for leaks and proper drainage at the beginning, middle, and end of the cycle.
- ❑ Ensure the dishwasher is secured to the cabinet, with no side-to-side movement, or movement when opening or closing the door (usually with a screw under the cabinet, at the top front of the dishwasher).
- ❑ Check stove top to ensure each burner heats/lights.
- ❑ If the stove top is gas, ensure there is a vent that vents the gases to the outside of the home.
- ❑ Check all lights and fans on vent hood and microwave (if present) for proper operation.
- ❑ Check sink to ensure hot water is on left, and run sprayer hose and disposal briefly, if present.
- ❑ Run water in the sink for approximately 2 minutes, and check drain line under the sink for any leaks.
- ❑ Stop the sink up (both sides if possible), fill and let water sit for 30 minutes or so, then check underneath for any signs of leakage at the seals.
- ❑ Check operation of cabinet doors and security of cabinets (no movement). Check security of counter tops. Often, these are not secured to the cabinets they sit on.

BATHROOMS

- ❑ Check ceiling for any unsafe situations (glass hazard, loose fan, electrical hazard, etc).
- ❑ Ensure faucets (sink, bath, shower) and counter tops are not loose.
- ❑ Check sink to ensure hot water is on left.
- ❑ Run water in the sink for approximately 2 minutes. Stop the sink up, fill and let water sit for 30 minutes or so, then check under the sink for any signs of leakage at the seals. Run water in tub (hot water should be on left). Stop the tub drain and run shower until tub is approximately 1 inch full or for 2 minutes. Keep tub stopped up for at least 30 minutes.
- ❑ If it is a jetted tub, locate GFCI for jets. A jetted tub must be on GFCI. If you cannot locate the GFCI in the bathroom, check an adjacent room, closet or the main electrical panel. If none is present, one must be installed. Do not use the jetted tub unless it is on a GFCI. This is potentially a serious safety issue.
- ❑ If you have located the GFCI ensure jets are pointed down and are covered with approximately 1 inch of water prior to using jets. Run at least 1 to 2 minutes to help identify any leaks under the tub or in the pump area, if visible. Once you drain the sink and tub, ensure they drain properly. If they drain slowly, there may be an obstruction in the line that should be cleared.
- ❑ When draining the sinks and tub, check the drain lines for any leakage. Check toilet for security by nudging it with your leg to see if it is loose. Flush toilet at least 3 times, checking for operation, drainage, fill, and any leaks, especially at base.
- ❑ For tiled shower surrounds, gently pound on the tiled wall, especially around the soap dish, to try to determine if water intrusion has weakened the wall. If it has, you may feel a "give" or hear a hollow sound as you tap. Water intrusion in cracked tile or grout can cause serious problems that are not always visually observable.
- ❑ Note any areas that need to be re-caulked or grouted to prevent water intrusion, and have them repaired.

GARAGE

- ❑ Check operation of garage door.
- ❑ Door should have electric eyes that light when the beam is interrupted, and the door should automatically reverse with pressure. Check that electrical connection to garage door is not run to an extension cord.
- ❑ For any basement (lower level) garages, ensure they do not have open air conditioning vents in the garage, which can lead to carbon dioxide poisoning (older homes or split levels often have these). If a vent is present, it should be sealed.
- ❑ Check to see if garage floor has settled significantly, which is often indicated by significant cracks.
- ❑ Check to see if there is staining on the floor, which may indicate persistent water intrusion, commonly located near the front of the door. If a water intrusion problem exists, consider re-grading near door, or redirecting nearby gutter downspouts.

ELECTRICAL PANEL

- ❑ If the home is under 20 years, the electrical panel is probably OK. If you want to be certain, hire an electrician to take a look, which will probably cost \$75-\$100 minimum. Do not inspect the panel yourself.



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EXTERIOR AND ROOF

- ❑ Walk around the home slowly, noting any deficiencies and assessing the home's "big picture".
- ❑ Look at the roof from the ground; if there are missing shingles, nail pops, or other issues are evident, hire a roofer to do minor maintenance. Binoculars may be helpful.
- ❑ Check gutters/soffits for damage. Downspouts should direct water away and downhill.
- ❑ Check brickwork or cladding (such as siding) for cracks/damage.
- ❑ Look at caulking and condition of wood and seals around windows.
- ❑ Check that all exterior lights are secure.
- ❑ Look for large cracks in the foundation that may be an indication of structural problems.
- ❑ Check hose bibs for security, leakage and flow.
- ❑ Check the security of the deck if present. Look underneath the deck where it attaches to the house; it should be attached to the house with bolts. If it is nailed, you may need repairs.

FOUNDATION

- ❑ Look for water leaks, horizontal cracks and any cracks that are ¼" or more, or that widen as they go up. These types of cracks tend to be more worrisome. Almost all poured concrete foundations have cracks, which are rarely a structural problem. Usually the bigger issue is any water intrusion that is occurring with these cracks.
- ❑ If you see cracks you are concerned about, contact a foundation company. If it needs repair, you will have fixed the issue before it can worry a potential buyer. If it does not need repair, you can present the potential buyer with a certificate or note from the foundation company saying it passed their inspection.

ATTIC

- ❑ If you are not completely comfortable and competent in walking in an attic, DO NOT ATTEMPT. This can be a dangerous area and you can injure yourself. If you inspect the attic, be careful to only put weight on the structural wood members (beams).
- ❑ Look carefully for any signs of water intrusion, especially around plumbing vents, valleys, chimneys or other penetration points. If water staining is present, consider having a roofer make repairs at these points.
- ❑ Check for insulation adequacy and look for any electrical problems, such as open splices, knob and tube wiring, or other electrical issues.

STRUCTURE

- ❑ If you have an unfinished basement, look at all of the floor joists and other wood members to see if there is any deterioration from moisture, termites or other causes. If it's a finished basement, look at those wherever possible in any unfinished spaces.
- ❑ If you have a crawlspace, you can do the same thing, but it may be easier to hire a foundation company to come out to take a look.

This guide should help you identify many of the issues in your home, and if followed closely, should help reduce the number of deficiencies a home inspector will point out to a potential buyer. Keep in mind that no home is perfect, and even if you follow these steps exactly, there may be many things an inspector will point out to a potential buyer that may need to be fixed. An inspector has undergone training and licensing, and he has experience from inspecting thousands of homes. It is impossible for someone without that training to identify and repair every item by simply relying on a checklist. However, we trust this guide will help make your inspection process a little easier, and hopefully, less stressful. Good luck!



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