

How to Prepare for an Inspection

No home is perfect. Anything from major damage to minor maintenance issues are often found. Even new homes are not immune they could have problems with the plumbing, electrical system, heating and cooling system, or the roofing system just to name a few.

For homeowners, its important to be aware of any issues your home may have prior to putting it on the market. Getting a pre-listing home inspection will ensure that you're aware of any problems and can take care of them on your terms or present them as-is and adjust your selling price proportionally. The alternative leaves you open to costly surprises and delays, and even potential deal-breakers once you've entered negotiations with the buyer.

For buyers, an inspection is vital to uncovering issues a home may have but are invisible to the untrained eye. Even if the inspection finds more problems than you're comfortable with and you move on to a different home to start the process all over again, its money well spent. An inspection will give you the opportunity to ask the seller to make the repairs before you buy, or to back out of the contract. So be sure to ask for the inspection contingency when you begin to enter negotiations with the seller. This allows you to set a limit on the cost of repairs to the home. If the inspector estimates that repairs will cost more than the limit, the contract is voided. It is a good way to protect yourself from ending up with a home that requires repairs that you are unable or unwilling to pay for.

Before the inspector arrives, there are a few things you should know. There are no federal regulations governing inspectors. The laws are going to differ state by state. Therefore its important to interview your inspector or inspection company prior to hiring them. Since each state is going to have their own standards of certification for inspectors and some dont even have any credibility is a big issue in choosing the right inspector. Ask what certifications your inspector holds and what associations he or she belongs to. Most associations such as the American Society of Home Inspectors (ASHI), National Association of Certified Home Inspectors (NACHI), and National Association of Home Inspectors, Inc. (NAHI) have membership requirements that include minimum levels of experience and training as well as codes of ethics. There are also several state-level associations that your inspector may be a member of. Ask your inspector and then visit the associations website.

Once your inspector has arrived, it is recommended that you accompany him or her on the inspection of the property. This is so you can become familiar with the home and its systems as well as exactly what repairs the inspector recommends and why. You might also want to prepare a list of items that you've seen in the home that you feel are cause for concern as well as any questions you may have. The inspection is a great time to find out where the homes water and gas shutoffs are and where the fuse box is.

Here are some other suggestions for homeowners:

- **Accessibility:** Make sure that all areas of the home are accessible, especially to the attic and crawl space. Its also a good idea to trim any trees and shrubs that may make an inspection of the exterior of the property difficult.
- **Housekeeping:** The inspector may photograph your home for the inspection report, so clearing the clutter and moving vehicles from the front of the home will help the inspection go smoother.
- **Maintenance:** Repair minor things like leaky faucets, missing door handles and trim.