



What to Look for When Selecting a Great House

Picking a house that was well built and well maintained could save you thousands of dollars in unexpected expenses in the future. Home Inspectors are trained to look at hundreds of different areas during a house inspection but here are some clues you can look for yourself before calling in a Home Inspector for your final pre-purchase report.

Exterior

The exterior of the home is what protects the home and occupants from sun, wind, and rain. A well designed and maintained home will last a long time while a poor design or poor maintenance may present many unexpected repairs.

- **Property** - The house should be sitting on the highest point on the property to allow water to flow away from the building. If the property slopes, make sure the slope is addressed to channel water around the building, not into it. Also watch for exterior items on the property, like big trees, which could impact the building in the future.
- **Roof** - Roofs need to shed water to gutters systems which will carry the water away from the building. Complex roof designs increase the likelihood of water getting into the home as do roof penetrations like satellite dishes, skylights, antennas. A good roof will have overhangs protecting the walls from rain water, be in good repair, and have leak-free gutters at all the lower edges.
- **Siding** - Siding needs to be water resistant and should withstand modest impacts. Our favorite sidings are vinyl and aluminum as they are nearly maintenance free. Stucco, brick, and stone are good materials if well installed and maintained. Wood sidings need very high maintenance.
- **Foundation** - Foundation walls should be visible 6-8" above the grade level of the soil. This is to keep the house above the ground water and to make it difficult for insects and pests to penetrate. Look for any foundational cracks on the visible area. Small cracks may be normal but all cracks require further analysis by an expert.
- **Attached Garages** - Because of the gasses generated by our cars, we need a gas seal between the garage and the home. This includes a sealed drywall interior of the garage, an auto-closer on the house door, and an exterior weather sealed house door.
- **General Maintenance** - Look for signs of rot or aged paint on wood trim, holes or missing materials in siding and roofs, and vegetation trimmed back from the home. A lot can be said about the maintenance of the home from the care on the outside.

Interior

Changes home occupants make after original construction tend to be the largest cause of concerns in house inspections. Watch for signs of amateurish work inside the house as this often suggests further evaluation and remediation may be needed.

- **Doors and Windows** - Doors and windows should operate smoothly and seal when closed. Look for double pane windows for energy efficiency. Vinyl windows are the best current material for operation and energy efficiency.

Interior (con't)

- **Kitchens** - Kitchen cabinets and drawers should operate well and be in good repair. Counter tops should be a nonporous material (no wood) in good condition. Flooring should be a material suited for wet environments like tile or vinyl sheets. Avoid wood flooring and particularly laminate, as these will swell when wet and show permanent water damage.
- **Bathrooms** - Bathroom fixtures should be clean with no signs of mold. There should be no visible water damage signs around showers, tubs or on the ceilings. Cabinets should open and close smoothly.
- **Plumbing** - Look under sinks or in basement areas for the water supply pipe material. If you see a bluish grey plastic, this is called polybutylene which is poor piping material. Copper and white or clear plastics are generally better materials. Watch for signs of water damage on ceilings and walls which may indicate past or current leaks.
- **Electrical** - Check samples of light switches for operation and look for signs of amateurish work like surface wiring or 'rat's nests' of wire groupings. If possible get a look at the main breaker/fuse panel. Breakers are preferred as they indicate a newer electrical system which may have more safety features.
- **Heating** - Heat may be from furnaces, electric baseboard, or hot water systems. White plastic piping exhaust from the furnace or boiler indicates a newer high efficiency system. Watch for heat sources and controls like heat registers and thermostats to determine how heat is distributed in the home.
- **Hot Water** - Hot water systems in houses are typically gas or electric fuelled storage tanks. Inquire with the seller on the last replacement date and anticipate replacing a tank at around 10 years.
- **Laundry** - Laundry areas should have dedicated electrical plugs for the washer and dryer. Dryers also need proper exhaust lines routed to the exterior of the house to safely remove humidity and lint from the house. Laundry cabinets and sinks should be well attached and operate correctly.
- **Interior Safety** - Watch for smoke alarms on all levels and near bedrooms. All windows in bedrooms need to allow an occupant to exit in a fire. Staircases need handrails and guardrails to prevent children and adults from falling.
- **Basements** - Unfinished basements provide excellent visibility of the foundation walls, floor structure, electrical, and plumbing systems. Look for cracks or holes in the foundation, signs of water penetration, and for drains at the lowest level in the basement as well as visible plumbing and electrical.
- **Crawl Spaces** - Crawl spaces should have a large access and at least 3' clearances for regular inspection and access. Avoid dirt crawl spaces as the moisture given off by soil can cause rot and mold issues in the home.

Final Thoughts

A professional Home Inspector is not caught up in the emotional aspect of buying a house and can give you a clear written report and be an excellent source of expertise on your future expenses when buying a house. Choosing Rival Inspection Services before you choose your house can save you from additional stress during the buying process. No matter the age or style of your home, always have your house inspected before you buy to know your home is safe and sound.