
Complete Home Inspection Checklist

Whether you are buying a new home, selling an existing home, or are homeowners looking to do a thorough review of the house you live in, a home inspection is a great start. Simply follow through each section of this checklist for a complete inspection of the property you are looking at. Remember no house is perfect. Some components listed in this checklist will not apply to all houses.

Inspection Note: This home inspection checklist is not intended should not stand in place of a professional home inspection. If you need a professional home inspector, we recommend you hire a Certified Master Inspector.

Certified Master Inspectors are home inspectors who have been in business for a minimum of 3 years, have performed over 1000 fee based inspections, and adhere to the strictest industry standards. You can find a Certified Master Inspector at <https://certifiedmasterinspector.org/members>

Our Home Inspection Checklist

What we recommend you will need to do your home inspection:

1. **Checklist:** Print this checklist with a clipboard and pencil
2. **Clothing:** Safety glasses, gloves, sneakers, and coveralls
3. **Tools:** Flashlight, GFCI outlet tester, infrared thermometer, binoculars, and a cell phone or camera to take pictures.

Inspection Note: you can purchase a GFCI outlet tester and an infrared thermometer in the hardware department at Walmart or in home improvement stores for less than \$25 each. You can also find these on Amazon.com for less than \$20 each with free shipping with Amazon Prime.

Inspecting the Exterior

- Does the house have a basement, crawl space, or concrete slab foundation?
 - **Basements** – are deep foundations that are primarily buried below ground. Some basements have an exposed exterior wall with a walkout on the rear of the house. This is common in hillside construction. Basements may be finished or unfinished.
 - **Crawl Space** – crawl spaces under a home are typically less than 4 feet high and provide access underneath the house to examine wood framing, plumbing, electrical, and ductwork. You can identify a crawl space if an access door and foundation vents are visible along the foundation.
 - **Concrete Slab** – this is a poured concrete foundation that has no access underneath the home. Concrete slabs typical have a minimum elevation of 4 inches. Raised slabs can be much higher.
- Look at the foundation walls, do you see any cracking, shifting, or separating along the exterior?

Siding: What is the condition of the exterior siding?

- Is there damage to the siding such as wood rot, chipped or broken pieces, etc?
- Is there peeling paint on painted surfaces?
- Are there loose or missing siding pieces of siding?

- Are there cracks in the brick veneer or stucco walls?
- Is there a minimum of 6 inches of ground clearance?

Windows: What is the condition of the windows?

- Is there broken glass in the windows?
- Is there wood rot in the window frames and sashes?
- What's the condition of the caulking around the windows? Is it dry and brittle?
- If windows are wood, is there peeling paint on wood sashes and framing?

Exterior Doors: What is the condition of the exterior doors?

- Is there water damage to the bottom of the door?
- Is there wood rot in the exterior door frames and trim?
- Is there peeling paint to wood door frames and trim?

Lot Grading: What is the condition of the grading?

- Does the ground slope away from the house?
- Is there erosion around the foundation walls?
- Is there low lying or wet areas of the yard?

Vegetation: You'll need to look at the trees and any shrubbery around the house.

- Are there trees growing within 8-10 ft of the foundation?
- Are there any dead or leaning trees that could fall on the house?
- Are there tree limbs overhanging the roof?
- Is the shrubbery touching the exterior of the home?
- Are there vines growing on the exterior walls?

Fence: Walk along the fence, checking for loose posts and broken boards. Does the fence feel sturdy when tugged on?

Driveway, walkways, and patios

- Do the driveway, walkway, and patios slope away from the house?
- Is there cracking from settlement causing uneven surfaces?

Decks: What is the condition of the deck?

- Are the decking boards weathered?
- Are the decking boards weak when walked on?
- Are the handrails secure?
- Are the steps secured and easy to walk on?

Inspecting the Roof

Safety Note: *We are not advising anyone to climb on any roof surface regardless of the roof slope. You can inspect most roofs safely from the ground with binoculars. Contact a certified home inspector to conduct a more thorough inspection.*

- Look for signs of broken or curling shingles.
- As a roof ages, fungi will grow on roof coverings on the north side. Look on the north side to see if there are black streaks on the shingles.
- Do you see any unevenness or buckling in the roof sheathing?
- If the roof is metal, do you see any signs of bent metal or rust?
- If the roof is wood shake, do you see any signs of mold, wood rot, or decay in the wood shakes?
- Is the gutter piping and downspouts secure to the house?

Garage: You'll need to go inside the garage to inspect the garage door and garage door opener. Often, mechanicals like water heaters are located in the garage.

- Check the garage door for damage such as bent panels, bent tracks, broken rollers, etc. before attempting to operate the garage door opener. Make sure the garage door is not locked. Many foreclosed homes have padlocks on the garage doors for security.
- If all looks good, operate the garage door opener. Does the garage door vibrate excessively during operation?
- Check the Auto Reverse Sensors. This can be done by lowering the door and using your hand or foot block the sensor. The door should reverse on its own.

Inspecting Mechanical Equipment

Heating and Cooling System: Look at the heating and cooling system.

- Can you read the serial number and model number on the data plate? Some systems stamp the age on the data plate. Others you may have to use an online resource to determine the age of the system. Use <https://www.building-center.org/> to determine the age of the system.
- Does the system show signs of age, such as rust or damaged fins on the side of the unit.
- If possible, ask the owner for service records.
- Check the air filter. Is it clean or dirty?
- Operate the system using the thermostat. If the temperature is above 65 degrees operate in cooling mode only. If the temperature is below 65 degrees operate in heating mode only. Improper operation can damage the system. Use your hand to feel if the air is hot or cold depending on which mode it's in. For more detailed reading, you can use an infrared thermometer.

Water Heater: Look at the water heater system.

- Can you read the serial number and model number on the data plate? You will need the serial number to determine the age of the water heater. Use <https://www.building-center.org/> to determine the age of the water heater.
- Does the system show signs of age, such as rust along the bottom of the tank or around the valves?
- Check for hot water at a faucet. The hot side is on the left of the faucet.

Inspecting the Electric System

Electrical System: You'll need to look closely at the meter base outside and the electrical panel box.

Safety Note: *We do not advise removing the cover panel from any electrical device. If you see something, you are unsure about call a professional home inspector or licensed electrician.*

Meter Base: You'll need to look at the meter base to determine if there are any defects.

- Identify if the service is overhead or underground. Do you see a service mast and overhead wiring? If so this is called overhead electrical service.
- Is the service mast secured to the house?
- Is the meter base secured to the house?
- Is there a properly identified main service disconnect? (this is sometimes located inside the electrical panel)
- Are there any other breakers and if so are they identified?

Electrical Panel Box: You'll need to locate the electrical panel box. It is often located in the garage or interior. In older homes, they can be found in closets.

- Is there a properly identified main service disconnect? If it is neither in the panel nor the meter base, then the house may not have one. Some older homes that have not had electrical upgrades do not have main disconnects. This can be a signal that the electric service is old.
- Are there any tripped breakers?
- Check the ground fault and arc fault breakers using the test button.
- Are the breakers in the electrical panel properly identified?
- Is there evidence around the electrical panel that it has been tampered with such as drywall patching, missing cover panel screws, cover panel screws that don't match, etc.?

Inspecting the Interior

Windows: You'll need to check all or as many windows as possible to determine if the windows are functioning properly.

- Check to see if the windows open and close with ease.
- Do the locking mechanisms work?
- Are there any broken glass panes or fogging in the glass panes?
- Is there water staining on the walls under the windows?

Doors: You'll need to operate all the doors to be sure they are functioning correctly.

- Do the doors open and close completely?
- Do they stick or hard to open?
- Do the doors lock properly?
- Do the doors scrape the floor during use?
- Do exterior doors have weather stripping?

Floors: As you walk through the interior, you'll want to be observant for several things.

- Is there noticeable unevenness in the floor?
- Does the floor feel bouncy when walked on?
- Does the floor creak when walked on?
- What is the condition of the floor coverings?
- Does all or part of the floor coverings need replacement?

Walls and Ceilings: Look at the condition of the walls.

- Are there any holes that are larger than 1 inch in size?

- Do you see any water staining?
- Do you see any black fungi that could be mold?
- Do you see peeling wallpaper?
- Do you see any diagonal cracking above the windows and doors?

Wood Trim: Look at the condition of the door trim, baseboards, and window trim.

- Do you see any damage caused by animals?
- Do you see any broken or missing trim?

Outlets: Use an outlet tester to test as many outlets as you can.

- If you see a bunch of outlets that are 2-prong and not 3-prong, that's a surefire sign that the wiring in the house is old. Do not just assume that the 3-prong outlets in the house are grounded. Very often, I find that in older homes, people will replace the outlet and not the wiring, which results in an ungrounded outlet.
- Test the outlets around the kitchen sink and bathroom sinks to be sure they are ground fault circuit protected (GFCI). This can be verified by using an outlet tester with a built-in GFCI test button.

Lights: Turn on all lights to check to see if they work.

- If a light doesn't work, it's likely only a blown bulb. If you can reach the light safely, you can change out the light bulb to confirm.
- When checking light switches, you may see a light switch that doesn't appear to operate anything. Some switches that appear to be inoperative may actually work for wall outlets.
- Three quick ways to spot a switch that operates a wall outlet:
 1. If the room has a switch and no overhead light
 2. In newer homes, builders often installed rooms, such as bedrooms, without overhead lights but did install a lighting bracket. There would be three light switches on the wall; one for a ceiling fan, one for a ceiling fan light, and one for an outlet.
 3. If you see an outlet that has the grounding prong hole on top (looks upside down), yet all the other outlets in the room appear normal, there's a good chance the outlet is switch operated. You can check if an outlet is a switch operated with an outlet tester.

Stairs: Walk up and down the stairs in the home.

- Are the railing and spindles secure?
- Do the stairs lean or move when walked on?
- Are there any trip hazards?

Inspecting the Kitchen

Cabinets: Open and close all the cabinet doors and drawers.

- Do the doors open properly?
- Are the cabinet door hinges secured?
- Do the drawers slide open and closed freely?

- Look inside the cabinets to see if you see evidence of insect or rodent activity such as dead bugs, or rat droppings.

Oven: Open and check the inside of the oven.

- Does the door open and close properly?
- Is the oven clean indicating it's been cared for?
- Turn on the oven to make sure it works?

Stove/Cooktop: Turn on each burner on the stove top.

- If electric, turn on the burners to be sure they work properly.
- If the cooktop is glass, check for surface chips or cracks.
- If gas, turn on each burner individually at first to make sure each igniter is working on it's on. Then turn them all on at once. The flame should be blue. Do you see any high flames or yellow flames? This could indicate the burner needs to be serviced.

Refrigerator: Open the refrigerator/freezer doors.

- If the refrigerator is running, check to be sure the doors open with ease.
- If the house has been vacant and the power is off or the unit unplugged. Open at your own discretion. Be warned it could be disgusting inside. If there is mold or old moldy food inside just scrape it and get a new one.

Dishwasher: Open the dishwasher to check inside.

- Does the door open properly?
- Check the condition of the door seal before operating.
- Check underneath the sink to verify the drain hose is connected and that the water line is turned on. The water line should be connected off the hot water side and should have its own cut off valve.
- If all looks good, operate in a light wash cycle to make sure the pumps are working, and the unit is draining properly.
- Does the door leak during operation?

Kitchen Sink: Check your kitchen sink and the plumbing under the sink.

- Is the plumbing pipes connected and are there any signs of previous leaks?
- Are the water shut off valves turned on?
- Does the drain piping look to be adequately configured and secure? Drain piping should have what's called a P trap underneath.
- Run the water to check the water pressure?
- Check beneath while the water is running to verify there are no leaks.
- Does the sink drain properly?

Garbage Disposal: While the water is running, check the garbage disposal.

- Does the garbage disposal run? If the unit doesn't run, check the red reset button under the garbage disposal.
- Does the garbage disposal leak?

Microwave: Open up the microwave and look inside.

- Does the digital display work properly?
- Does the door open and close properly?
- Turn it on for 5 seconds to see if it works. It's not good to run an empty microwave. If there is a glass or microwave-safe bowl handy, fill with water to use in testing.

Range Hood: Turn on the range hood fan and light to make sure they work.

- Check the filter. Does it look clean?
- Is there a grease buildup under the hood requiring heavy cleaning? If the grease buildup is too bad, you'll be best replacing it.

Countertops: Check the condition of the countertop

- Are there physical defects such as swelling from water damage, chips, etc.
- Is the area behind the sink caulked?
- Lift up on the countertop slightly to verify it's secured to the cabinet.

Flooring: Check the kitchen floor.

- If the floor is tiled, are the tiles cracked or loose?
- If the floor is wood or laminate, is the wood stained or swollen from a prior water leak?
- If the floor is vinyl, is the vinyl flooring curling, cut, or torn in areas.

Inspecting the Bathrooms

Cabinets: Open and close all the cabinet doors and drawers.

- Do the doors open properly?
- Are the cabinet door hinges secured?
- Do the drawers slide open and closed freely?
- Look inside the cabinets to see if you see evidence of water damage from previous leaks.

Bathroom Sinks: Check your bathroom sink and the plumbing under the sink.

- Is the plumbing pipes connected and are there any signs of previous leaks?
- Are the water shut off valves turned on?
- Does the drain piping look to be adequately configured and secure? Drain piping should have what's called a P trap underneath.
- Run the water to check the water pressure?
- Check beneath while the water is running to verify there are no leaks.
- Does the sink drain properly?

Countertops: Check the condition of the countertop

- Are there physical defects such as swelling from water damage, chips, etc.
- Is the area behind the sink caulked?
- Lift up on the countertop slightly to verify it's secured to the cabinet.

Flooring: Check the bathroom floor.

- If the floor is tiled, are the tiles cracked or loose?

- If the floor is wood or laminate, is the wood stained or swollen from a prior water leak?
- If the floor is vinyl, is the vinyl flooring curling, cut, or torn in areas.

Toilets: inspect the toilet to be sure if working properly

- Is the toilet secure to the floor?
- Does the toilet flush properly?
- Is the tank on the back of the toilet secure?
- Any signs of leaks around the base or behind the toilet?

Bathtubs: turn the water on and fill the tub.

- With the tub stopper engaged, does the tub hold water?
- With the tub stopper disengaged, does the tub drain properly?
- Any cracks or other surface defects to the bathtub?
- Any sign of leaking around the bathtub faucet?

Showers: Turn on the shower to check operation.

- Any cracks or other surface defects to the shower base or surround?
- Is the inside corners, door, and base caulked?
- Any sign of leaking around the shower faucet?

Vent Fans: Test the vent fans.

- Are the vent fans functional?
- Are the vent fans noisy?
- Is the vent fan drawing air correctly? You can use a piece of toilet paper placed against the fan to determine if it is drawing correctly.
- Are there any signs of moisture damage to the ceiling, such as water stains, peeling ceiling texture, etc.

Inspecting the Attic

Safety Note: *We are not advising anyone to use a ladder or climb into an attic. If you do enter the attic, do not walk on any area that is not floored. If you can not safely enter the attic, do not enter. Call a professional home inspector for assistance.*

Provided you can safely enter the attic, look for the following:

- How many inches of insulation does the house have? Fiberglass insulation needs about 12-14 inches for an R30 level. Blown cellulose 8-10 inches is required for an R30 level.
- Do you see any broken rafters or trusses?
- Do you see any water staining or fungi growth on the roof sheathing?
- Do you see any spliced wire connections?
- Are the bathroom vent fans vented to the exterior?
- If ductwork is present, does it appear to be in good condition?

Inspecting the Basement

Unfinished basements typically have an entry point from the interior of the house or an outside cellar door.

- Any signs of cracking in the basement walls?
 - Any signs of water staining or water intrusion in the basement?
 - Check all visible plumbing connections for leaks.
 - Do you see any broken or cut floor joists? Sometimes you'll see where a floor joist has been cut to make room around plumbing pipes. This cut framing has to be cross supported.
 - Do you see any dry rot or fungi in the visible wood framing?
 - Check for wiring splices and open junction boxes in the visible electrical wiring.
 - If ductwork is present, does it appear to be in good condition?
- Look for signs of termite activity in the wood framing and basement walls. Look for damaged wood that looks shredded and pencil-thin mud tubes on the piers.

Inspecting the Crawl Space

Safety Note: *We are not advising anyone to enter into a crawl space. If you do enter the crawl space, you will need to wear coveralls to protect your clothes. You will also need to take a flashlight with you to see. Otherwise, you should call a professional home inspector for assistance.*

- Any signs of water intrusion in the crawl space?
- Is there a plastic vapor barrier over the ground in the crawl space?
- Check all visible plumbing connections for leaks.
- Do you see any broken or cut floor joists? Sometimes you'll see where a floor joist has been cut to make room around plumbing pipes. This cut framing has to be cross supported.
- Do you see any dry rot or fungi in the visible wood framing?
- Check for wiring splices and open junction boxes in the visible electrical wiring.
- If ductwork is present, does it appear to be in good condition?
- Look for signs of termite activity in the wood framing and piers. Termites love damp, wet spaces such as crawl spaces. Look for damaged wood that looks shredded and pencil-thin mud tubes on the piers.

There you have it. You've completed your home inspection. Again this is not meant to stand in place of having a professional home inspection. This is only a small portion of what all a certified home inspector does. However, it's a good starting point to aid you in evaluating houses before you make an offer to purchase or place your home on the market to sell.

You won't find everything that a professional home inspector will, but you also can save the cost of an inspection fee on a house you otherwise may not be interested in with a little more information.