

Frequently Asked Questions About Home Inspections



Example

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First Last

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Why do I need a home inspection?

An inspector can't tell you whether or not to buy the home you're considering, but he or she can tell you vital information about the condition of a home's various systems that can help you make an informed decision about the property's construction and measures you may need to take to maintain it. A home inspection gives buyers an assessment of potential issues they'll face as owners of a particular property and makes buyers consider how willing – and how much they are willing to pay – to accept them.

What do inspectors review?

Inspectors review a home's structure – including its foundation, interior and exterior walls and their surfaces, and its roof and related structures such as chimneys. They examine its basement or crawlspaces, as well as its plumbing, electrical, heating and air conditioning systems. They look at whether home systems function properly, and at how well-maintained they are. They also look for evidence of moisture penetration, good ventilation, evidence of insect infestations, and other issues.

Do I need to attend the inspection?

By all means, attend and pay very close attention to your inspector when he or she reviews your potential house. Inspectors enter crawlspaces and attics, climb up to or even on the roof, and take a hard look at the home in ways you probably never did when you decided to make your offer. Bring a pen and paper to jot down notes, ask lots of questions, and carefully read the inspector's report when you are done.

Is there more than one type of home inspection for buyers?

Yes. The most common type of home inspection is a buyer's inspection, which takes place after you have made an offer on a property but before you have closed on the home. An inspection is typically a "contingency" in an offer – in other words, the offer at its current price is contingent on what the inspection reveals. Based on the results of the inspection, you may wish to move forward with your offer, negotiate a new price with the seller or request that the seller perform work on the house. In some instances, buyers arrange a "pre-offer" inspection so that they can make an offer on a house without an inspection contingency. Buyers interested in new construction may also arrange inspections that take place before, during, and after construction is complete.

Do homeowners and sellers use inspections, too?

Yes. Homeowners regularly schedule inspections to assess their home's condition and learn how best to maintain and monitor ongoing structural issues or environmental issues (radon gas emissions, carbon monoxide, the presence of lead) in the home. Sellers often arrange inspections so they know their home's condition before they put it on the market and can thus anticipate what a buyer's inspector might point out.

How long does a typical home inspection take?

A typical inspection of a single-family home lasts two to four hours, depending on the size of the house. A condo or townhouse inspection lasts one to two hours.

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