Home Inspection Checklist

When buying a house, it is wise to make your offer conditional upon inspection by a qualified home inspector. That way, if something serious turns up, you can get out of the purchase or renegotiate the offer.

You can also do your own pre-inspection to eliminate some houses or prepare for an offer. You don't have to be an expert to spot most defects. This checklist will guide you through a basic pre-inspection. It is not a replacement for a professional home inspection. Some categories - such as electric, heating, and plumbing - are limited to those things that the average person can inspect himself or herself

Print as many copies as you need.

Home Inspection Checklist

Address:	**Contact:**
Exterior	**Your Notes**
Grade The yard should slope gradually from the house to drain water away. If a hill slopes toward the house, there should be a swale - a shallow runoff trench - to collect and drain water before it reaches the house.	
Driveway The driveway should be approximately five-centimeters (two-inches) below the garage entrance. It should slope away from the garage. If it slopes toward the garage, a drainage well should run across the width of the entrance to collect water and prevent it from draining into the garage. There should be no potholes, heaving, large cracks, missing paver stones, or excessive weed growth.	
Foundation Usually made of poured concrete, concrete block	

or - on older houses - stone. The foundation should be free of cracks, crumbling, water stains, and signs of dampness (moss and mildew growth). Plantings should be at least one-meter (three-feet) away from the foundation. The top of the foundation should be at least 20-centimeters (eight-inches) above grade to keep the wooden sill away from contact with the ground.	
Roof and Chimney ***(for safety, view the roof from the ground with binoculars)*** The rooflines should appear straight, with no sagging. There should be roof vents, preferably as close to the ridge as possible. Shingles should lie flat with no missing ones, no worn areas, no lifted corners, no moss growth, and no bending over the roof edge. They should extend over the roof edge and the edge of the fascia board in order to direct water into the eavestrough. (Flat roofs cannot be inspected from the ground. Leave them to a professional). The top of the chimney should be at least one-meter (three-feet) above the peak of the roof or at 3.5-meters (10-feet) away from higher roof sections. There should be no cracked or missing bricks, stone, or mortar.	
Eavestroughs and Downspouts Eavestroughs should be securely fastened and free of cracks or joint gaps. Downspouts should direct water away from the house, walks, and driveways.	
Windows and Doors Windows and exterior doors should fit well and should open smoothly. Locks, hinges, and other hardware should fit well and be in proper working order. Caulking and weather stripping should not be cracked, worn, or missing. There should be no broken glass or torn screens, and no damaged or rotted trim. In colder climates, windows should be	

double or triple-glazed. Older, single-glazed windows should have storm windows. Exterior doors should be solid - never hollow core - and built either of wood or insulated steel.	
Garage An attached garage must be gas and fireproofed. There cannot be any openings that will let exhaust into the house. The walls should be sheeted with non-combustible material such as gypsum board. A door from the garage to the house must be fireproof (usually steel), have an automatic closer, and gaskets to seal the door when closed. If the garage floor is a concrete slab, it should not have any significant cracks or appear to have settled. The garage door should open and close smoothly. If it has an automatic opener, test it.	

Interior	**Your Notes**
Basement Walls and floors should not have cracks or any signs of leaks; (look for water marks and smell for mustiness). The floor should slightly slope toward floor drains; (test by rolling a marble). In unfinished basements, check the wooden sill (where it rests on top of the foundation) for signs of rot or insect damage. Test its soundness by jabbing it with a screwdriver or spike. Floor joists can be tested the same way. Also look for sagging joists.	
Plumbing Flush toilets and turn on faucets to check water pressure. Toilets should not run on or clog. Check for signs of leaking where toilet rests on floor. Taps should not drip and sinks should drain freely. Check the condition of caulking around tubs and check shower tile for gaps and cracks.	

Note the water heater's capacity and its fuel, (oil, gas, electric). Check for an installation tag (usually attached to a fuel line or water line) to determine the heater's age.	
Heating and Air Conditioning Note the kind of heating system (forced air furnace, hot water radiator, electric, etc.). Turn it on, set the thermostat and note how quickly it comes up to temperature. Look at the general condition of the furnace or boiler. Check its age by looking for an installation tag (usually attached to a fuel line. Fuel burning furnaces and stoves should vent to the outside and have their own fresh air intakes. Turn on central air conditioning and note how long it takes to get to temperature.	
Electrical All lights and fixtures should turn on. To test that plug outlets are properly wired and grounded, use an outlet tester (also called a receptacle tester). They are inexpensive and available from almost any hardware store.	
Walls, ceilings, and trim There should be no cracks, holes, or gouges. Plaster should not be crumbling or cracked. Drywall should be smooth and free of seams or popped nails. Baseboards, crown molding, door and other molding should be well fitted with mitered corners.	
Floors There should be no excessive creaking when the floor is walked on; (a bit of creak is acceptable). Note the overall condition of the flooring. It should not be obviously worn. Ceramic tiles should be evenly laid and free of cracks or damaged grout. Vinyl tiles should be evenly laid with no gaps between them. Carpet must be drawn tight and the seams should match. Hardwood should be free of	

gouges, gaps, and visible nail heads.	
Doors Doors should be well fitted. They should open and close smoothly on their hinges and not scrape along the floor. Doorknobs and locks should be well fitted. Doorstops should be in place. Sliding doors should run smoothly on tracks - they should not stick or scrape.	
Cabinets and Countertops Cabinets should be sturdy, properly aligned, and securely fastened to the wall. Doors and drawers should operate smoothly and be free of damage. Countertops should be free of significant scratches, gouges, or other damage.	
Ventilation The kitchen and bathrooms should have proper ventilation. Turn on vents to check that they operate without rattling or whining. In the laundry room, the clothes dryer should exhaust to the outside. Check outside to see that all vents exhaust freely and there are no obstructions.	
Fireplace The damper and vents must open easily. Note if there are smoke stains above the opening - this is a sign of negative pressure or an obstructed flue. There should be no cracks or other damage to the fireplace structure itself. Gas fireplaces should be in proper working order. There should be no cracks in the glass or any other damage to the unit.	
Kitchen Appliances If appliances come with the house, they should work properly and be free of damage.	