

Home Inspection Checklist

A room-by-room and system-by-system home inspection checklist for buyers and homeowners.

Exterior and Roof

- ☐ Walk the full perimeter and look for cracked, missing, or rotting siding, trim, and fascia.
- ☐ Inspect the roof from the ground with binoculars for curled, missing, or damaged shingles.
- ☐ Check gutters and downspouts for clogs, rust, sagging, and that water drains away from the house.
- ☐ Examine chimneys, flashing, and vents for cracks, missing mortar, or loose seals.
- ☐ Note the grading: soil should slope away from the foundation, not toward it.
- ☐ Inspect decks, porches, railings, and steps for rot, wobble, and secure fasteners.
- ☐ Test exterior faucets, look at the driveway and walkways for heaving cracks, and check fences and gates.

Foundation and Structure

- ☐ Look for cracks in the foundation wider than a quarter inch, especially horizontal or stair-step patterns.
- ☐ Check basement and crawlspace walls for water stains, efflorescence, or active moisture.
- ☐ Note any musty smells that may signal mold or chronic dampness.
- ☐ Set a marble or ball on floors to spot sloping or uneven settling.
- ☐ Inspect support posts, beams, and joists for rot, sagging, or insect damage.
- ☐ Look for sticking doors and windows, which can indicate structural movement.
Persistent sticking across many openings is more concerning than one door.
- ☐ Check sump pumps and drainage systems for proper operation and recent water marks.

Plumbing

- ☐ Run every faucet, shower, and tub, checking water pressure and how quickly drains clear.
- ☐ Look under sinks for leaks, water stains, corrosion, and signs of past repairs.
- ☐ Flush all toilets and confirm they refill and shut off without running or rocking.
- ☐ Identify the water heater's age, capacity, and any rust, leaks, or corrosion at fittings.
- ☐ Note the pipe material; older galvanized steel or polybutylene may need replacement.
Lead pipes or solder are a health concern—flag for professional testing.
- ☐ Locate the main water shutoff valve and confirm it is accessible and operable.
- ☐ Check for water stains on ceilings below bathrooms, which often reveal hidden leaks.

Electrical

- ☐ Open the electrical panel cover and check for scorch marks, rust, double-tapped breakers, or a recalled brand.
- ☐ Test a sample of outlets in each room with an outlet tester for proper wiring and grounding.
- ☐ Confirm GFCI outlets in kitchens, baths, garages, and exteriors trip and reset correctly.
- ☐ Verify that light switches operate fixtures and that no bulbs flicker.
- ☐ Look for exposed wiring, overloaded extension cords, or amateur splices.
Knob-and-tube or aluminum branch wiring warrants an electrician's review.
- ☐ Check that smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are present, correctly placed, and functional.
- ☐ Confirm the panel has adequate capacity and clear labeling of circuits.

Heating, Cooling, and Ventilation

- ☐ Turn on the heat and air conditioning to confirm both cycle on and produce conditioned air.

- ☐ Check the furnace and AC unit ages, looking for rust, corrosion, or deferred maintenance.
- ☐ Inspect and replace dirty air filters, and note when the system was last serviced.
- ☐ Examine visible ductwork for disconnects, leaks, or missing insulation.
- ☐ Feel airflow at several supply registers to confirm balanced delivery.
- ☐ Verify that bathroom and kitchen exhaust fans vent outside, not into the attic.
Improperly vented fans cause moisture buildup and mold.
- ☐ Check the thermostat operation and any heat pump or boiler for unusual noises.

Interior, Kitchen, and Baths

- ☐ Scan walls and ceilings in every room for cracks, water stains, and patched repairs.
- ☐ Open and close all windows and doors, checking locks, screens, and seals.
- ☐ Walk floors listening for squeaks and feeling for soft, sloping, or springy spots.
- ☐ Test kitchen appliances—range, oven, dishwasher, disposal, and vent—for basic operation.
- ☐ Inspect countertops, cabinets, and backsplashes for water damage and loose fittings.
- ☐ Check bathrooms for caulk gaps, loose tiles, soft subflooring, and proper ventilation.
- ☐ Look for signs of pests such as droppings, nests, or chewed materials in corners and cabinets.

Attic, Insulation, and Safety

- ☐ Access the attic and inspect for daylight, roof leaks, water stains, and adequate insulation depth.
- ☐ Confirm attic ventilation is unobstructed and free of mold or rotted sheathing.
- ☐ Check that insulation is present and even in the attic, walls, and any crawlspace.
- ☐ Test garage doors, auto-reverse safety sensors, and the fire-rated door to the living space.
- ☐ Verify stair railings, deck rails, and balusters are secure and at safe heights.
- ☐ Locate fire extinguishers, confirm detector battery dates, and plan two exit routes.
Replace smoke and CO detectors older than ten years.
- ☐ Compile your notes and photos, then schedule a licensed inspector for anything you flagged as unsure.