

How to Prepare for a Home Inspection

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So you've listed your home, found a buyer, and accepted a purchase price. The sale of your house is almost a done deal, but it's not quite time to pack the [moving boxes](#) yet – you still have to make it through the home inspection.



In a typical real estate transaction, the home inspection occurs after the buyer has signed a purchase agreement and before the final closing date. Most home buyers choose to make the closing contingent on the results of the home inspection, meaning that they can back out of the sale if the inspector finds something that is not to their liking and the seller is unwilling to repair it or lower the purchase price to account for it. As a seller, you're going to want the home inspection to go as smoothly as possible, with little to no major issues detected.

But first: What does a home inspector do? During the inspection, properties are examined top to bottom, with emphasis placed on evaluating the roof, walls, foundation, plumbing system, electrical system, and HVAC system. Inspectors will also check for the operational ability of installed systems, such as garbage disposals and carbon monoxide detectors, as well as for leaks, mold, mildew, and other signs of water damage.

As a seller, it's common to get nervous during the home inspection process. You don't want the deal to fall through, nor do you want to be stuck with the cost and burden of repairs if your buyer requests them as a contingency. Fortunately, there are some things you can do to prepare for the inspection.

1. Provide open access to areas that need to be checked

Make sure that the home inspector has easy access throughout the property. If they can't get to an area, they can't inspect it, and that will be a red flag for buyers. Clear away any clutter impeding access to areas or systems that the inspector needs to take a look at, including basements, attics, furnace rooms, and under sinks.

2. Clear the perimeter

In addition to checking the interior functioning of your home, the inspector is also going to be looking at the exterior, including siding, trims, and caulking around windows and doors. You'll want to leave areas around your home clear of plant growth, trash cans, and stored items so they can get an unimpeded look.

3. Check the roof

When's the last time you took a good look at the roof of your house? For most sellers, it's been awhile. The roof is a key part of the home inspection though, so you can't ignore it in your preparations. Get out a ladder and clean moss and debris from the gutters, check for damaged or missing tiles, and make sure downspouts are in their proper position. If you do find damage on the roof, you'll want to get it taken care of prior to the home inspection.

4. Keep a clean house

If you've already been going through the process of selling your house, you're probably already pretty adept at this point at keeping everything clean and tidy. Resist the urge to let things build up after an accepted offer and maintain the same level of cleanliness for the home inspector. How clean your home is doesn't play into the inspection itself, but a dirty or messy house may make the inspector suspicious that other areas of the property aren't properly taken care of either.

5.

Replace any bulbs that are out

A blown bulb suggests two things to a home inspector: either the bulb itself is out, or there's something faulty in the fixture's wiring. The inspector will either have to waste time determining whether a fixture is inoperable or they'll simply note that there's a possible defect without looking further into it. Avoid both of these scenarios by making sure that all of your bulbs are in working order.

6. Make sure your toilets are functioning properly

Does your toilet run for a long time after you flush? It's a common problem that gets easy to ignore when you're living with it every day, but it's not something you want your home inspector to come upon. Fixing a running toilet is an easy and inexpensive repair you can take care of on your own with a simple trip to the hardware store, so take care of the problem before the inspection.

7. Put in a fresh furnace return filter

Regularly replacing the furnace filter in your home is important for air quality and the overall functioning of your heating system. Instead of making the inspector concerned that you haven't been taking good care of your home's heating and air, clean or replace the existing filter and show that it's something you do pay attention to.

8. Turn all pilot lights on

The pilot light in your water heater is probably always on (and you would have noticed already if it wasn't), but what about the pilot light in your gas fireplace? Many homeowners turn their fireplace off in warmer months, so it's important to double check that the pilot light – and the fireplace itself – is working prior to inspection. If you've turned off your fireplace's pilot light, now is the time to get it going again.

9. Ensure the fuse box is properly labeled

A confusing fuse box is frustrating for homeowners and home inspectors alike. Double check that each switch in the box is labeled clearly and correctly, and replace any labels that are incorrect or difficult to read.

10.

Check your doors

Take a walk-through of your house and check each door to make sure that it's in working condition. Interior and exterior doors should be latching into the frame with no problem, doorknobs should be securely in place, and any locks, particularly on doors that lead outside, need to be functioning properly as well. Sometimes cold or heat can warp normally functional doors and lead to problems, so be sure to check all doors, including those you don't use very often.

11. Repair faulty cabinets

It's easy for the hinges on cabinets to get a bit loose, which results in doors that don't close correctly or that aren't flush with the frame. If you have a cabinet that's looking off, you can usually fix it pretty simply just by tightening the hinge with a screwdriver.

12. Look for leaks and water damage

The home inspector is definitely going to be looking for signs of leaks or water damage, so it's better you beat them to it and get any water-related issues repaired prior to the inspection. When looking for leaks, be sure to check under sinks, around faucets, around the base of your toilets and bathtubs and/or showers, and under any appliances that may leak, such as dishwashers and refrigerators. In terms of water damage, examine walls, ceilings, and floors, looking for signs of warping, sagging, or buckling. Don't forget to check the exterior of your house for signs of leaks or water damage as well. If you see water pooling near the base of your house, that should be a cause for concern.

13. Take care of any bug problems

Most of us have to occasionally deal with an errant ant or spider in the home, especially in warmer temperatures. But if you've got a wasp nest in the backyard or are regularly seeing lines of ants in your kitchen or other interior areas, you'll want to take care of these problems prior to inspection. Most bug problems aren't a huge deal, but they can turn off buyers.

14. Be prepared on the day of the inspection

By the day of the home inspection you should have done everything you can to prepare. Now, it's just about making sure it goes as smoothly as possible. To do that,

keep all utilities on, double check that you've left clear access to areas and systems all around the house, and unlock any gates, electrical boxes, or other areas that you normally keep secure. Most of all, be ready at least two hours before the inspector is set to arrive (they're known for being early) and prepare yourself and your family to vacate the house during the inspection. It's best to take any pets with you, but if you can't, make sure they're safely crated or otherwise secured.

At this point, take a deep breath. Most buyers aren't expecting complete perfection; they just want to know that there are no heavy burdens waiting for them. It's common for the home inspector to note a few minor issues, but most of the time, if there's something serious to detect you've already figured it out on your own.

