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Inspect – Inform – Ensure

Home Inspection Checklist for Sellers and Listing Agents

After observing that the most frequent search query on google related to the home inspection industry was “home inspection checklist”, we realized decided to sit down and make a cheat-sheet for home sellers and listing agents to make their and the inspector’s lives easier while ensuring a smoother real estate transaction.

The purpose of this checklist is just that: a quick checklist that sellers can look through in preparation of a home inspection. In a perfect world, as soon as someone was getting ready to sell their home they would look through this checklist and correct or repair deficient items well ahead of showings, so that by the time the inspection was performed, the inspection report would be considerably smaller than average. In reality, I would be thrilled if our San Antonio-area realtor partners would download and email or print out the checklist for their home-selling clients a few days before inspection. Several important items on the checklist are common sense and basic courtesy, but you would be surprised how often we write up items that simply should not have to be written-up if the seller had known what we were doing.

Important note to buyers and buyer’s agents: this checklist is not in any way, shape or form even a remote replacement for licensed and/or properly certified professional home inspector. We realize that a significant portion of the individuals searching for a real estate checklist are thinking that they can save themselves the not-insignificant home inspection fee by just following a checklist. While I would like to hope that home buyers have enough sense to understand that our years of training, continuing education, costly certification and experience can’t be boiled down to a few pages of text, let this serve as an official notice: please do not use this checklist in place of hiring a home inspector to inspect your home. It just won’t work out like you think it will.

Have Questions? Want to Book a Pre-Listing Inspection? Just Want to Talk? Give Us Call!

Best Practices to Prepare for a Home Inspection

DO Leave the direct contact information of the listing agent as well as the home-sellers. Leave a note on the kitchen countertop. No, don't leave me your office number that I can call Monday through Friday, 8 through 5. Your cell number. This is for emergency purposes. What if we discover a significant water or gas leak? What if the alarm system starts to go off? Wouldn't you like to know as soon as possible?

DO Make sure that ALL necessary utilities like water, electricity and gas are turned on. This is very important!

DO Make sure that the fixture water supply valves (often called "angle-stops) and gas supply valves are turned on. Our Standards of Practice all explicitly state that we don't operate any valves because of their tendency to leak. If the water supply to a fixture is shutoff at time of inspection, the inspector will note this in the report and recommend a re-inspection at the seller's expense because the seller didn't have the house ready for inspection.

DO Make sure that all circuit breakers at all electrical cabinets are in the "on" position.

DO Make sure the attic is accessible. Please clear a path to the attic and remove the Christmas tree, the totes and boxes filled with mementos and winter clothes, etc. If you're stuff blocks our movement in the attic, you can be we'll make note of it. This is especially important if your air handler (air-conditioner) is in the attic.

DO Make sure that the electrical panels, water heaters and air-conditioning equipment is accessible. These are all major components of a home; they need to be accessible for inspection. Furthermore, they need to be accessible for a home owner as well, such as when you need to reset a tripped circuit breaker.

DO Park your vehicles outside of the garage. Experienced inspectors will not operate a garage door opener with a car parked in the garage in case the door or a door component were to fall and damage the vehicle. Again, we will just say that we didn't operate the garage door and recommend a re-inspection at the seller's expense.

DO Take your pets with you when you leave the house or put them in a secure area. If your cat or dog is an escape artist, lock them up. If you have a large dog that might get aggressive, lock them up.

DO Try to remove or reduce the clutter that occurs under the sinks. We know you store cleaning supplies and towels down there; we do too. But it makes it difficult to observe any leaking sink drains when the cabinet is filled to the brim with makeup.

DON'T Leave a bunch of dishes in the sink. I need to look inside the garbage disposal and I really want to be able to block the drain temporarily to fill the sink.

DON'T Leave your dog in the backyard while you are not home. I appreciate you putting a note on the slider to warn me of their presence, but I need to go into the backyard to look at the exterior. I'm not going back there with Cujo ready to eat me.

DON'T Leave a bunch of pans and cookware in the oven. I use the oven for storage as well, but I need to operate the oven and test the thermostat's accuracy. Please put this stuff on the countertop.

DON'T Let me see those filthy dirty air-filters. Dirty air filters are an automatic red flag that make me recommend a cleaning of the AC system; it shows lack of maintenance or neglect. Just change them.

EXTERIOR

____ Trim any vegetation away from house. The more space the better, but at least 6-inches.

____ Trim any tree branches away from the structure. No tree branches above the roof ideally.

____ At least 4-inches of concrete foundation should be visible between the ground and the siding.

____ Grab a fistful of soil from the ground directly adjacent to the foundation. Does it clump up or is it very dry and crumbles back to dust? If it's dry, google "Foundation Watering".

____ Remove any debris (especially wood) or storage from around the foundation and exterior walls.

____ Clean out the gutters.

____ Install splash blocks around all gutter downspouts.

____ Put splash blocks underneath any gutter downspouts.

____ Replace any rotted wood on the exterior. This goes for siding, the window and door trim/casing, the deck and deck floorboards, porch posts, etc. It may require replacement if the buyer's lender requires a Wood Destroying Insect (WDI) report.

____ If you have a wood fence, make sure it doesn't touch the exterior of the structure.

____ Replace any leaking hose bibbs/spigots. Put Backflow Preventers on them.

____ Go out to your water meter. Make sure it is readily accessible.

____ Make sure none of the deck/porch railings are loose or wobbly.

INTERIOR

Windows

____ Open and close all windows. Make sure they lock, open and close easily. Clean and lubricate the tracks if necessary. Replace broken glass.

____ Make sure that they don't fall as soon as you let go of them. If they do, they need adjustment.

____ If you see condensation or white mineral deposits between the window panes, the window's thermal seal has failed and should be replaced.

Walls

___ Caulk and/or grout as necessary any cracking or deteriorated caulk / grout in the shower or bath enclosure walls.

___ Caulk and/or grout as necessary any cracking or deteriorated caulk / grout in the countertops / backsplashes.

Doors

___ Tighten door knobs / handles as necessary.

___ Tighten hinge screws as necessary.

___ Doors that rub against the frame, jamb or strike-plate will be noted as potential indicators of adverse foundation performance. Correct if possible.

___ Make sure all doors latch closed.

Electrical *(work to be performed by a qualified electrician only)*

___ All receptacles (plugs) and switches should have a cover plate installed.

___ No cable wiring "romex" should be visible. It should be in a wall or in conduit.

___ Remove the Christmas lights / string lights.

___ Extension cords should not be used as permanent wiring.

___ Operate ceiling fans on high: if it wobbles or is very noisy, have it corrected.

___ Make sure all lights turn on. Replace bad bulbs as necessary.

___ All GFCI receptacles should de-energize when the "test" button is pressed.

___ All GFCI and AFCI circuit breakers should trip when the "test" button is pressed.

Plumbing *(work to be performed by a licensed plumber only)*

___ Make sure the sink pop-up drains operate; same with bathtub mechanical drain stops.

___ Close the drain for all sinks, fill them up, and then open the drain. Run the cold water for about 15 minutes. Check for leaks.

___ Do the toilets wiggle? They should be secured to the floor. Have a plumber reset any that wiggle.

___ Replace any cracked or damaged toilets.

___ Make sure the hot water is on the left side, the cold water is on the right side, of all faucets.

___ Check for rust, corrosion, and especially leaks near the water heater.