

Frequently-Asked Questions

Here is a list of the most frequently-asked home inspection questions and their answers.

Should you have additional questions, please don't hesitate to contact us!

CAN'T I DO IT MYSELF?

Even the most experienced homeowner lacks the knowledge and expertise of a professional home inspector who has inspected hundreds, perhaps thousands, of homes in his or her career.

Qualified inspectors are familiar with the many elements of home construction, proper installation and maintenance. They understand how the home's systems and components are intended to function together, as well as how (and why) they fail.

Above all, most buyers find it very difficult to remain completely objective and unemotional about the house they really want, and this may affect their judgment. For the most accurate information, it is best to obtain an impartial third-party opinion by an expert in the home inspection field.

CAN A HOUSE "FAIL" INSPECTION?

No. A professional home inspection is an examination of the current condition of your prospective home. It is not an appraisal, which determines market value, or a municipal inspection, which verifies local code compliance. A home inspector will not "pass" or "fail" a house, but will accurately describe its physical condition and indicate needed repairs and/or replacement.

WHAT DOES AN INSPECTION INCLUDE?

A complete inspection includes a visual examination of the building from top to bottom. The inspector evaluates and reports the condition of the structure, roof, foundation, drainage, plumbing, heating system, central air-conditioning system, visible insulation, walls, windows, and doors. Only those items that are visible and accessible by normal means are included in the report.

WHEN DO I REQUEST AN INSPECTOR?

The best time to consult the inspector is right after you've made an offer on your new home. The real estate contract usually allows for a grace period to inspect the building. Ask your professional agent to include this inspection clause in the contract, making your purchase obligation contingent upon the findings of a professional inspection.

IS AN INSPECTION A CODE COMPLIANCE INSPECTION?

No. A professional inspection is simply an examination of the building's current condition. It is not an appraisal or a Municipal Code inspection.

WHAT IF THE REPORT REVEALS PROBLEMS?

If the inspector finds problems in a building, it does not necessarily mean you shouldn't buy the building; only that you will know in advance what type of repairs to anticipate. A seller may be willing to make repairs because of significant problems discovered by the inspector.

If your budget is tight, or if you do not wish to become involved in future repair work, you may decide that this is not the property for you. The choice is yours.

IF THE REPORT IS FAVORABLE, DID I REALLY NEED AN INSPECTION?

Definitely. With a favorable report in hand, you can complete your purchase with real peace of mind. You may have learned a few things about your property from the inspection report, and will want to keep that information for your future reference. Above all, you can rest assured that you are making a well-informed purchase decision and that you will be able to enjoy or occupy your new home or building the way you want.

WHY DO I NEED AN INSPECTION?

The purchase of a home or commercial building is one of the largest single investments you will ever make. You should know exactly what to expect — both indoors and out — in terms of needed and future repairs and maintenance.

A fresh coat of paint could be hiding serious structural problems. Stains on the ceiling may indicate a chronic roof leakage problem, or may be simply the result of a single incident. The inspector interprets these and other clues, and then presents a professional opinion as to the condition of the property so you can avoid unpleasant surprises afterward.

Of course, an inspection will also point out the positive aspects of a building, as well as the type of maintenance needed to keep it in good shape. After the inspection, you will have a much clearer understanding of the property you are about to purchase, and be able to make your decision confidently.

As a seller, if you have owned your building for a period of time, an inspection can identify potential problems in the sale of your building and can recommend preventive measures that might avoid future expensive repairs.

CAN I INSPECT THE BUILDING MYSELF?

Even the most experienced building or homeowner lacks the knowledge and expertise of a professional inspector who has inspected hundreds, and perhaps thousands of homes and buildings in their career. An inspector is equally familiar with the critical elements of construction and with the proper installation, maintenance and inter-relationships of these elements. Above all, most buyers find it difficult to remain completely objective and unemotional about the building they really want, and this may lead to a poor assessment.

WHAT WILL THE INSPECTION COST?

Fees for a typical single-family house or commercial building inspection vary geographically, as does the cost of housing. Similarly, within a geographic area the inspection fees charged by different inspection services may vary depending upon the size of the building, particular features of the building, age, type of structure, etc. However, the cost should not be a factor in the decision whether or not to have a physical inspection. You might save many times the cost of the inspection if you are able to have the seller perform repairs based on significant problems revealed by the inspector. Consult your professional agent for guidance.

SHOULD I ATTEND THE INSPECTION?

It is not necessary for you to be present for the inspection, but it is a good idea. By following the inspector through the inspection, observing and asking questions, you will learn about the new building and get some tips on general maintenance. This information will be of great help to you after you move in.

DO I REALLY NEED AN INSPECTION?

As a seller, if you have owned your property for a period of time, an inspection can help identify potential problems and recommend preventive measures, which might avoid future expensive repairs. There is no such thing as a home that is too new or too well built to benefit from a professional inspection.

Anyone advising against an inspection is doing a disservice to the buyer. Many problems frequently encountered after the buyer moves in are a routine discovery for a qualified home inspector.

IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO TO BETTER MAINTAIN MY HOME?

Inspection reports often identify many commonly-neglected maintenance items. Performing some basic maintenance can help keep your home in better condition, thus reducing the chance of those conditions showing up on the inspection report.

To present a better maintained home to perspective buyers, follow these tips from the Real Estate Inspection Association. Most of these items can be accomplished with little or no cost, while the benefits of selling a well maintained home can be worth the effort.

- Clean both rain gutters and any roof debris and trim back excessive foliage from the exterior siding.
- Divert all water away from the house (for example, rain-gutter downspouts, sump pump discharge locations, and clean out garage and basement interiors).
- Clean or replace all furnace filters.

- Remove grade or mulch from contact with siding (preferable 6-8 inches of clearance).
- Paint all weathered exterior wood and caulk around trim, chimneys, windows, doors, and all exterior wall penetrations.
- Make sure all windows and doors are in proper operating condition; replace cracked windowpanes.
- Replace burned out light bulbs.
- Make sure all of the plumbing fixtures are in spotless condition (toilets, tubs, showers, sinks) and in proper working order (repair leaks).
- Provide clear access to attic and foundation crawl spaces, heating/cooling systems, water heater/s, electrical main and distribution panels and remove the car/s from the garage.
- And finally, if the house is vacant make sure that all utilities are turned on. Should the water, gas or electric be off at the time of inspection the inspector will not turn them on. Therefore, the inspection process will be incomplete, which may possibly affect the time frame in removing sales contract contingencies.