

# Building Inspection Checklist: What Does a Building Inspection Cover?

## Why This Building Inspection Checklist Matters for Every Buyer

A thorough property inspection checklist can save you thousands of dollars. Whether you're buying a house or need a first apartment checklist for a unit, you need to understand the inspection process before attending any inspection.

### Trust the process

Systematic purchasers pay less and are happier with their purchase.

Major structural issues cost \$47,000 on average when missed. Knowing what the report covers protects you.

**Quick test:** Which would make you walk away?

- A) Small foundation cracks (less than 3mm)
- B) Active roof leak with water stains
- C) Safety outlets missing in bathrooms
- D) Old heating system

If you answered anything except B, you might pay too much for hidden problems.

## Three Levels of Property Inspection Checklist Findings

Group findings into three levels on your property inspection checklist. This shows which problems are serious and helps you understand the true scope of work.

### Level 1: Serious Issues on Your Building Inspection Checklist (May Walk Away)

These 23 items show major problems. Repairs often cost \$15,000 or more.

**Your list should look for:**

- Active roof leaks with water damage
- Foundation cracks wider than 6mm
- Electrical panel with burn marks
- Plumbing with active leaks
- Heating system with cracks (carbon monoxide risk)
- Large areas of mould (more than 1 square metre)
- Structural settling or sagging
- Termite damage to main structure

Even serious findings aren't always deal-breakers. Get repair cost estimates first.

## Level 2: Significant But Fixable Items on Your Property Inspection Checklist (\$3,000-\$15,000)

These 47 items on your property inspection checklist are bargaining points.

### Your inspection list should look for:

- Roof nearing end of life (3-5 years left)
- Heating/cooling over 15 years old
- Hot water system over 10 years old
- Ground sloping toward house
- Older electrical service
- Windows with broken seals (foggy glass)
- Deck with concerns
- Crawl space moisture

**Strategy:** Work out repair costs. Take them off your offer.

## Level 3: Normal Maintenance Items (\$100-\$3,000)

These 86 items are normal wear and tear.

### Look for:

- Minor plumbing drips
- Safety outlets missing
- Gutters needing cleaning
- Old caulking
- Minor siding damage
- Small wall cracks
- Lights not working

Don't walk away over Level 3 items on your list. These are normal costs of owning a home.

## What Does a Building Inspection Cover: 156-Item List

This comprehensive guide covers everything a professional building report should include.

## Foundation Checks on Your Building Inspection Checklist (12 checks)

### Structure & Condition

- [ ] Foundation material is solid and in good condition.
- [ ] Foundation is free from significant cracks (no cracks wider than 6mm).
- [ ] Structure shows no signs of settling, sinking, or movement.
- [ ] Foundation anchoring is secure and meets requirements.

- [ ] Brick or stone elements are intact with no significant wear.

#### **Moisture & Drainage**

- [ ] Ground slopes away from house (approx. 15cm drop over 3m) to divert water.
- [ ] Foundation walls are free from white mineral deposits (efflorescence).
- [ ] Foundation vents are clear and working properly.
- [ ] Crawl space is accessible, dry, and in acceptable condition.

#### **Exterior & Hazards**

- [ ] Proper clearance exists between soil and wood framing (no soil-to-wood contact).
- [ ] Soil around foundation is suitable and shows no problem signs.
- [ ] Foundation is free from pest or termite damage.

The inspector spends 15-20 minutes here. Foundation issues affect everything else on your list.

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### **Roof Checks (18 checks)**

#### **Surface & Materials**

- [ ] Roof material type and age are documented and within expected lifespan.
- [ ] Shingles or tiles are in good condition with no damage or missing pieces.
- [ ] Flashing around chimneys and vents is intact and properly sealed.
- [ ] Gutters and downpipes are secure, clean, and draining properly.
- [ ] Soffit and fascia are intact with no rot or damage.
- [ ] Roof ventilation is adequate and unobstructed.

#### **Structural Integrity**

- [ ] No evidence of past or current roof leaks.
- [ ] Roof structure is free from sagging or deformation.
- [ ] Chimney is in good condition with intact mortar and cap.
- [ ] Roof is free from damage caused by antennas or dishes.

#### **External Factors**

- [ ] No tree branches are overhanging or threatening the roof surface.
- [ ] Roof surface is free from excessive moss or debris.
- [ ] Ridge vent is in good condition and functional.

#### **Attic Inspection**

- [ ] Attic ventilation is adequate.
- [ ] Attic insulation is present and at proper depth.

- Vapour barrier is properly installed.
- Attic is free from moisture, mould, or mildew.
- Roof decking is solid with no rot or deterioration.

Your roof lasts 15-25 years. Replacement costs \$8,000-\$25,000.

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## Electrical Checks (24 checks)

Electrical issues cause 24% of home insurance claims and 67% of home fires.

### Service Panel & Main

- Panel type, age, and brand are documented.
- Panel is not a recalled brand.
- Home is free from aluminium wiring (fire hazard).
- Service capacity is adequate for the home's needs.
- Circuit breaker labels are clear and accurate.
- Wire sizes correctly match breaker ratings.
- No double-tapped breakers present.

### Outlets & Switches

- Safety outlets (RCDs) are installed and working in wet areas.
- Arc-fault breakers are present in bedrooms (where required).
- Grounding system is properly installed.
- All outlets are working correctly.
- All light switches are operating properly.
- Outlets are three-prong where appropriate.

### Wiring Condition

- No signs of overheating, burn marks, or scorching anywhere.
- Junction box covers are in place.
- Wire insulation is intact with no exposed wiring.
- Home is free from old knob-and-tube wiring.
- Outside outlets are functional and weather-protected.

### Safety Systems & Additional

- Subpanel connections are proper and safe.
- Smoke detectors are present and functional.
- Carbon monoxide detectors are present and functional.
- Service mast is in good condition.

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- Meter base is in good condition.
- No evidence of unpermitted DIY electrical work.

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## Heating and Cooling (16 checks)

### System Information

- System age and brand are documented.
- Heat exchanger is free from cracks (no carbon monoxide risk).
- Burner flame pattern is correct (blue flame, not yellow).
- Air filter is clean or recently replaced.
- Ductwork is intact and properly connected.

### Cooling System

- Air conditioner condition is documented and acceptable.
- Refrigerant lines are insulated and in good condition.
- Condensation drain is clear and draining properly.
- Thermostat is working and controlling system correctly.
- Airflow volume is adequate at all vents.

### Performance & Maintenance

- Temperature readings are within normal range for heating and cooling.
- Supply and return vents are balanced throughout the home.
- Combustion air supply is adequate.
- Flue pipe is properly installed and in good condition.
- Gas line connections are secure with no leaks.
- Maintenance records are available showing regular service.

A new system costs \$6,000-\$12,000.

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## Plumbing (22 checks)

### Pipes & Supply

- Pipe material is documented (copper, PEX, or galvanised).
- Pipes are free from wear, corrosion, or mineral buildup.
- Water pressure is adequate.
- Drain condition is good with no blockages.

### Fixtures

- All sinks are free from leaks underneath.
- All toilets function properly with no running water.
- All showers and baths drain quickly.
- Hot water system age is documented and within expected lifespan.

#### **Hot Water System**

- Safety relief valve is present and functional.
- Hot water venting is properly installed.
- Expansion tank is present and in good condition (where required).

#### **Main Systems**

- Main water shut-off is located and operates properly.
- Sewer line condition is known or has been inspected.
- Sump pump is present (where needed), tested, and functional.
- Septic system age and condition are documented (if applicable).

#### **Valves & Additional**

- Fixture shut-off valves operate properly.
- No cross-connection hazards exist.
- Backflow prevention is in place and functional.
- Gas line connections are secure and free from corrosion.
- No signs of frozen pipe damage.
- Water quality is acceptable.
- Well system is functional (if present).

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### **Inside the Home (31 checks)**

#### **Windows (6 checks)**

- All windows open and close smoothly.
- Window locks are working properly.
- Window glass is clear with no fogging (seals are intact).
- Window frames are free from rot or damage.
- Screens are present and in good condition.
- Caulking around windows is intact.

#### **Doors (6 checks)**

- All doors open and close properly.
- Weatherstripping is present and provides a good seal.

- Security locks are present and functional on exterior doors.
- Door glass is free from cracks.
- Storm doors are in good condition (where present).
- Thresholds are intact with no damage.

#### **Walls, Ceilings, Floors (19 checks)**

- Walls are free from significant cracks.
- Ceilings are free from water stains.
- Paint condition is acceptable with no peeling or bubbling.
- Floors are level throughout.
- Floors are free from squeaks and soft spots.
- Carpet wear is acceptable.
- Tiles are secure with no cracks or loose pieces.
- Hardwood floors are free from significant gaps or damage.
- Basement is dry with no moisture problems.
- Interior is free from mould or mildew.
- Insulation is adequate for the climate.
- Ventilation is adequate throughout.
- Smoke detectors are present and functional.
- CO detectors are present and functional.
- Fireplace is safe and in working condition (where present).
- Stairs are solid and stable.
- Handrails are secure and meet safety requirements.
- Attic access is present and functional.
- Built-in appliances are working correctly.
- Garage door sensors are functioning properly.

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## **Your Own 30-Minute Building Inspection Checklist Preview**

Before the formal pre-purchase inspection, use this preview to do your own check:

- All taps run with good pressure for both hot and cold water.
- All toilets flush properly with no running water afterward.
- Tested outlets work using phone charger or similar device.
- All windows open and close smoothly.
- Heating/cooling system responds within 1-2 minutes.

- Ceilings, under sinks, and window frames are free from water stains.
- Foundation, walls, and ceilings are free from significant cracks.
- Garage door safety sensors stop door when triggered.

Take dated photos. Have your inspector review your concerns.

## First Apartment Checklist: Inspection Considerations for Units

If you're buying an apartment instead of a house, your inspection list needs modifications.

### Apartment Inspection: What's Different for Units

When inspecting apartments, add these items to your property inspection checklist:

#### **Building-wide systems (not covered in standard inspections):**

- Common area condition is acceptable.
- Lift maintenance history is documented and current.
- Fire safety systems are present and compliant.
- Basement or garage structure is sound.
- Building facade condition is acceptable with no major concerns.

#### **Strata-specific checks for your new apartment checklist:**

- Strata meeting minutes reviewed for building issues.
- Capital works fund balance is adequate.
- Special levy history is known and acceptable.
- Planned maintenance is understood.
- Building insurance policy has been reviewed.

### Apartment vs House Inspection

Your inspection for apartments focuses more on:

- Shared walls provide adequate soundproofing.
- Common plumbing stacks are in good condition.
- Building-wide electrical systems are functional and safe.
- Balcony and window waterproofing is intact.
- Strata-maintained areas are in acceptable condition.

#### **What about shared areas?**

Professional inspectors check your unit but cannot inspect common areas without strata permission. Always combine your pre-purchase inspection with a strata report for complete coverage.

## The Bottom Line

Your inspection isn't about finding a perfect house or apartment. It's about understanding what you're buying.

Know which issues are serious and which are normal. Use findings to negotiate a fair price.

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