

Home Inspection Checklist: 156 Things Inspectors Evaluate

Why This Home Inspection Checklist Matters for Every Buyer

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

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 1/8")
- 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.

Foundation (12 Items)

Structure & Condition

- [] Foundation material (concrete, block, or stone) is solid and in good condition.
- [] Foundation is free from serious cracks (none wider than 1/4").
- [] Structure shows no signs of settling, sinking, or movement.
- [] Brick and masonry elements are intact with no significant damage.
- [] Anchor bolts are present and secure (required in earthquake areas).

Moisture & Drainage

- [] Ground slopes away from house, directing water away from foundation.
- [] Foundation walls are free from white mineral deposits (efflorescence).
- [] Foundation vents are open, unobstructed, and providing proper airflow.
- [] Crawl space is accessible, dry, and in acceptable condition.

Exterior & Hazards

- [] Proper clearance exists between soil and wood siding (no soil-to-wood contact).
- [] Soil type around foundation is suitable and not causing issues.
- [] Foundation is free from pest damage or evidence of infestation.

Roof (18 Items)

Roof Surface & Materials

- Roof age and material type are documented and within expected lifespan.
- Shingles or tiles are in good condition with no curling, cracking, or missing pieces.
- Flashing around vents, chimneys, and penetrations is intact and sealed.
- Gutters are clean, secure, and draining properly.
- Downspouts are present and directing water away from foundation.
- Overhangs and soffits are intact with no rot or damage.

Structural Integrity

- Roof is free from sagging areas or structural deformities.
- No evidence of past or current roof leaks.
- Chimney is in good condition with intact mortar and cap.
- Roof is free from damage caused by dishes, antennas, or other installations.

Ventilation & External Factors

- Roof ventilation is adequate with functional vents.
- Ridge vent is in good condition and unobstructed.
- No overhanging tree limbs threatening the roof surface.
- Roof surface is free from excessive moss, algae, or debris growth.

Attic Inspection

- Attic vents are present and providing adequate ventilation.
- Insulation is present and at proper depth for the region.
- Vapor barrier is properly installed.
- Attic is free from mold, mildew, or moisture signs.
- Roof decking is solid with no rot, staining, or deterioration.

Electrical (24 Items)

Service Panel

- Panel type and age are documented.
- Panel is not a recalled brand (Federal Pacific, Zinsco, etc.).

- Wiring is copper (no aluminum wiring present, which is a fire risk).
- Service size (amps) is adequate for the home's needs.
- Breakers are properly labeled and organized.
- No double-tapped breakers present.

Wiring Safety

- Wire sizing matches breaker ratings throughout.
- GFCI outlets are installed and functional in all wet areas.
- AFCI breakers are present in bedrooms (where required by code).
- Electrical system is properly grounded.
- All outlets are in good condition with proper three-prong configuration.
- All outlets tested and functioning correctly.

Switches & Wiring Condition

- All light switches operate properly.
- No signs of overheating, burn marks, or scorching at outlets or panels.
- Junction boxes have proper covers installed.
- Wire coating/insulation is intact with no exposed wiring.
- Home is free from old knob-and-tube wiring.
- Outdoor outlets are present, functional, and weather-protected.

Safety Systems & Additional

- Subpanels are properly installed and connected.
- Smoke detectors are present and functional in required locations.
- Carbon monoxide detectors are present and functional.
- Service mast is in good condition and securely attached.
- Meter base is in good condition with proper weatherproofing.
- No evidence of unpermitted DIY electrical work.

HVAC System (16 Items)

Heating System

- Furnace age and model are documented.
- Heat exchanger is free from cracks or damage (no carbon monoxide risk).
- Burner flame is blue (not yellow or orange, which indicates problems).

- Air filter is clean or recently replaced.
- Ductwork is intact, connected, and properly insulated.

Cooling System

- AC unit age and condition are documented.
- Refrigerant lines are insulated and in good condition.
- Condensate drain line is clear and draining properly.
- Thermostat operates correctly and controls system as expected.
- Adequate airflow is present at all supply vents.

System Performance & Maintenance

- System achieves proper temperature differential (heating and cooling).
- Airflow is balanced throughout the home with no dead spots.
- Air returns are unobstructed and adequate for system size.
- Flue pipe is properly connected and in good condition.
- Gas lines are secure with no leaks or corrosion.
- Maintenance records are available and show regular service.

Plumbing (22 Items)

Supply Lines & Pipes

- Pipe material is documented (copper, PEX, or galvanized).
- Pipes are free from rust, corrosion, or mineral buildup.
- Water pressure is adequate (40-60 psi is ideal).
- Drain pipes are clear and draining properly.

Fixtures

- All sinks are free from leaks underneath.
- All toilets flush properly and do not run continuously.
- All showers and tubs drain quickly with no standing water.
- Water heater age is documented and within expected lifespan.

Water Heater

- Temperature/pressure relief valve is present and functional.
- Water heater venting is properly installed and unobstructed.

- [] Expansion tank is present and in good condition (where required).

Main Systems

- [] Main water shutoff valve is located and operates properly.
- [] Sewer line condition is known or has been scoped.
- [] Sump pump is present (where needed), tested, and functional.
- [] Well system is functional with adequate flow (if applicable).
- [] Septic system is documented and in good condition (if applicable).

Valves & Additional

- [] Individual fixture shutoff valves operate properly.
- [] No cross-connections exist between potable and non-potable water.
- [] Backflow preventer is present and functional (where required).
- [] Visible gas lines are secure and free from corrosion.
- [] No signs of past frozen pipe damage or repairs.
- [] Water quality is acceptable (consider testing if concerns exist).

Windows and Doors (12 Items)

Window Inspection

- [] All windows open, close, and lock smoothly.
- [] Window locks engage and hold securely.
- [] Window glass is clear with no fogging (seals are intact).
- [] Window frames are free from wood rot or water damage.
- [] Window screens are present and in good condition.
- [] Caulking around windows is intact and not cracked or missing.

Door Inspection

- [] All doors open, close, and latch properly.
- [] Weatherstripping is present and provides a good seal.
- [] Deadbolts are present on exterior doors and function correctly.
- [] Door glass is free from cracks or damage.
- [] Storm doors are in good condition (where present).
- [] Door sills and thresholds are intact with no rot or damage.

Interior: Walls, Ceilings, Floors (19 Items)

Walls and Ceilings

- Walls are free from significant cracks.
- Ceilings are free from water stains or discoloration.
- Paint is in good condition with no peeling or bubbling.
- Interior is free from visible mold or mildew.

Flooring

- Flooring is in good overall condition.
- Floors are free from excessive squeaking or soft spots.
- Carpet is in acceptable condition with no major wear patterns.
- Tiles are secure with no loose, cracked, or missing pieces.
- Hardwood floors are free from significant gaps or buckling.

Basement & Attic

- Basement is dry with no signs of moisture or water intrusion.
- Attic insulation is adequate for the climate.
- Attic ventilation is sufficient to prevent moisture buildup.

Safety Features

- Smoke detectors are present and functional on every level.
- Carbon monoxide detectors are present near sleeping areas.
- Fireplace and chimney are in safe, working condition.
- Stairs are solid with secure handrails that meet code.
- Attic access is present and functional.
- Built-in appliances operate correctly.
- Garage door and safety sensors function properly.

Exterior (21 Items)

Siding and Structure

- Siding is in good condition with no major damage or deterioration.
- Exterior is free from wood rot.
- Exterior is free from pest damage or infestation signs.

- Trim and fascia are intact and properly secured.

Drainage and Grading

- Ground slopes away from house on all sides.
- Downspout extensions direct water at least 4-6 feet from foundation.
- Yard is free from areas of standing water after rain.
- Window wells are clean, clear, and draining properly.

Outdoor Features

- Deck or patio is structurally sound and in good condition.
- Exterior railings and stairs are secure and meet safety codes.
- Outdoor electrical outlets are present, functional, and GFCI-protected.
- Outdoor lighting is functional.
- Hose bibs operate properly and are free from leaks.

Driveway and Walkways

- Driveway is in good condition with no major cracks or heaving.
- Walkways are level and free from trip hazards.
- Concrete surfaces are free from significant cracking or damage.
- Retaining walls are stable and free from leaning or displacement.

Garage

- Garage door opens and closes smoothly.
- Garage door safety sensors are present and functioning.
- Garage floor is in good condition with no major cracks.
- Proper firewall separation exists between garage and living space.
- Garage electrical outlets are functional.

Inspection Results Summary

Major Issues Found (Tier 1 - Immediate Attention)

- _____
- _____
- _____

Important Repairs Needed (Tier 2 - Near-term)

- _____
- _____
- _____

Routine Maintenance (Tier 3 - Normal Wear)

- _____
- _____
- _____

Notes Section

Use this space to document specific findings, measurements, and observations during your inspection.

Resources:

- HUD Home Inspection Guide
- CFPB Home Buying Resources
- EPA Mold Information
- USFA Fire Safety Guidelines

This checklist is for informational purposes. Always hire a licensed professional inspector for a complete evaluation.