

KEY ITEMS IN A HOME INSPECTION

You can expect a home inspector to evaluate these nine areas or systems.

Structure

The home's "skeleton" should be able to stand up to weather, gravity, and the earth that surrounds it. Structural components include items such as the foundation and the framing.

Exterior

The inspector should look at sidewalks, driveways, steps, windows, doors, siding, trim, and surface drainage. They should also examine any attached porches, decks, and balconies, as well as detached garages.

Roofing

A good inspector will provide very important information about your roof, including its age, condition of roof draining systems, and the presence of buckled shingles or loose gutters and downspouts. The inspector should also inform you of the condition of any skylights and chimneys as well as the potential for pooling water.

Plumbing

The inspector should thoroughly examine the water supply and drainage systems, water heating equipment, and fuel storage systems. Drainage pumps and sump pumps also fall under this category. Poor water pressure, banging pipes, rust spots, or corrosion can indicate larger problems.

Electrical

The inspector should inform you of the condition of service entrance wires, service panels, breakers and fuses, and disconnects. Also, during the inspection, take note of the number of outlets in each room.

Heating and air conditioning

The home's vents, flues, and chimneys should be inspected, as well as all the central air and through-wall cooling equipment. The inspector should be able to tell you the water heater's age, its energy rating, and whether the size is adequate for the house.

Interiors

Your inspector should take a close look at walls, ceilings and floors; steps, stairways, and railings; countertops and cabinets; and attached garage systems. These areas can reveal leaks, insect damage, rot, construction defects, and more.

Ventilation/insulation

Inspectors should check for adequate insulation and ventilation in the attic and in unfinished areas such as crawl spaces. Insulation should be appropriate for the climate. Without proper ventilation, excess moisture can lead to mold and water damage.

Fireplaces

They're charming, but fireplaces create risk. Inspectors should examine the vent, flue, and chimney stack, as well as installed fuel-burning appliances. In an older home, the inspector should look for the buildup of soot in the flue, known as creosote, which can catch fire.