

You finally found a buyer and agreed on a price. The dream of selling your home is quickly becoming a reality. At this point, the negotiation of finer details commences, including a home inspection by the buyer. Given the importance of a home purchase, most buyers will ask a professional to walk through the home to look for potential issues before they sign on the dotted line.

Don't get caught off guard by unexpected costs. Follow this home inspection checklist to ensure that you ace this step of the selling process.

1. Complete Your Own Walk-Through

Take note of not just the sights, but also the smells and sounds that could potentially raise questions. Understand that any item that appears to be an issue will be further investigated by an inspector. For example, a loud heater or a musty smell can warrant additional examination just as easily as a wet spot on the ceiling. During the walk-through, you may also want to check smoke and carbon monoxide detectors to ensure they're working properly.

2. Perform Minor Repairs

Prior to the home inspection, complete minor repairs that you're capable of doing yourself. Patch nail holes in the wall, replace cracked floor tiles, test all light fixtures and replace any dead light bulbs.

3. Provide Access to the Entire House

Home inspectors will want to look through your entire home, including the attic, garage, electrical panel, and backyard. Make sure that they're able to get where they need to go. Remove any locks on the electrical panel, outbuildings, or gates. Try to make as much floor space available as possible in the garage. Make sure pets are properly secured and don't present a threat to the inspector (locking them in a room will prohibit the inspection of that room and may raise questions/concerns). Generally, a pet carrier/kennel is best. Try to remove any furniture which blocks access to windows. Make sure all attic access points are accessible. It would be prudent to trim overgrown landscaping in order to provide visual access to your home's foundation.

4. Check Major Appliances

Run all of your major appliances, such as the dishwasher, including the ones you don't use frequently. Make sure everything works as it should through the entire cycle, and if you decide to repair or replace anything, do so before the home inspection.

5. Gather Receipts and Warranties

Another important item on your home inspection checklist is to gather all necessary paperwork. Assemble a folder of warranty and maintenance information. The inspector may want to know when you last had the chimney cleaned or had the HVAC system serviced. Include receipts you've filed away to prove the age of fixtures and appliances.

6. Investigate Toilets and Plumbing

Make sure to check out your plumbing system before your inspection. Many times, running toilets may simply be the result of a bad seal. This small repair can be corrected by purchasing a new flapper prior to the inspector's visit.

7. Check for Mold and Mildew and Re-caulk Bathrooms

Mold is a big concern for homebuyers. Even the minor appearance of mold will need to be fixed prior to selling your home. Make sure bathrooms are caulked, and then check for signs of mold and mildew in damp areas of the home, such as bathrooms.

8. Change Air-Conditioning and Heater Filters

A clogged HVAC filter can significantly alter your heater or air-conditioner's performance. Ensure that you change the filters before the inspector tests your system.

9. Turn on All Utilities

If you're not living at the home you're selling, make sure the water, gas (if applicable), and power are turned on. The home inspector will want to test the electrical outlets, the plumbing and the HVAC system. Without utilities, the inspection will most likely be delayed or rescheduled.

Once the home inspection is completed, review the report. According to the American Society of Home Inspectors (ASHI), your home will not "pass" or "fail" an inspection. Rather, the inspector will describe the overall condition of the house and make repair recommendations. As a seller, you have several options, including making the repairs or offering the buyers a credit. If you disagree with any findings, you may need to hire your own professional for a second inspection.