



<http://www.hgtv.com/home-improvement/choose-your-real-estate-inspector-carefully/index.html>

Choose Your Real Estate Inspector Carefully

Tips for choosing a real estate inspector.

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Scripps Howard News Service

Q: I'm getting ready to move again and I want to know what I should be expecting from a home inspector. Should my realtor hire the inspector or should I?

A: Your realtor may set up the appointment, but he cannot choose the inspector. Your client-to-business relationship with the home inspector leaves the realtor and all others out.

In most cases, you will be asked to sign an agreement with the home inspector, and this agreement should outline the scope of his work. The report that you will get from him is for your eyes only and can be given to the realtor or the home's seller only with your permission. A real estate company often will have a list of home inspectors from which you may choose. This does not mean that you cannot find someone on your own.

If you choose an inspection company based on price alone, you might be disappointed in the near future. It pays to do research, because home inspectors have differing levels of expertise, and a part-time or less-experienced home inspector can charge much less than a full-time professional.

What should you expect from a professional home inspector? Experience, professionalism and ethics. You should expect that the inspector would walk on the roof to get a better look at the covering, and that he should enter the darkest recess of the crawl space and attic. The furnace and electrical panel covers should be removed to inspect inside.

All accessible outlets and switches should be checked; windows and doors should be opened and closed; insides of closets and the undersides of stairs should be examined; walls, ceilings and floors should be checked for defects; plumbing fixtures need to be operated for long periods of time to ensure proper drainage and ample water flow; toilets need to be flushed and the bowls checked for proper support; and chimneys and flues must be inspected to make sure they are in proper working condition and have been properly installed.

The inspector should never assume that just because an appliance or fixture was installed by a licensed professional that everything is OK.

The exterior of the home should be checked for signs of weather damage, decay and settlement. For the untrained eye, it is easy to pass up a settlement problem that may end up costing tens of thousands of dollars to repair.

The inspector needs to be familiar with the soil and flooding problems in the area where you are buying.

Inspectors who report on small defects, such as broken light fixtures or small cracks in the concrete, are only giving you fluff to fill up a report and make it look as if they are thorough.

If an inspector takes only 45 minutes to inspect the home, you need to hire another inspector. If the inspector takes three to four hours to inspect an average-sized home, you need to hire another inspector.

The national average for an inspection of an average-size, 2,000-square-foot home is two to three hours. If your inspector has to explain that it took longer because of all the problems he found, look for another home.

There are two major organizations that certify and train home inspectors: The National Association of Home Inspectors (NAHI), found online at www.nahi.org, and the American Society of Home Inspectors (ASHI), found at www.ashi.org online.

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