

Home Inspections: Top 10 Problems



A good inspection does not make a home “pass” or “fail.” It helps you understand the condition, the risk and what deserves a closer look before you move forward.

1 Know the scope. A standard inspection is mainly visual and non-invasive. Hidden conditions, inaccessible areas and specialized testing may be outside the inspection. Ask what was not inspected and why.

01 Water & drainage

WATCH FOR

Stains, damp smells, peeling paint, efflorescence, pooling near the foundation or a sump pump working hard.

ASK

Where is water entering, and what must be corrected first?

02 Roofing & flashings

WATCH FOR

Missing or curled shingles, damaged membranes, worn sealant, blocked gutters, soft decking or signs of old leaks.

ASK

What is the estimated remaining life, and should a roofer review it?

03 Foundation & structure

WATCH FOR

Wide or changing cracks, uneven floors, sticking doors, bowed walls or movement around beams and posts.

ASK

Does this look cosmetic, or is a structural assessment needed?

04 Electrical system

WATCH FOR

Warm or scorched outlets, exposed wiring, missing covers, frequent breaker trips, outdated components or unsafe DIY work.

ASK

Are there safety concerns or upgrades for an electrician to price?

05 Plumbing & leaks

WATCH FOR

Low pressure, slow drains, active drips, corrosion, water stains, loose fixtures or aging supply and drain materials.

ASK

Is anything leaking now, and what should a plumber scope or repair?

Look past finishes. Focus on systems, moisture and safety.

06 Heating, cooling & hot water

WATCH FOR

Poor airflow, unusual noise, rust, leaks, uneven temperatures, missing service history or equipment near end of life.

ASK

Does each system operate, and what service or replacement may be coming?

07 Attic, insulation & ventilation

WATCH FOR

Wet insulation, blocked vents, condensation, dark staining, bathroom fans venting into the attic or thin insulation.

ASK

Is moisture present, and is airflow or insulation improvement recommended?

08 Windows, doors & exterior

WATCH FOR

Failed seals, drafts, soft trim, cracked caulking, damaged siding, poor grading or deck and guardrail movement.

ASK

Where can water or air enter, and which repairs are urgent?

09 Pests, rot & organic growth

WATCH FOR

Wood damage, droppings, nesting, insect activity, musty areas, soft framing or visible suspect growth.

ASK

Should a pest, restoration or environmental specialist investigate further?

10 Safety & environmental concerns

WATCH FOR

Missing alarms, loose railings, unsafe stairs, garage separation gaps, radon risk or materials that may need testing.

ASK

What requires immediate action, and what separate testing is outside this inspection?

Before you leave the inspection

- ☐ Ask the inspector to show you the main water shut-off, electrical panel and heating equipment.
- ☐ Confirm which areas, systems or appliances were not inspected or tested.
- ☐ Take notes on immediate safety concerns, active water entry and likely near-term replacements.

Turn the report into a decision

- Separate urgent safety or water issues from normal maintenance.
- Get specialist opinions and written estimates where the inspector recommends them.
- Review the findings with your real estate professional before the inspection condition deadline.
- Decide whether to proceed, renegotiate where appropriate, or walk away under your contract terms.

General information only. Every property, inspection scope and contract is different. Rely on the written inspection report and advice from qualified inspectors, specialists, your real estate professional and legal adviser as appropriate.