



Home Inspections: What To Expect When They Inspect

Whether you are buying or selling, here's how you should prepare for inspection day

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The home inspection is one of the final, crucial gates to pass in any home buying or selling journey. An inspection sheet with every box checked may be the last document you sign before the contract, but one with glaring omissions or marked up with the inspector's concerned scribbles could bring the entire process to an indefinite halt. That's why it's essential that both the buyer and the seller arrive prepared on inspection day.

ESTATENVY spoke with Dan Cullen, the founder and owner of Domicile Consulting in Chicago, and Leneiva Head, the principal broker and owner of Welcome Home Realty in Nashville, to learn what steps buyers and sellers should take to make sure their home

inspection goes off without a hitch.

How should a seller prepare their home for an inspection?

Cullen: There are a number of simple things that every seller should do, like cleaning gutters, decluttering and cleaning HVAC systems. But to really get a leg up and make sure that their house is in perfect shape for the inspection, sellers should do an inspection before even listing their homes. Most inspections done after the home is listed are performed pursuant to an accepted offer to purchase, so you don't want any surprises at that point. Having a pre-listing inspection gives owners a chance to get in front of any potential issues.

Head: If the owner has been living in the home and they've done any work to prepare it for sale, they should have some idea of any pressing issues, but it's still important to go through the house and test everything. Test every utility, test the air—some buyers will have their inspectors test for radon—go everywhere the inspector will go, that includes crawl spaces, attics and garages. Anytime you see moisture, mold or deterioration, those are red flags.

Once you are confident in the integrity of the home, the important thing is just to keep everything accessible on inspection day. The inspector won't move furniture, so you need to make sure that all utilities and every space in the house are easily accessible.

What is the buyer's role during the inspection?

Cullen: I always prefer a buyer be present during the inspection. Some of my favorite, most fulfilling inspection experiences have been when I've had educated and engaged buyers asking questions throughout the process and even challenging my observations. I've had walkthroughs with engineers, architects and other building professionals, and those are always fun and educational conversations.

If the buyer is out of town or otherwise unavailable, I always take as many photos as possible and collect observations on the general maintenance of the home so that we can have that conversation later. In either case, my goal is to provide clients answers to the following question: "how do I make sure this home is safe, efficient, comfortable and durable."

Head: Technically, the only thing required of the buyer is that they sign the inspection form at the end, otherwise they don't even necessarily have to be at the inspection, but I always recommend they go. After the inspection, you'll want a chance to walk through with the inspector and take a look at anything they may have concerns about, that way you can see for yourself whether or not a particular issue is something you can take care of. I also recommend my clients bring a tape measure and a list of any design ideas they have. That way, while the inspector is going through the house, the buyer has an opportunity to take measurements and start planning their furniture and design ideas so they don't have to take another trip out later.

What are some of the most common problems identified during home inspections?

Cullen: I could write a book on the subject, but a short list of some of the more common

defects include overhead garage-door safety sensors that are significantly higher than the six-inch maximum above the slab, loose toilets that pose a risk for leaking, poorly installed ceramic floor tiles, loose electrical receptacle, reversed or ungrounded wires, missing GFCI shock protective receptacles, a whole laundry list of shingle and roof defects, leaking masonry walls, improperly ventilated or insulated attic spaces, and on and on and on.

Head: The big one is leaks, especially under the home. People can live in a house for a long time and have no idea that their plumbing is leaking into the crawl space under the house. Other common issues are shingles missing from the roof, cracking vent stacks, leaky attics, loose toilets and plumbing leaks.