

Ask the

INSPECTOR...

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Preparing the house for inspection

Question: The potential purchasers of my home are having a home inspection performed. What do I need to do to prepare my house for the inspection?

A home inspection is a visible, non-intrusive review of all accessible areas and major systems of the home as they appear at the time of the inspection. As part of a home inspection, the inspector is not permitted to put holes in walls, ceilings, floors, etc., and does not typically move all of the furniture, boxes, clothing, etc. in the home to inspect these areas. Significant amounts of personal storage, or 'clutter' limits the inspector's review of the home. The inspector cannot report on what he or she cannot see and therefore has to report these limitations to the potential purchasers. Having some limitations is an inherent part of the home inspection process, however if there are too many limitations, the prospective purchasers may feel uncomfortable and therefore less confident about the home they are considering purchasing. To avoid this potential problem, it is recommended that the home be prepared so that the house is tidy and free of unnecessary storage during the home inspection.

Areas that will need to be fully accessible for the inspection are the attic, the major systems, and the basement walls and floor. The inspector will have to enter the attic space to inspect insulation levels, ventilation, signs of leaking, etc. If the attic hatch is in a closet, storage or shelving should ideally be cleared so that convenient access to the attic will be available. A

home inspector will have a ladder to access the attic, therefore provision of a ladder by the home owner is not required. Also be aware that bits of insulation, dust, etc. may fall out of the attic when the hatch is opened. Most home inspectors will place a drop sheet under the attic hatch and clean up any fallen insulation subsequent to the attic inspection.

The major systems in the home are an integral part of the inspection and should also be made readily accessible. For example, the area around the furnace and water heater should be cleared to provide access for inspection, as should the areas below the sinks. If the electrical panel or main water shut off valve has been concealed, be sure to leave a note indicating their exact location. The electrical panel cover will be removed by the inspector to check the wiring conditions, so there should be adequate space around the panel to do so. The exterior basement walls are also an extremely important part of the inspection process. They are inspected for signs of past water leakage, signs of cracking, and to determine the general condition of the foundation. Any boxes or personal storage in the basement should ideally be moved away from the walls and temporarily relocated to provide convenient access for inspection.

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Other Considerations

A few other things to consider when your house is being inspected:

Animals: If you have pets that are free in the house and are not allowed outside, leave a note informing the inspector of this. The pet may best be left confined into one area of the home (eg. the laundry area) to prevent the pet from 'escaping' during the inspection. If there are large or unfriendly pets, they should be temporarily removed from the house and/or back yard during the home inspection.

Winterized Property: If the property has been 'winterized' and the home's water supply or electrical service has been disconnected, these services should be restored prior to the inspection. With the water supply disconnected, the plumbing cannot be inspected. Inspection of the electrical system is very limited without electrical service. In some cases the heating system cannot be properly inspected in a winterized home.

Documentation: If documentation is available for recent upgrades or repairs, including warranties, it should be provided

for the prospective purchaser to review. Other documentation that should be made available includes building permits and service records. This documentation will provide further information for the purchaser and help to answer some common questions that often arise during an inspection.

Obvious defects: If there are obvious defects or damage (i.e. staining, holes, patches, etc. in wall/ceilings) an explanation should be provided. When the cause is not evident, the inspector and purchaser can only speculate, potentially leaving the purchaser in doubt. If repairs have been performed to correct the condition, information related to the repairs should also be provided.

Inspection Time: Be aware that the inspection process typically takes 2.5 to 3.5 hours for an average sized home and that the prospective purchaser and their Real Estate Agent are usually present for the duration of the inspection.

As the seller, should I be present in my home during the home inspection?:

There are many pro and con arguments about having the homeowner present during the inspection. When the homeowner is present, any questions that may arise during the inspection can usually easily be answered. It is important, however, for the homeowner to keep in mind that the inspector has not been retained to point out all of the good aspects of the home and that they should not feel offended when the inspector points out a defect or potential defect. The potential purchaser

is sometimes intimidated by the homeowner and does not feel comfortable asking all of the questions he or she may have. The homeowner may also feel uncomfortable during the inspection because it is very thorough – as mentioned above, the process usually takes 2.5 to 3.5 hours. Ultimately, however, it is the homeowner's house and therefore their decision whether they are present during the home inspection process.

For further information please contact:

