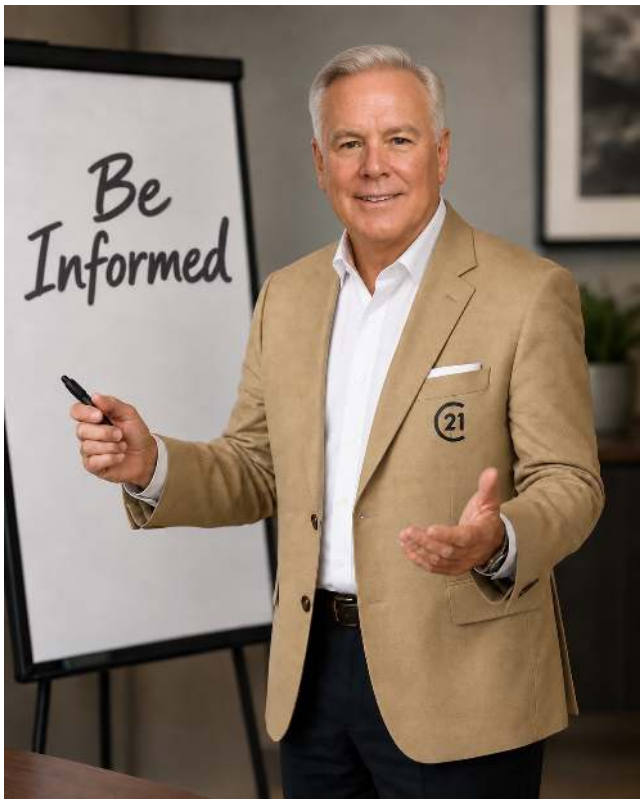
BUYERS

Home Inspections



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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®

CONSUMER GUIDE: HOME INSPECTIONS

Between signing and close, a homebuyer may choose to have a new home inspected to make sure it is in good condition and safe for a new owner. Here's what buyers and sellers should know:

What is a home inspection? A home inspection is an assessment of a home's condition in which an inspector identifies potential problems in a home's structure, exterior, roof, plumbing, electrical systems, heating and air conditioning, interiors, ventilation/insulation, and fireplaces. An inspection may also include tests for problems that can affect human health like mold, radon gas, lead paint, and asbestos.

Are home inspections required? No, but a buyer can choose to include an inspection as a contingency—a condition that must be met for the transaction to continue—in their purchase agreement. This is because inspections can help inform buyers and flag costly problems they may not notice until after move-in. However, some buyers may choose to waive home inspections as a tool to make their offers stand out in competitive markets. There are also options somewhere in between, such as only asking for a seller to make repairs for major issues found during an inspection.

Who performs the home inspection? Members of the American Society of Home Inspectors (ASHI) or the International Association of Certified Home Inspectors (InterNACHI) are trained and certified to perform the inspection. The cost will vary depending on a property's size and how many additional tests are needed. An agent who is a REALTOR® can help you find a trustworthy inspector and determine the types of inspections to consider.

Who is responsible for inspection costs? Buyers are typically responsible for inspection costs. In some cases, sellers may choose to have an inspection before putting their home on the market to get more information about the condition upfront, giving them more control over repairs and preparing them for discussions with buyers. Sellers may offer to cover the cost of home repairs as a concession when marketing their property, or buyers could request the seller pay for inspections as part of the purchase agreement.

Can a buyer attend an inspection? Yes, it can be very beneficial for a buyer to join the inspector as they do their work. Inspectors can show buyers where plumbing or electrical details are located and help them understand the scope of any potential or identified problem.

How long does the home inspection take? The length of a home inspection will depend on factors like a home's size and condition, but will typically last at least two to three hours.

What are some of the common issues found during home inspections? Inspection reports educate buyers on the current conditions of systems and structures in a home, including recommendations on how to maintain a home and updates for future consideration. Inspectors may flag items that should be monitored or issues that have the potential to cause larger problems after move-in. These issues vary widely, but some common problems inspectors look for are structural or foundation problems, improper drainage that could damage the structure over time, faulty wiring that could disqualify a home from being insured, HVAC system issues, and safety issues such as tripping hazards or too few smoke alarms or carbon monoxide detectors.

What does it mean if a home is listed "as-is"? A home being sold "as-is" or "in its present condition" means that the seller is not making any guarantees about the home's condition and has decided they will not make repairs even if the buyer decides to get an inspection. Buying a home as-is comes with some risk, so talk to your agent about options that work best for you. Sellers should also talk to their agents about the pros and cons of listing their property as-is.

Practices may vary based on state and local law. Consult your real estate professional and/or an attorney for details about state law where you are purchasing a home. Please visit facts.realtor for more information and resources.

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