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The potential purchasers of my home are having a home inspection performed. What do I need to do to prepare my house for an 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 furniture, boxes, clothing etc. Significant amounts of personal storage or “clutter” limits the inspector’s review of the home. The inspector cannot report on what they 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 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 in the home, the basement, walls, and floors. 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, the provision of a ladder by the homeowner 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 the inspection. The areas below the sinks should also be cleared. 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 be moved away from the walls and temporarily relocated, to provide convenient access for inspection.

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, please leave a note informing the inspector of this. The pets may best be left confined to one area of the home (i.e. the laundry area) in order to prevent their “escape” during the inspection. If there are large or unfriendly pets, they should be temporarily removed from the house and/or backyard 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, which includes warranties; it should be provided to the prospective purchaser for review. Other documentation that should be made available includes building permits and service records. This documentation will provide further information to the purchaser, and will help to answer some common questions that often arise during an inspection.

Obvious Defects. If there are obvious defects or damages (i.e. staining, holes, patches, etc. in walls or ceilings), an example 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 be easily 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. 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 that he or she may have. The homeowner may also feel uncomfortable during the inspection because it is very thorough, as mentioned above. Ultimately, however, it is the homeowner’s decision whether they are present during the home inspection process.

To speak with a certified and trained AmeriSpec home inspector, contact us today.

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