



Home Buying Inspection Checklists

A practical guide for spotting red flags before you buy, budget, or begin renovations.

Inside you'll find two focused checklists: one for new construction and one for fixer-upper or older homes.

Use this guide before inspection day: Bring it with you, take notes during the walkthrough, and use it to ask better questions before closing. A professional inspection is not just a box to check — it is a smart way to protect your budget and your peace of mind.

Created for home buyers by Prosper Craft Homes

Checklist 1: New Construction Home Inspection

Even brand-new homes deserve a careful inspection. New construction can still have installation errors, missed punch-list items, drainage concerns, or incomplete details that are easier to address before closing.

Recommended timing: schedule a pre-drywall inspection, a final walkthrough inspection, and an 11-month warranty inspection before the builder warranty period ends.

Documentation & Warranty

- [] Confirm final permit approvals, signed-off inspection cards, and certificate of occupancy or temporary certificate of occupancy.
- [] Review builder warranty, manufacturer warranties, appliance manuals, and transfer requirements before closing.
- [] Ask for subcontractor or vendor contact list for warranty service, if available.
- [] Confirm any promised punch-list items are written into the closing documents with deadlines.

Exterior, Site & Drainage

- [] Check final grading: soil should slope away from the foundation and avoid pooling near the house.
- [] Inspect gutters, downspouts, splash blocks, window wells, and drainage extensions.
- [] Look for cracked concrete, uneven flatwork, settlement, missing caulking, or exposed foundation penetrations.
- [] Inspect siding, stucco, stone, flashing, roof edges, vents, and exterior paint touch-ups.

Roof, Attic & Insulation

- [] Verify roof installation quality, flashing around penetrations, and attic ventilation.
- [] Look for signs of moisture, gaps in insulation, blocked soffit vents, or loose ductwork in the attic.
- [] Confirm bathroom and kitchen fans vent outdoors, not into attic or wall cavities.

Interior Finish & Function

- [] Open and close every door, window, cabinet, drawer, and closet; note sticking, gaps, or damage.
- [] Inspect drywall seams, paint, trim, flooring transitions, tile grout, caulking, and countertop seams.
- [] Test stair railings, guardrails, handrails, safety glass markings, smoke detectors, and carbon monoxide detectors.

Mechanical, Electrical & Plumbing

- [] Test outlets, GFCI/AFCI protection, switches, lighting, exterior outlets, and garage circuits.
- [] Run hot and cold water at every fixture; check pressure, drainage, leaks, and hot water delivery.
- [] Review HVAC operation, thermostat programming, filter access, combustion air, and clearances around equipment.
- [] Confirm sewer line, sump pump, irrigation, radon system, and gas lines if applicable.

Checklist 2: Fixer-Upper / Older Home Inspection

A fixer-upper can be a smart investment, but only when the inspection helps you understand what is cosmetic, what is structural, and what could become a major hidden cost.

Key reminder: Always conduct a thorough professional inspection on older properties to uncover hidden structural issues, aging electrical and plumbing, foundation concerns, roof and drainage problems, or other risks that could turn a budget-friendly project into an expensive liability.

Structure & Foundation

- [] Always conduct a thorough professional inspection on older properties to uncover hidden structural issues, such as aging electrical, plumbing, or foundation concerns, that could turn a budget-friendly project into an expensive liability.
- [] Look for foundation cracks, sloping floors, sticking doors/windows, water intrusion, crawlspace moisture, and signs of settlement.
- [] Ask the inspector whether a structural engineer should evaluate framing, beams, additions, or visible movement.
- [] Check basements and crawlspaces for rot, pests, mold-like growth, poor ventilation, and unpermitted repairs.

Electrical & Safety

- [] Identify outdated wiring, undersized panels, aluminum wiring, knob-and-tube wiring, double taps, unsafe splices, and missing grounds.
- [] Confirm GFCI/AFCI protection where required and review whether the panel has capacity for remodel plans.
- [] Inspect smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, egress windows, stair safety, railing heights, and garage fire separation.

Plumbing, Sewer & Water

- [] Check visible supply lines, shutoffs, drains, venting, water pressure, water heater age, and signs of leaks.
- [] Request a sewer scope, especially for older homes with mature trees, clay pipe, cast iron, or unknown service lines.
- [] Ask about lead, galvanized, polybutylene, or outdated plumbing materials and replacement costs.

Roof, Envelope & Moisture

- [] Assess roof age, layers, flashing, gutters, attic ventilation, insulation, and evidence of past leaks.
- [] Inspect windows, doors, siding, stucco, masonry, caulking, and grading for water entry risks.
- [] Look for condensation, staining, musty odors, soft subfloors, and hidden moisture near bathrooms, kitchens, and laundry areas.

Remodel Scope & Budget Risk

- [] Compare inspection findings to your renovation budget and add contingency for hidden conditions.
- [] Confirm whether prior remodels, additions, basements, decks, or ADUs were permitted and inspected.
- [] Flag asbestos, lead-based paint, radon, mold, pest damage, and old insulation for specialist testing when applicable.
- [] Prioritize health, safety, structure, water management, and mechanical systems before cosmetic upgrades.

Inspection Day Questions to Ask

Use these questions to turn the inspection report into a realistic plan, especially if you are comparing a newer home with an older property or renovation opportunity.

- [] What are the top three safety or structural concerns that should be addressed first?
- [] Which findings are routine maintenance, and which could become expensive if ignored?
- [] Do any items require a specialist, such as a structural engineer, electrician, plumber, roofer, sewer scope provider, or environmental tester?
- [] Are there signs of unpermitted work, additions, or repairs that should be researched before closing?
- [] What should be repaired before closing, negotiated as a credit, or budgeted for after purchase?
- [] For renovation plans: are there systems or layout issues that could affect the remodel scope, timeline, or cost?

Category	New Construction Focus	Fixer-Upper Focus
Main Risk	Incomplete work, installation quality, drainage, punch list, and warranty documentation.	Hidden structural, mechanical, moisture, safety, and code concerns.
Best Extra Inspection	Pre-drywall and 11-month warranty inspection.	Sewer scope, structural evaluation, roof review, and radon/lead/asbestos testing as applicable.
Budget Lens	Make sure promised finishes and corrections are completed before closing.	Build in contingency for unknowns and prioritize health, safety, structure, and water management.

Final Notes / Decision Points

This checklist is educational and does not replace a licensed professional inspection, specialty testing, engineering review, or local code/permitting guidance.