

Home Buyer Inspection Checklist

Please note that this is a simplified checklist of items and tips and is not proposed to take the place of a professional pre-purchase building inspection.

If you require an independent pre- purchase building or pest inspection please obtain service in your suburb of purchase by visiting Inspection Angel – “Australia’s #1 Building and Pest Inspection Directory” at <http://www.inspectionangel.com.au>

Property Address: _____

Doors

- ☐ Does each door panel open and shut without obstruction of the door frame?
- ☐ Is the door panel a true rectangle shape or has it been planed to fit the frame?

Tip: Check for uneven gaps at the top and bottom of the door panel.

Tip: Check that the striker plate has not been adjusted within the door jamb.

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Windows

- ☐ Attempt to open and close each window.
- ☐ Look for condensation and damp damage.
- ☐ Are there any cracked panels of glass?

Tip: Often timber frames are patched and painted with fibreglass filler. Look for irregularities in the paint surface. Fibreglass filler and putties are only a short term repair and they usually hide much worse damage.

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Wall and Ceiling Surfaces

- ☐ From the doorway openings look at the line of the wall. Is there any buckling?
- ☐ Solid brick walls may have damp issues; are there any mould stains or irregular areas of fresh paint?
- ☐ Check the level of the ceilings are even and consistent, or is there a lot of patch repair and damp stains?
- ☐ If it is a solid brick wall check for damp and mould markings along the floor level.

Tip: Shine a torch from an angle at the wall and ceiling surfaces; this can highlight patch repairs and thin paint cover.

Tip: Sagging in the ceiling can indicate a past roof leak and should indicate close attention needs to be paid to the condition of the roof and its performance.

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Kitchen

- ☐ Look for damp stains at the junction of the splash back and kitchen sink.
- ☐ Check under the kitchen sink; common leaks occur in the waste pipes.
- ☐ Take a hold of the plumbing from under the sink/bench top and give a firm but gentle shake to ensure the fittings are secure.

Tip: Many cooktop exhaust systems are installed without an external vent. Open the cupboards above the exhaust system and look for signs of excess cooking fat. Is the cupboard shallow or has there been no feasible space for a flue to be provided? Check the roof line above the kitchen to see if an external flue exists above the location of the kitchen.

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Bathroom 1 (Ensuite)

- ☐ Turn taps on and off.
- ☐ How long for hot water to start running?
- ☐ Check under sink for leaks.
- ☐ Check for any grout or sealant missing from the edge of shower bases, bath tubs and tiles.
- ☐ Check for installation of an exhaust fan.
- ☐ Check that shower screens open and close without damage.

Tip: Often tap handle leaks occur from behind the tiled surface. If there is good sub-floor access and someone is with you, ask them to turn the taps on and off as you look from under the house for any drips.

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Bathroom 2 (Main)

- ☐ Turn taps on and off.
- ☐ How long for hot water to start running?
- ☐ Check under sink for leaks.
- ☐ Check for any grout or sealant missing from the edge of shower bases, bath tubs and tiles.
- ☐ Check for installation of an exhaust fan.
- ☐ Check that shower screens open and close without damage.

Tip: As above for Bathroom 1.

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Laundry

- ☐ Usually the simplest of service areas to inspect. Check that the trough is secured in place, check for rust and ensure that there is a seal between the trough and the wall.
- ☐ The wall behind the trough should be tiled.
- ☐ For apartments pay particular attention to the location of an overflow drain pipe in the floor surface.

Tip: Make sure you open the door of the trough cupboard; some troughs are painted up for sale but the internal casing may be significantly affected by rust.

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Toilet 1 (Location _____)

- ☐ Flush toilet while viewing the area behind the seat; look for leaks at the cistern and waste pipes. Aged rubber seals should be replaced.
- ☐ Check for excessive use of silicon sealant; this is a sign of leakage and poor quality repair.
- ☐ Listen for water that is still running after the cistern has been filled – it should come to a stop, not continue forever.

Tip: Gently nudge your knee against the toilet pan, if it moves the mounting screws are loose and you will be prone to leakage from waste and cistern pipe seals. Secure and service seals.

Tip: The flush valve within a cistern requires servicing to ensure no water wastage occurs.

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Toilet 2 (Location _____)

- ☐ Flush toilet while viewing the area behind the seat; look for leaks at the cistern and waste pipes. Aged rubber seals should be replaced.
- ☐ Check for excessive use of silicon sealant; this is a sign of leakage and poor quality repair.
- ☐ Listen for water that is still running after the cistern has been filled – it should come to a stop, not continue forever.

Tip: As above for Toilet 1.

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Plumbing Service

- ☐ Check the outgoing pipe at the water meter to determine the material used for the main supply line.
- ☐ Check waste pipes for cracks and broken seals.

Tip: Galvanised pipes are a cause of poor quality water and poor pressure; they should be updated for copper or PVC. If the pipes are dirty scratch through the surface; a silver colour indicates galvanized pipe and a copper colour indicates copper pipe.

Tip: It is only a licensed plumber whom can provide a truly professional accurate indication of the plumbing service. They will use specialised testing equipment and pressure tests and pinpoint the exact location of leaks or failure in the waste plumbing. A typical pre-purchase building inspection will only provide a general overview.

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Electrical Service

- ☐ Open the fuse box and observe whether it contains a fuse wire system or a modern circuit breaker system.
- ☐ Check for the physical presence of an Earth Leakage Safety Switch.
- ☐ If there is an opportunity to view the roof space or under house area, look for the use of wiring cable that is of a white colour; this is usually the modern standard.
- ☐ Black coloured cable and the use of timber cable trays cause certain concern for the need of a wiring update.

Tip: Only a licensed electrician can provide an accurate test and assessment of a home wiring service and safety. A building inspector's comments will only relate to a visual observation as to whether there have been wiring and or fuse box updates.

Tip: Make installation and testing of a Safety Switch a number one priority upon purchasing a new home.

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Roof Frame

- ☐ Seek to determine the type of timber used. If possible access the roof space.
- ☐ Hardwood timber indicates that you may endure the sound of roof creaks and also cracks in ceiling plaster during the change of seasons.
- ☐ A Pine Timber is used in prefabricated trusses and is usually much more stable.
- ☐ View the roof from the street – does it appear uniform or are there wave like patterns in the surface.

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Tip: Pay close attention to areas around roof skylights and air conditioning services, poor quality trade services have been known to saw through critical roof timbers during installation.

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Roof Cover and Drainage

- ☐ Check that iron roofs are free of rust; pay close attention to the roof colour as it is not uncommon to find that owners have painted over rust damage.
- ☐ Look for faded colour on concrete tiles to indicate the need for new sealant.
- ☐ Look for cracked mortar pointing along the ridge, hip and valley tiles.
- ☐ Check for rust marks along valley iron, gutters and down pipes.
- ☐ Is there any rust or water marks on the timber and eave lining beneath the roof line? This indicates leakage.
- ☐ Check that downpipes are connected to a storm water pipe at ground level and not just left to discharge rain water at the base of the house.

Tip: Tiled roofs deteriorate with age also and concrete tiles in particular require new sealant after about 25 years. Otherwise, they can become porous and deteriorate at a rapid rate. The sealant then needs to be applied again every 7 – 10 years to ensure the material quality of the tile is preserved.

Tip: Terracotta roof tiles that are older than 50 years of age have a very unpredictable performance quality and professional servicing becomes very costly, the tiles become very brittle and cannot be walked on.

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External Wall Surface

- ☐ Check the lines in the timber weather boards; they may have sagging or bowed lines if the structure has moved.
- ☐ Check for damp rot adjacent to window openings, plumbing and at ground level.
- ☐ Cracks in brick work that are of a significant concern would normally be obvious as large cracks. Pay particular attention around door and window openings, this is where the first signs of movement usually occurs.
- ☐ Scrape the mortar joints within a brick wall with a screwdriver, if it is removed freely and has a dusty quality. The joints may need to be raked and pointed with new mortar.

Tip: Damp rot usually starts at the join in timber weatherboard, timber at the corners of a house are at highest risk of having damp rot damage.

Tip: Pay close attention to walls adjacent to large trees for concern of the root structure causing damage.

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Sub Floor Area

- ☐ Check the material quality of the stumps; probe the base of the stumps with a large screwdriver.
- ☐ Check the soil surface under the house for any water courses.
- ☐ If it is on a concrete slab check that garden bed levels are kept below the line of the internal floor level.
- ☐ There should be a fall in the surface of the ground adjacent to the building perimeter that directs surface water away from the house.

Tip: Concrete stumps are far superior in durability to timber stumps. Timber stumps that are older than 30 years almost certainly require replacement.

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Smoke Alarms (refer to AS3786)

- ☐ Check for working smoke alarms outside sleeping areas and on each additional level. Extra alarms will be required in those with separate sleeping areas.

Tip: If possible install a smoke alarm in every room.

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