

Buying Your Home - Home Inspections and Warranties

Do I need a home inspection?

Yes. Buying a home "as is" is a risky proposition. Major repairs on homes can amount to thousands of dollars. Plumbing, electrical and roof problems represent significant and complex systems that are expensive to fix.

How do I find a home inspector?

Your realty agent is one source. But keeping them independent from the agent may be a good idea. Inspectors are listed in the yellow pages. You can ask for referrals from friends. Ask for their credentials, such as contractor's license or engineering certificate. Also, check out their references.

How do I find a home inspector?

In order to find a home inspector, Dian Hymer, author of "Buying and Selling a Home A Complete Guide," Chronicle Books, San Francisco; 1994, advises looking for someone with demonstrable qualifications. "Ideally, the general inspector you select should be either an engineer, an architect, or a contractor. When possible, hire an inspector who belongs to one of the home inspection trade organizations."

The American Society of Home Inspectors (ASHI) has developed formal inspection guidelines and a professional code of ethics for its members. Membership to ASHI is not automatic; proven field experience and technical knowledge of structures and their various systems and appliances are a prerequisite. One can usually find an inspector by looking in the phone book or by inquiring at a real estate office or sometimes at an area Realtor association. Rates for the service vary greatly. Many inspectors charge about \$400, but costs go up with the scope of the inspection.

What constitutes a home inspection?

A home inspection is when a paid professional inspector -- often a contractor or an engineer -- inspects the home, searching for defects or other problems that might plague the owner later on. They usually represent the buyer and or paid by the buyer. The inspection usually takes place after a purchase contract between buyer and seller has been signed.