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Getting the Most Out of Your Home Inspection

A home inspection is a buyer's chance to get fully acquainted with their prospective home. It's a priceless opportunity to get answers and information to make informed decisions. So how exactly can buyers get the MOST out of that experience? Here are some tips about how:

Be There

The absolute number one way to get the most out of your inspection, is to be there and be an active participant. In addition to inspecting the home, the inspector will educate you about the house, encourage your questions, and show you the locations of major systems and components (i.e. water meter location and important shut off valves, etc.) This is an important opportunity for you to receive a wealth of information and a detailed orientation to the home.

Dress for Success

Remember to dress for the occasion. Attend your inspection in comfortable clothes and accompany your home inspector throughout the inspection. Closed-toed shoes and long pants are recommended. Dress appropriately for rain or cold as well. Expect a few cobwebs and dusty shoes and don't shy away from the opportunity to see basements or attics first-hand with your inspector. Whenever you safely can, tag along.

Make the Time

Expect your inspection to take some time, between 2 and 3 hours. Don't schedule the inspection when you have to rush to another appointment or when you are otherwise distracted.

Assure Accessibility

If the property is vacant or a foreclosure, etc. be sure to meet with your real estate agent and do whatever it takes to make sure all areas of the home will be accessible to your inspector and all utilities will be on.

Take Notes & Ask Questions

It's a great idea to take notes during your inspection. Prepare a loose leaf binder ahead of time with a blank sheet of paper for each system or area of the home. Write your questions down in the appropriate sections ahead of time so that they can be answered at the appropriate time during the inspection. This way, all your notes, questions and answers will stay organized.



Limit Extra Guests

There are many occasions when you may wish to bring others along on your inspection—for an extra set of eyes, or someone whom you trust to help you ask questions or understand the inspection information. But limit any guests that might distract you from the inspection or tempt you to discuss aesthetic topics that are better left for later.

Schedule A Babysitter

Speaking of "guests," if at all possible, leave your children with a sitter or arrange for another adult to come along to watch them so that you can give the inspection your full attention.

Leave the Pictures to the Inspector

It's not a great idea to bring camera/ video camera along to the inspection. Though this may sound counter-intuitive, when you are stuck behind a lens, your attention is not fully on the inspection. You can also become easily tempted to begin taking pictures of items for other purposes, like decorating or space planning. Leave the pictures to the inspector who will snap shots of various areas during the inspection.

Consider Optional Inspections or Testing

Getting the most out of your inspection may mean getting some additional inspections or tests performed that same day. Consider radon testing or pest inspections and get them done all at the same time.

Know the Questions Your Inspection Should Answer

- Is the house structurally sound, safe, and a healthy place to live?
- What is the age and current general condition of the roof?
- Do I know pertinent info about the attic and crawlspace? (Insulation coverage and thickness, or water penetration issues).
- Are the heating and cooling systems operating as designed?
- Are all plumbing fixtures working and free of leaks?
- Do I know the location of the main water shutoff?
- What is the location and condition of the electrical service and associated panels, including breaker status?
- Does the seller have maintenance records they are willing to release?
- Are the kitchen appliances performing as expected, including operating lights?
- Should I be concerned about environmental issues, i.e. asbestos, mold, radon, or termites?