

Five Key Areas To Pay Attention To When Buying A Home

Looking for a new home is exciting and overwhelming. There are so many details to pay attention to. Focus on these five important areas: electrical, foundation, plumbing, the attic, and landscaping. According to Don Walker, inspector and owner of Ace Home Inspections, these are the five areas in homes that he frequently reports problems with.

- **Electrical**

Most people assume that if they buy a newer house, they won't have electrical problems any time soon. "I inspected a brand new house - four years old but the electrical was all done incorrectly," says Walker. Through a complete home inspection, potential problems are detected early on.

- **Foundation**

Walker said he inspected a four-year-old home that was already showing signs of major damage that is expected to cost a lot of money in repairs. "It was a model home. What [the homeowners] did was plant trees for shade to make it look really nice, but they planted the wrong trees and they're going to crack the foundation and it's going to cut the property value down by \$50,000," says Walker.

Walker says in the case of that home, the trees were causing micro-fractures in the tile in various locations of the home. "As you walk through the house, 21 feet in and 30 feet deep, there's just too much root invasion and it's going to ruin their tile," explains Walker.

He says some tell-tale signs with this home were the minor cracks in the foundation that were causing a lifting and separation of the foundation. Also, the windows were not opening and closing properly, "which means the foundation is moving."

But not all cracks are an indication of a foundation problem. Walker said, "Most people don't understand that there are natural cracks in a house. That's why when we do an inspection report we have to look at it and say 'Okay, this is a typical crack and this one is an untypical crack.'"

- **Plumbing**

According to Walker, plumbing is another area that poses a big concern, yet often goes undetected. "Mold forms underneath sinks when people have a leak and they fix the pipe but they don't take care of the mold," says Walker. He said caulking the sink can help prevent mold. "That's my number one thing I always find -- bad sinks."

He says, "When you look at the sink, look behind it and most of the time you will discover a little crack. What happens is, when you wash dishes or you wash your hands in the bathroom or the kitchen, the water gets in that crack and seeps down. Once the water gets behind the cabinet it's in a perfect position to create mold." When it's dark and damp, it becomes a perfect breeding ground for molds.



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- **Attic**

Walker says, "You can tell everything about the house by the attic." When you fix other parts of the house, you can already mask the problem. Take for example a wall damaged by leaks. You can have it fixed and repaint it to make it look new. But Walker says the attic is sort of the eyes to the soul of the home. "In the attic you can tell where all the damage has been."

"If you're in a 20-year-old house and you see that the insulation is brand new, you know that there was a water leak because it had to be replaced," says Walker. He adds, "You can tell if the roof is good because you can look right at the wood."

- **Landscaping**

"There should not be moisture or plants next to your house," says Walker. He says there should be a 12 inch barrier between the landscape and the house. If not, the foundation might crack. If the landscape is too close to the home, when the plants are watered, the foundation and soil expand. When the water disappears, the foundation dries up and shrinks, which causes it to crack.

Acquiring the money to pay for a house is not the only preparation you need to buy a house. Learn what you can about the house and how to take care of it. It will save you a lot of money in the near future.



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