

Questions and Answers on Home Inspections

For most persons, purchasing a home is the largest investment they will ever make. It is no wonder then that many homebuyers employ professionals to inspect the structural and mechanical systems of the home and report to them on their condition. Sometimes sellers also employ Home Inspectors to alert them to problems with their homes which could arise later in the transaction. But normally Home Inspectors are employed by buyers. For this reason, this brochure is written from the viewpoint of the potential homebuyer.

This brochure is a joint publication of the North Carolina Home Inspector Licensure Board and the North Carolina Real Estate Commission designed to give consumers a better understanding of the home inspection process. What a home inspection is, who can perform an inspection and what to expect. If you have further questions regarding home inspections and Home Inspectors, you should contact the North Carolina Home Inspector Licensure Board, 322 Chapanoke Road, Suite 200, Raleigh, NC 27603, Phone 919/662-4480.

Questions

- [What is a home inspection?](#)
- [Can anyone perform a home inspection?](#)
- [Why should I have the home inspected?](#)
- [In my home purchase I have chosen to sign the standard Offer to Purchase and Contract* form which many real estate and legal professionals use. It states that I have the right to have the home inspected and the right to request that the seller repair identified problems with the home. Will the home inspection identify all of these problems?](#)
- [How do I request a home inspection, and who will pay for it?](#)
- [Should I be present when the home inspection is performed?](#)
- [Are all inspection reports the same? What should I do if I feel something has been missed on the inspection?](#)
- [If, following the home inspection, the seller repairs an item found in the home inspection, may I have the Home Inspector perform a "re-inspection"?](#)

Answers

What is a home inspection?

It is an evaluation of the visible and accessible systems and components of a home (plumbing system, roof, etc.) and is intended to give the client (usually a homebuyer) a better understanding of their condition. It is also important to know what a home inspection is not! It is not an appraisal of the property's value; nor should you expect it to address the cost of repairs. It does not guarantee that the home complies with local building codes (which are subject to periodic change) or protect you in the event an item inspected fails in the future. [Note: Warranties can be purchased to cover many items.] Nor should it be considered a "technically exhaustive" evaluation, but rather an evaluation of the property on the day it is inspected, taking into consideration normal wear and tear.

Can anyone perform a home inspection?

No. Only persons licensed by the North Carolina Home Inspector Licensure Board are permitted to perform home inspections for compensation. To qualify for licensure, they must satisfy certain education and experience requirements and pass a state licensing examination. Their inspections must be conducted in accordance with the Board's Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics.

Why should I have the home inspected?

Most homebuyers lack the knowledge, skill and emotional detachment needed to inspect homes themselves. By using the services of a licensed Home Inspector, they can gain a better understanding of the condition of the property, especially whether any items do not "function as intended" or "adversely affect the habitability of the dwelling" or "warrant further investigation" by a person who specializes in the item in question.

In my home purchase I have chosen to sign the standard Offer to Purchase and Contract* form which many real estate and legal professionals use. It states that I have the right to have the home inspected and the right to request that the seller repair identified problems with the home. Will the home inspection identify all of these problems?

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Yes and No. Home Inspectors typically evaluate structural components (floors, walls, roofs, chimneys, foundations, etc.), mechanical systems (plumbing, electrical, heating/air conditioning), installed appliances and other major components of the property. The Home Inspector Licensure Board's Standards of Practice do not require Home Inspectors to report on: wood-destroying insects, environmental contamination, pools and spas, detached structures and certain other items listed in the Offer to Purchase and Contract form. Always ask the Home Inspector if he covers all the things which are important to you. If not, it is your responsibility to arrange for an inspection of these items by the appropriate professionals. For a description of the services to be provided by the Home Inspector (and their cost), *you should read carefully the written contract which the Home Inspector must give you and which you must sign before the Home Inspection can be performed.*

How do I request a home inspection, and who will pay for it?

You can arrange for the home inspection or ask your real estate agent to assist you. Unless you otherwise agree, you will be responsible for payment of the home inspection and any subsequent inspections. If the inspection is to be performed after you have signed the purchase contract, be sure to schedule the inspection as soon as possible to allow adequate time for any repairs to be performed.

Should I be present when the home inspection is performed?

Whenever possible, you should be present. The inspector can review with you the results of the inspection and point out any problems found. Usually the inspection of the home can be completed in two to three hours (the time can vary depending upon the size and age of the dwelling). The Home Inspector must give you a written report of the home inspection within three business days after the inspection is performed (unless otherwise stated in your contract with the Home Inspector). The home inspection report is your property. The Home Inspector may only give it to you and may not share it with other persons without your permission.

Are all inspection reports the same?

No. While the Home Inspector Licensure Board has established a minimum requirement for report-writing, reports can vary greatly. They can range from a "checklist" of the systems and components to a full narrative evaluation or any combination of the two. Home Inspectors are required to give you a written "Summary" of their inspection identifying any system or component that does not function as intended, or adversely affects the habitability of the dwelling, or appears to warrant further investigation by a specialist. The summary does not necessarily include all items that have been found to be defective or deficient. Therefore, do not read only the summary. Carefully read and understand the entire home inspection report.

What should I do if I feel something has been missed on the inspection?

Before any repairs are made (except emergency repairs), call the inspector or inspection company to discuss the problem. Many times a "trip charge" can be saved by explaining the problem to the inspector who can answer the question over the telephone. This also gives the inspector a chance to promptly handle any problems that may have been overlooked in the inspection.

If, following the home inspection, the seller repairs an item found in the home inspection, may I have the Home Inspector perform a "re-inspection"?

Yes. Some repairs may not be as straightforward as they might seem. The inspector may be able to help you evaluate the repair, but you should be aware that the re-inspection is not a warranty of the repairs that have been made. Some Home Inspectors charge a fee for re-inspections.

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