



How to Prepare for a Home Inspection

There are a number of things that should be done to prepare for a home inspection. The buyer and/ or buyer's real estate agent should work with the seller and/or seller's real estate agent prior to the inspector's arrival to ensure that:

1. The utilities are turned on. Electric, water and gas utilities should be working so that your inspector can properly test and operate all the systems and components in the home. Water should be turned on at water meter, back flow preventer and main water shut-off valve at house. Some home inspectors may charge a fee to return to the home to inspect anything that they could not properly inspect or test the first time.
2. Water shut-off valves at sinks, tubs, toilets should all be on and fully open, water heater supply valve should be open and water heater should be plugged in, Ice maker should be in the on position. Shut-off valves should be in the on or open position below kitchen sink, laundry sinks, wet bar sinks, outdoor sinks. Shut-off valves should be on at every toilet. Shut-off valves should be on at washer in laundry room. Many inspectors will not and are not required to open or close shut-off valves. If inspectors find valves off at time of inspection, in many cases it is an indication that there may be a leak. Inspectors generally will not operate valves that appear corroded because turning them can create a leak and subject the inspector to liability.
3. Pilot lights are lit for gas powered water heater or any gas heating or cooking appliances that will be inspected. Home inspectors will not light pilot lights for water heaters, stoves or heating units. These units need to be operational at the time of inspection. An inspector should not ignite an appliance that may not have been properly maintained or repaired. If the owner is not familiar with lighting pilot lights, they should contact their gas utility company to perform this task and service the gas appliances and check safety features and piping connections for gas leaks.
4. Air Conditioning and Heating units are accessible. This means that the area around the air handler or other cooling or heating appliance is free of stored items and clutter. Your home inspector is not required to move items away from the cooling and heating unit to inspect the air conditioning system.
5. Electrical panels are accessible and unlocked. All electrical service panels and sub-panels should be readily accessible so that the inspector can remove the panel cover and inspect the wiring within if he chooses to. Inspectors are not required to remove service panels. Be aware that a home inspector may refuse to inspect an electrical panel if distribution box is wet, or shows signs of fire damage or short-circuiting. All breakers should be in the on position prior to inspector's arrival so that appliance such as water heater are operational before the inspection.
6. The attic area is accessible and cleared of stored items. By inspecting the attic, a home inspector can view water stains that may result from roof damage or premature roof failure, structural issues with trusses, roof decking, exhaust piping and other issues with the home. This area should be readily accessible. Your home inspector needs to be able to get into the attic. Scuttle holes, walk-up accesses and pull-down stairs should be unobstructed and

free of stored items so that the inspector can enter freely. If access to the attic is gained through a closet ceiling, then the closet area should be free of clothing and other stored items in order to allow the inspector to place his ladder there and climb into the attic. In the attic area, be sure that all areas of the attic are visible and accessible by removing or relocating store items. Remember - a home inspection is a visible evaluation of the home and if it is not visible, it cannot be properly inspected.

7. Crawl space entrances are accessible and unlocked, and that they are not screwed or nailed shut. Although there are not many homes here in Southwest Florida that has crawl spaces, an important area of the home is the crawl space. Plumbing, electrical and structural components are located in crawl spaces. Crawl space is one of the least maintained areas of a home, but one of the most important. Be sure that your inspector can gain access to the crawl space to view the floor structure, wall structure and any plumbing or electrical components in that area of the home. Be aware that your inspector is within his rights to refuse to enter a crawl space if the area presents an obvious health hazard such as standing water, leaking sewage, and evidence of rodent activity, evidence of snakes or other life or health-threatening situations.
8. Showers and bathtubs are free of stored or personal items. One aspect of the plumbing inspection is running water into tubs, showers and sinks in order to look for leaks and obstructions, and to determine if the plumbing fixtures are in good working order. If the tub is full of clothes, toys or other stored items, your inspector will not run water into it and will not be able to properly inspect the plumbing components.
9. Sinks and dishwashers are cleared of dishes, and area beneath all sinks free of stored items. Washer and dryer cleared of clothes. Oven should be cleared of stored items. A home inspector needs to be able to see and freely inspect the water service plumbing and drainage components for sinks, dishwashers and garbage disposals. Be sure that the inspector is able to access these areas so they can determine if these components are in good working order. Inspector needs to operate washer, dryer and oven for functionality. Be sure items are removed from these appliances.
10. Any pets are secured for the inspector's safety. You the Realtor or the home owner may think that the dog is not a threat, but bear in mind that the dog doesn't know the home inspector, and the home inspector doesn't know the dog. Unfamiliarity can sometimes breed contempt. The dog has never seen the inspector and may view him or her as a threat. It is always best to secure any pets during a home inspection or remove the pet during the inspection.
11. All items and areas to be inspected are readily accessible. This may seem redundant, after discussion about crawl space accessibility, attic accessibility, etc. But it bears repeating. Home inspectors will not normally move items out of the way to inspect systems or components, and most inspectors will take pictures of obstructed areas to document that there were items in the way at the time of inspection in order to absolve themselves from litigation issues. So if an area is not accessible and visible, the home cannot inspect it. Encourage your seller to clear as many areas as possible for viewing.