



Home Tips



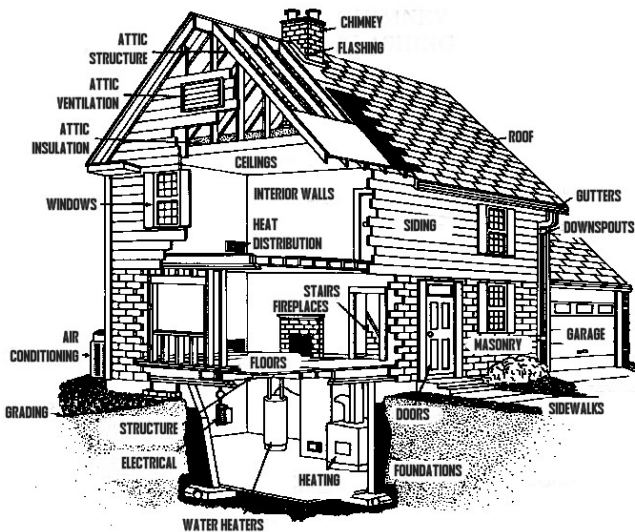
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Q & A

What To Look For When Buying A Home

Can you give us a list of things home buyers should look for when buying a home?

Buyers should be aware of the items that will need to be repaired or replaced. This expense is important in determining if they are getting a good deal on the house. I have seen cases in which the repair cost plus the purchase price far exceeds the appraised value of the house. This is not always a bad thing as long as you know it before closing and really want the house.



Here are some of the items to look for when determining the condition of the house:

ROOF

The roof is normally the most expensive part of the house and can cost up to \$10,000 to \$15,000 to replace. The average age of standard roofing shingles in the Atlanta area is around 15 years. Sometimes the seller disclosure will give you the age of the roof. If the disclosure is not available, look at the age of the house. If the home is 20 years old and the shingles look like the original roof, plan on the replacement cost.

ATTIC VENTILATION

Ventilation is critical in extending the life of the roof shingles and lowering your cooling cost. If the house has continuous ridge vents, you know you have the best ventilation available. If it does not, this will be a valuable asset to add when you replace the shingles.

SIDING

Atlanta has many homes with hardboard or oriented strand board siding. Both of these had class action lawsuits that have since expired. It is very important to look for damaged siding that will need to be replaced. This also can be a big expense. As long as you keep this type of siding totally caulked and painted, it is still considered a good type of siding.

WOOD TRIM

You normally can tell if the house has been maintained by the condition of the exterior wood trim. If the wood trim has decay present or if the paint is peeling and the joints are separating, you will need to take care of this soon after moving in. The longer you wait, the more damage you will have to repair.

LANDSCAPING

Look for trees that have limbs rubbing against the roof. Limbs can easily damage roof shingles. Also, look for large trees that have roots near the foundation or paved areas. The roots can cause major damage to concrete.

GRADING

All grading should slope away from the house. If it slopes toward the house, look for moisture problems inside.

RETAINING WALLS

It is common to see cracks in brick, block or concrete retaining walls. If the cracks are over 1/4 inch wide, call in a professional for further evaluation. Cross tie retaining walls will eventually decay and will need to be replaced.

DECKS

Decks are very complicated to inspect unless the buyer is familiar with the code requirements. Gwinnett County has a great deck drawing showing what is needed for a well built deck. Look for wood decay on all parts of the deck, especially at the bottom of wood or steel support posts.

ATTIC INSULATION

Most attics do not have the minimum required insulation. This is often shown on a card stapled to the roof framing. Properly insulated attic will insure lower utility bills.

SMOKE DETECTORS

A smoke detector is required on each living area of the house. Smoke detectors do have a life span and should be replaced every 10 years. If you have gas heat, be sure to replace them with a combination smoke and carbon dioxide type.

WALLS

Look for settlement cracks in the walls and ceiling. All homes will settle a little. If the cracks are larger than "hair line" cracks, call in a professional.

CEILING

Go around the entire house and look for water stains. Stains can be a result of roof leaks or mechanical

equipment leaks. Also, look for repairs. The disclosure should tell you if there was a problem that has been repaired.

BATHROOMS

Plumbing can leak. Look for leaks around the bathtub, shower, toilet and sink. Also, look at the condition of the ceramic tile.

KITCHEN APPLIANCES

Test every appliance. Make sure they are in good working condition. Also, copy down the model numbers and check for recalls. If you do not want to do it yourself, we can do it for you. Go to our website and click on the RecallChek logo.

WATER HEATERS

The average life span of a water heater is 10 years. Look for leaks and be sure to check the temperature and pressure relief valve.

FURNACES

Furnaces over 12 years old have a greater chance of having a problem with the heat exchanger. When the heat exchanger rusts out or cracks, carbon monoxide will leak into the supply air and be distributed throughout the house.

AIR CONDITIONER CONDENSERS

It is very common to have damaged coils on condensers. If the damage is excessive, the condenser may need to be replaced. Also, the average life of a condenser is 15 years.

BASEMENTS

Dry basements are a blessing. Wet ones can be a pain. Look for signs of water leaks or stains on the walls and floor. The seller's disclosure must note any leak. It is also good to note if an unfinished basement has the plumbing stubbed for a future bath.

PLUMBING

Are the plumbing drain pipes cast iron or plastic? Cast iron will eventually rust and clog. When this happens, the pipe will need to be replaced. What type of water pipes is present? Some types are more prone to leaks than others.

ELECTRICAL

Does the house have panel breakers or fuses in the panel box? If it has fuses, you may consider upgrading to breakers. Also, look for safety devices such as ground fault circuit interrupters and arc fault circuit interrupters. If these are not present, you probably will choose to have them installed for your family's safety.

HOME INSPECTION

If you do not feel comfortable doing any of the above inspections yourself, it would be well worth the investment to have a professional inspect your house. They are trained to look at hundreds of items most people are not familiar with.

Quote Of The Month

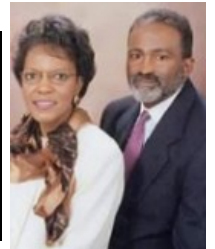
"What you believe about yourself controls what happens in your life."

Brian Cowling

A Tip Of The Hat To:

Barbara & Ausker Morris

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Thank You

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