

House Anatomy: Agent Study List

A quick-reference checklist of styles, parts, and vocabulary to recognize during showings (SFH, condos, and townhomes). No diagnosing-just identify, explain simply, and recommend inspection when needed.

Top 15 terms to memorize first

- **Sump pump** - groundwater removal from sump pit (basement/crawl).
- **Sewage ejector pump** - lifts wastewater when fixtures are below sewer line.
- **Sewer cleanout** - access cap for snaking/servicing drain line.
- **Main water shutoff** - turns off water to the home (often near meter).
- **Electrical panel** - breakers/fuses; main service + circuits.
- **GFCI** - outlet protection near water (kitchen/bath/garage/exterior).
- **Furnace** - heats air; uses ductwork (forced air).
- **Boiler** - heats water; radiators/baseboards (no ducts needed).
- **Water heater** - tank vs tankless; look for manufacture date.
- **Expansion tank** - small tank near water heater/boiler for pressure changes.
- **Condensate pump** - moves HVAC water to a drain when gravity can't.
- **A/C condenser** - outdoor unit for central air cooling.
- **Heat pump** - can heat + cool; outdoor unit can look like A/C.
- **Vinyl vs fiber cement siding** - different durability/maintenance.
- **LVP vs engineered hardwood** - vinyl vs real wood top layer (different feel/cost).

The 4 things to always do during a showing

- **Confirm needs:** must-haves + dealbreakers; watch layout flow and room sizes.
- **Big-ticket systems:** roof, HVAC, plumbing, electrical (note what you see; verify later).
- **Water + safety:** grading, gutters/downspouts, basement signs; GFCI, handrails, detectors.
- **Set next steps:** 1-10 rating, decide write/re-tour/pass, outline inspection + timeline.

Use this phrase: *"I'm not an inspector, but I'm noting this so your inspector can take a closer look."*

Exterior identification checklist

Architectural styles to recognize

- Traditional
- Colonial/Georgian
- Victorian
- Tudor
- Craftsman
- Prairie
- Ranch
- Cape Cod
- Mid-century modern
- Modern/Contemporary
- Modern farmhouse
- Mediterranean/Spanish

Roof basics

Shapes: Gable, Hip, Shed, Gambrel, Mansard, Flat/low-slope

Materials: Asphalt shingles (3-tab vs architectural); Metal (standing seam); Cedar shake; Slate; Clay/concrete tile; TPO/EPDM (flat roofs)

Parts: Ridge/ridge vent; Valleys; Flashing; Drip edge; Soffit/fascia; Gutters/downspouts; Roof vents/skylights

Siding and exterior materials

- Vinyl
- Fiber cement (Hardie)
- Wood lap/shake
- Brick veneer vs solid masonry
- Stone veneer
- Stucco vs EIFS
- Metal panels

Windows and doors (what to call them)

Windows: Single-hung / double-hung; Casement; Awning; Slider; Picture; Bay/bow; Transom

Exterior doors: Steel; Fiberglass; Wood; Sliding patio door; French doors; Storm door

Water management + foundation terms

- Positive vs negative grading
- Downspout extensions / buried drains
- Window wells (covers/drains)
- Efflorescence (white powder) vs staining
- Sump discharge location
- Foundation crack vocabulary: hairline, vertical, step, horizontal (flag)

Interior identification checklist

Interior surfaces + trim

- Drywall vs plaster
- Ceiling types: flat, vaulted, tray, coffered
- Trim: baseboards, casing, crown, wainscoting

Flooring types to recognize

- Solid hardwood
- Engineered hardwood
- Laminate
- LVP/LVT
- Carpet
- Ceramic/porcelain tile
- Natural stone
- Polished concrete (lofts)

Kitchen vocabulary

- Cabinet doors: shaker, slab, raised panel, inset
- Countertops: quartz, granite, marble, butcher block, laminate, quartzite
- Sink mounts: undermount, drop-in, farmhouse
- Range hood: ducted vs recirculating

Bathroom vocabulary

- Tub types: alcove, freestanding
- Shower: tiled vs prefab; curbless/walk-in
- Tile: subway, hex, penny, large-format; patterns: herringbone/chevron
- Vent fan (bath fan) basics

Stairs, doors, and layout terms

- Stair parts: tread, riser, nosing, baluster, handrail, newel
- Interior doors: hollow-core vs solid-core; pocket vs barn
- Closets/pantries: reach-in vs walk-in

Mechanical vocabulary (inspection-report basics)

- **Electrical:** panel, breakers vs fuses, GFCI vs AFCI, 3-way switches, smoke/CO detectors.
- **Plumbing:** water meter + shutoff, supply pipes (copper/PEX/galv), drain pipes (PVC/cast iron), sump/ejector, softener.
- **HVAC:** furnace vs boiler, A/C condenser, heat pump, filter location, humidifier/dehumidifier, condensate line/pump.

Condo/townhome extras to recognize

- PTAC unit (hotel-style) vs central air
- Mechanical closet (water heater/HVAC inside unit)
- Fire sprinklers (common)
- Intercom/access fobs
- Limited common elements (balcony/patio/garage space)

- HOA responsibility split (studs-in vs exterior varies)

Common “flag it for inspection” items

- Musty odors, active leaks, ceiling stains
- Significant horizontal foundation cracks/bowing
- Missing handrails/loose railings
- Improper grading/downspouts dumping at foundation
- Old wiring indicators (knob-and-tube, unsafe panels) - flag, don't diagnose
- Roof wear: missing shingles, heavy curling, damaged flashing