

## QUESTIONS TO ASK

# When Choosing a Home Inspector

### **Do you belong to a professional association?**

There are many associations for home inspectors, but some groups confer questionable credentials or certifications in return for nothing more than a fee. Make sure the association your home inspector names is a reputable, nonprofit trade organization.

### **Will your report meet all state requirements?**

Also, make sure the organization complies with a well-recognized standard of practice and code of ethics, such as those adopted by the American Society of Home Inspectors or the National Association of Home Inspectors.

### **How experienced are you?**

Ask inspectors how long they've been working in the field and how many inspections they've completed. Also ask for customer referrals. New inspectors may be highly qualified, but they should describe their training and indicate whether they work with a more experienced partner.

### **How do you keep your expertise up to date?**

Inspectors' commitment to continuing training is a good measure of their professionalism and service. Advanced knowledge is especially important with older homes or those with unique elements requiring additional or updated training.

### **Do you focus on residential inspection?**

Home inspection is very different from inspecting commercial buildings or a construction site. Ask whether the inspector has experience with your type of property or feature. The inspector should be able to provide sample inspection reports for a similar property. If they recommend further evaluation from outside contractors on multiple issues, it may indicate they're not comfortable with their own knowledge level.

### **Do you offer to do repairs or improvements?**

Some state laws and trade associations allow the inspector to provide repair work on problems uncovered during the inspection. However, other states and associations forbid it as a conflict of interest.

### **How long will the inspection take?**

On average, an inspector working alone inspects a typical single-family house in two to three hours; anything less may not be thorough.

### **How much?**

Costs range from \$300 to \$500 but can vary dramatically depending on your region, the size and age of the house, and the scope of services. Be wary of deals that seem too good to be true.

### **Will I be able to attend the inspection?**

The answer should be yes. A home inspection is a valuable educational opportunity for the buyer and a refusal should raise a red flag.

## WHAT TO KNOW

# About the Home Inspection

Some items should always be examined.

### Structure

The home's "skeleton" should be able to stand up to weather, gravity, and the earth that surrounds it. Structural components include items such as the foundation and the framing.

### Exterior

The inspector should look at sidewalks, driveways, steps, windows, doors, siding, trim, and surface drainage. They should also examine any attached porches, decks, and balconies.

### Roofing

A good inspector will provide very important information about your roof, including its age, roof draining systems, buckled shingles, and loose gutters and downspouts. They should also inform you of the condition of any skylights and chimneys as well as the potential for pooling water.

### Plumbing

They should thoroughly examine the water supply and drainage systems, water heating equipment, and fuel storage systems. Drainage pumps and sump pumps also fall under this category. Poor water pressure, banging pipes, rust spots, or corrosion can indicate larger problems.

### Electrical

You should be informed of the condition of service entrance wires, service panels, breakers and fuses, and disconnects. Also take note of the number of outlets in each room.

### Heating and air conditioning

The home's vents, flues, and chimneys should be inspected. The inspector should be able to tell you the water heater's age, its energy rating, and whether the size is adequate for the house. They should also describe and inspect all the central air and through-wall cooling equipment.

### Interiors

Your inspector should take a close look at walls, ceilings and floors; steps, stairways, and railings; countertops and cabinets; and garage systems. These areas can reveal leaks, insect damage, rot, construction defects, and more.

### Ventilation/insulation

Inspectors should check for adequate insulation and ventilation in the attic and in unfinished areas such as crawl spaces. Insulation should be appropriate for the climate. Without proper ventilation, excess moisture can lead to mold and water damage.

### Fireplaces

They're charming, but fireplaces can be dangerous if they're not properly installed. Inspectors should examine the vent and flue, and describe solid fuel-burning appliances.