

# Find right home inspector before buying your home

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**Q:** I receive your weekly newsletters and they are very knowledgeable. Thank you. What can be done about home inspectors that do not give the buyers the correct information about the real problems about the home they are buying?

**A:** Thanks for your question. To start, you are lumping all home inspectors into one bag, which is probably unfair. And you didn't include a specific example, so we'll have to make some guesses as to the nature of the problem.

We think you are referring to some home inspectors that seem interested in finding cosmetic problems with homes and fail to look into deeper problems that some homes may have. But we won't blame all home inspectors, because there are many terrific ones out there. Still, there are those that don't do a good job for home buyers.

Let's start with what we think is the most important job a home inspector has to do for a home buyer. The home inspector is there to try to find major, material and costly problems with a home. While a leaky faucet can be problematic and can cost some money to fix, the real issues are with roofs, foundations, structural problems, major plumbing and electrical issues and the like. Problems with these issues can run in the thousands of dollars.

In addition to those structural issues, high levels of radon gas in the home, lead in the water supply, old homes with flaking lead-based paint, and asbestos insulations in poor



shape are other issues of grave concern to home buyers. The home inspector should offer to perform a radon test for a home, should inspect for wood-boring insects (not necessarily a full-blown wood-boring test), should alert homeowner to potential lead-based paint problems, should inspect to determine if the home has lead pipes, should advise a buyer on whether insulation in the home appears to be asbestos based, and so on.

Good home inspectors will perform their inspections with the home buyers tagging along behind them, and as they inspect each part of the house will talk to them about the issues they see in the home.

However, when home inspectors undertake their inspections and carve out elements for others to do, they are not giving a home buyer the service they deserve.

For example, some home inspectors have gotten into the habit of performing cosmetic inspections of homes. They won't inspect heating and cooling systems, won't inspect roofs, won't inspect for wood-boring insects, and have a list of many other items that they won't inspect. You would need an army of contractors to walk through a home with the inspector to inspect all of the items some home inspectors won't look at.

When you're interviewing

prospective home inspectors, you have to ask a few key questions: What does your inspection consist of? How long does it take? (It should take at least two hours for a smaller home and upward of three or four hours for a larger home.) What kind of written and/or verbal and/or video report can I expect? What isn't included? And, are there any parts of the home you don't inspect?

We'd take a pass on those home inspectors who exclude portions of the home and instead choose to work with home inspectors that have high recommendations from our real estate agents and get high marks from websites that review home inspectors, including the Better

Business Bureau.

We'd also like to see our home inspectors certified by ASHI (American Society of Home Inspectors). In some states, we would want to make sure our home inspector is licensed by the agency that licenses home inspectors. We would also ask our friends and relatives for recommendations of good home inspectors along with real estate attorneys in our area.

None of these things will guarantee that you'll get a good home inspector or that a home inspector won't miss something, but it should put you on a path to finding the right home inspector. Also, just because someone out there claims he or she is a home inspector that doesn't eliminate the need for us to ask all of the important questions we've listed above.

When you know what to look for in a home inspector, you might have a better clue about how to find the right inspector for you. Finally, many of the better home inspectors now have websites that will tell you exactly what they will do for their fee, what's included, what's not included or what you can order in addition to the basic home inspection. So, be sure to do your research.

To help you out, Ilyce has created nearly 30 videos covering various aspects of a professional home inspection. She worked with Jamie Dunsing, a professional home inspector we have known for more than 20 years, and they walked through a home that's more than 100 years old. You can find the home inspection video series at her YouTube channel.