

A Home Inspector's Checklist



Home inspectors carefully examine a home's exterior, interior, basement, and attic looking for potential problems.

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In this special section to Boston.com, we consulted a wide array of experts from various sectors of the real estate market for their advice on making the homebuying and selling process go as smoothly as possible. In this edition, we spoke with Mike Walsh, president of Walsh Home Inspections, about what a home inspector looks for on the job.

Exterior

Everyone looks at the curb appeal of a home. But Walsh said it's a different story for those in his line of work.

"Things might look good when you stand back. Rotted wood might look good, chipped paint might look good. But up close, it's a different story," he said. "Inspectors look at the state of everything outside the home, including the gutters, the paint job, porches, windows, everything that is outside the home."

Inspectors also look at the grating to make sure water flows away from the home, not towards it.

Basement

Walsh called the home's basement a "big ticket area." It's (usually) where the home's heating and cooling systems, plumbing, hot water heater, and electrical systems can be found.

"We make sure there isn't any rust, corrosion, and that the systems are installed correctly," said Walsh. "We're looking for proper installation. The basement tells us if the home has good bones."

Living space

As an inspector, Walsh said he's less interested than a buyer in how much a home's living area "looks like a Pottery Barn ad." After inspecting the basement, he can anticipate what problems the rest of the home will have.

"If there's a crack in the living room wall, I know why," he said. "I'll go room by room and check outlets, windows, tubs, drains, and appliances to make sure everything is doing what it should be doing."

"The most serious place to look is in the bathrooms. Since the pipes run through there, there's a greater potential for water damage and penetration."

Attic

The attic area is another "big ticket" item for Walsh and other inspectors.

"[This area] gives us a look at the structure of the home's roof. You can see if there are any leaks or ventilation problems," he says. "If there's mold, it's usually in the attic. Mold can be caused by poor ventilation or a bathroom vent."

Mike Walsh founded Walsh Home Inspections in 2008. The company is a full-service home inspection business that serves Eastern and Central Massachusetts and Rhode Island and specializes in educational home inspections. In addition to inspections, the company also offers radon air and water testing, water quality testing, and more.

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