

Here's a checklist of what you can use when you check out a house!

- **Outside**
 - **Grading of Soil** – Soil should be sloping away from the house to help keep water away from the foundation
 - **Vegetation** – Tree limbs should be trimmed away from roofs and power lines as they can cause damage in a storm or high winds.
 - **Downspouts** – Check to see if they dispose the water close to the foundation or away from. They should not dispose right at the foundation
 - **Guardrails** – If there is a deck/patio (any landing) that is 30 inches or higher, there should be guardrails present. These should be about 36 inches (give or take) high, and they should have spindles that are vertical every 4 inches on center. They shouldn't be horizontal (left to right) due to the ability to climb them like ladders.
 - **Exterior Paint** – Check to see how the paint looks. If you can see any bare wood on any trim work, it would be wise to have a new coat of paint to help protect it!
 - **Outdoor Condenser Unit** – This unit helps cool the coolant to the AC unit. If it's out of level the efficiency isn't optimal. Also, if there is a bunch of vegetation/debris or personal belongings, it's not getting the most airflow, which brings down efficiency.
 - **Chimney Cap** – A chimney cap (with a spark arrestor – or mesh) will help to keep the rain out and possibly larger critters (though not 100% effective). It's important, yet fairly inexpensive to have. (You may not be able to see from ground level)
 - **Maintenance Tip** – You should have your chimney cleaned once a year for optimal safety!
- **Basement** (A flashlight may be a good idea!)
 - **Sump Pump Pit** – If the basement has a sump pump pit, take a safe look inside if you can (try not to disturb anything). If it looks like there is debris in it, it probably needs to be cleaned out. If there is no pump, than it is an inactive pit. Don't remove any lids as you may damage something (plumbing, the lid itself, or even the pump)
 - **Electrical boxes** – They can come either round or square. They will be hanging in the ceiling or on the walls. If you can see wires, it should have a cover to it for protection purposes
 - **Loose Wire Ends** – Keep an eye out for wires that end outside of an electrical box. Even if they have wire nuts or electrical tape, they should be housed inside of a box
 - **Leaky Pipes** – Check around the pipes. If there's a leak, that's not good!
 - **Smoke Detectors** – It would be wise to have a smoke detector down here. A combo smoke detector/carbon monoxide detector if there is a fuel service other than electricity

- **Utilities (Electrical Panel, Heating Unit, Water Heater)**
 - **Clearances** – Check to see if there is proper clearance from personal belongings in front of and around. 30 to 36 inches of clearance from personal items is a common distance in front/to one side of each item.
 - **Heat/AC filter** – Is the location easily identifiable or labeled? Is it easily accessible?
 - **Heat/AC maintenance log** – Is there a log (usually a piece of paper) taped/stuck to the base of the unit? If not, make sure you get one started if/when you move in and have it looked at!
 - **Electrical Panel** – Open the door (don't unscrew the front cover as it is a safety hazard to do so). Take a look at your breakers/fuses. Are there empty slots with no covers? Are the breakers/fuses labeled? Remember – this is a visual inspection only.
- **Smoke Detectors**
 - There should be at least one per floor. They should be smoke detector/carbon monoxide combos if there is fuel fed appliances other than electricity.
 - There should be one in every bedroom
 - Every device should be at least 5 feet off the ground. Ones that are plugged into outlets are not as effective as the ones towards/on the ceiling.
- **Windows**
 - Open and close them (don't force them if they don't open easily)
 - Do they stay open?
 - Can they open with ease?
 - Do they lock effectively?
 - Broken Panes?
 - How are they overall? Are they foggy in between panes of glass?
- **Kitchen**
 - **Check the cabinet doors/drawers** – do they operate in proper condition?
 - **Under the sink** – Take a peak. How is the floor board of the cabinet?
- **Bathrooms**
 - **Exhaust Fan** – If present (they may not be). How does it sound? Loud and noisy?
- **Exterior Doors**
 - Check to see how they close. Do the deadbolts latch properly?
 - Does the deadbolt need a key on the inside to lock? If so, it isn't safe in case of a fire and the key isn't present

This is a simple list you can use when looking at a house. Please understand this is by no means a full check list of things to look for, and can **NOT** be used to negotiate repairs. This should **only** be used as a visual checklist only and a short guide to a house. This is not a home inspection report. Please refer to professionals for anything for advice or professional diagnosis.