

Your property inspection checklist

Is it right for you?

Is a spare bedroom, second bathroom or ensuite a must? Will everyone be safe or comfortable climbing stairs? Does your dog need space to roam? Be realistic about the features you can't live without.

Floor plan and room sizes

Walk around the property to get a sense of how one room flows into the next. Check whether the rooms are the right size and shape for your existing furniture and appliances. If not, are you prepared to splash out on replacements? The rooms should also be practical. For example, does the kitchen layout suit your needs? Is there enough space for a dining table?

Orientation and natural light

Check where the property's windows are, and whether trees or nearby buildings will block out sunlight. If the lights are on, switch them off to get a feel for the natural light. The inspection may have been timed to maximise natural light.

Neighbours

Consider whether neighbours can see directly into the property. It's also worth checking whether they've lodged any development plans with the council. Walk around the block to see how well other properties in the area are maintained, and to listen for noisy pets.

Parking

If there's off-street parking, are there enough spaces? Check local parking restrictions, and how much a resident's or visitor's parking permit costs. Consider how hard it would be to find on-street parking at peak times.

Heating, cooling and ventilation

If the property has heating or air conditioning systems, check that they work, how old they are and if they've been recently serviced. Keep in mind that high ceilings can make it difficult (and expensive) to heat a room. Ventilation is especially important in kitchens and bathrooms, so test the extractor fans.

Water

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Check whether the water pressure's up to scratch, especially in the shower. Can you get the right mix of warmth and pressure, or will it cost you to change this? Consider whether the hot water heater is big enough for your family's needs. And don't be afraid to flush the toilets.

Storage

Do the built-in wardrobes suit your needs? If there aren't any, will the bedroom be large enough for a freestanding wardrobe? If there's a garage, check that it's big enough for your car and any other items you'd like to store.

Fixtures and fittings

Are there enough power points? Are they in convenient locations? Check behind the furniture, because they may be hidden. If the house has blinds, curtains, flyscreens, light fittings or other fixed features, they should ideally be clean and in good working order.

Noise

Common walls, floors and ceilings can be a real issue, as can communal areas such as stairwells. Consider how well-insulated the property is, how well-fitted the doors and windows are, and whether there's carpet or double glazing. Traffic, shared courtyards and nearby schools and sporting grounds are all potential sources of noise.

Garden upkeep

Outdoor maintenance can be hard work. Do you have the time or money to mow the lawn, weed the flower beds or clean the pool?

Security

Will you need to install or repair security doors? If the property has a shared entrance, check whether the main door locks and if the other owners and tenants generally keep it closed.

A building inspection covers the property's structure, but there many other things to consider. Check for what's important to you, so you can make the best home-buying decision.