



H O M E

YOUR

What to Expect from a Home Inspection



More home buyers and sellers than ever are hiring home inspectors to prevent surprises and expensive problems. According to the American Society of Home Inspectors (ASHI), it's important for current and future homeowners to understand exactly what a home inspection involves, so they can take full advantage of the service.

When a home inspector arrives at a house, you can expect assessment of the exterior, roof, interior, attic and

any crawl spaces. Outdoors, inspectors look at drainage conditions, decks, chimneys and the condition of roofing materials. Inside, they examine the operation of windows, doors and plumbing, as well as the installation and operation of the furnace, air conditioner and electrical outlets. Crawl spaces and the attic are checked for structural condition. Insulation, ventilation, electrical, heating and plumbing systems are inspected if accessible.

Each of these areas is important to the overall condition of the home, says Mike Casey, president of ASHI. Home inspectors provide a written report that includes information on the condition of each section. In addition to identifying problems, home inspectors recommend what steps might be necessary to correct those problems. Although some people think they can inspect a home themselves, ASHI strongly recommends an impartial third-party opinion from a field expert.

Tips for Fall Showings

Planning to sell your house this fall? Autumn typically signals a slower market with a shift from a seller's to a buyer's market. Though lead economists predict steady home sales throughout the year, you'll want to take extra care when preparing your house for fall showings.

Curb appeal is important all year-round. During the autumn months, rake leaves, prune shrubs and trees, and plant fall annuals. Hang a festive wreath on your door. As always, mow your lawn and clean out any debris clogging your gutters. If you already have snow, be sure to clear a path to

the house.

Indoors, keep the house cozy and well-lit. Make sure your windows are sparkling clean, especially if you live in a sunny region that doesn't get much rain in the fall. Create a festive atmosphere with fall embellishments and bright orange pumpkins. And if you really want to make every effort to impress, bake. There's nothing more inviting to a potential home buyer in the fall than the aroma of a freshly baked apple pie.



Got Milk?

Next time you feel the urge to redecorate, try painting like the early American settlers did, with milk paint. Traditionally made from clay, quicklime and milk protein separated from buttermilk, milk paints decorated early American homes and Shaker furniture.

A handful of manufacturers still make milk paint. At Antique Drapery Rod (www.anticquedrapery.com), food grade ingredients make up more than 80 percent of its Healthy Milk Paint, available in 10 pastels. The Old Fashioned Milk Paint Company (www.milkpaint.com), which uses earth pigments in its small batches of paint, offers deeper shades that reflect those found on antique furniture and building walls. Sawyer Finn Milk Paints (www.sawyerfinn.com), available in 52 colors, come in a dry powder form and mix with warm water. Better than synthetic paints in many ways, milk paints are more durable and can be thrown away with regular trash.



BACK-TO-SCHOOL JITTERS

Fall brings with it cooler temperatures, leaf piles and the first day of school. Back-to-school time often means changes for families: the first day of pre-school or kindergarten for younger children and new classes, classmates and teachers for older kids.

To make the first day easier, the American Academy of Pediatrics suggests parents remind children that they're not alone. Find other children in the neighborhood your youngster can walk or ride to school with. The night before school, pick out clothes and make plans for lunch. Discuss what will happen after school is over. Will your child come straight home or go to a babysitter? Will he be taking the bus, walking or getting picked up?

Talk about your child's feelings, both excitement and apprehension. Visit the new school with your child before the first day. Don't build up unrealistic expectations about how wonderful school will be, but do convey a general sense of optimism about your child's future there. ■

So You Want To Buy a House?

In the United States, we take the 30-year, fixed-rate mortgage — with down payments as low as 3 percent to 5 percent — for granted. Home buyers in Europe don't have that luxury.

In the United Kingdom, reviewable-rate mortgages reign as the dominant residential finance instrument. In this version of an adjustable-rate mortgage, whenever market rates change, the mortgage company reviews the borrower's interest rate and decides whether to impose a new one. In France, the 15-year, fixed-rate loan is most common. Lack of an appraisal system results in borrowers having to put down 30 percent to 40 percent of a home's value. And in Germany, the homeownership rate is only 40 percent, reflecting high housing costs. Fixed-rate terms are available for periods from one to 10 years, and down payments are typically 35 percent to 40 percent. ■

Five Reasons To Use a CRS

All real estate agents are not the same. Only real estate agents who earn the Certified Residential Specialist (CRS) Designation have completed the most rigorous residential real estate training and have proven selling experience. Here are five ways CRSs can meet all your real estate needs:

- 1.** Your CRS agent can help you determine your buying power.
- 2.** A CRS Designee can help you understand the different financing options and identify qualified lenders.
- 3.** When selling your home, your CRS agent can provide up-to-date information on current pricing, financing, terms and condition of competing properties, key factors in getting your property sold at the best price — all quickly and with minimum hassle.
- 4.** A CRS Designee will know when, where and how to market your property. A study by the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® shows that 82 percent of real estate sales are the result of agent contacts through previous clients, referrals, friends, families and personal contacts.
- 5.** Your CRS agent can help you objectively evaluate every buyer's proposal without compromising your marketing position. ■

Do you know someone who is thinking about buying or selling a home? PLEASE MENTION MY NAME.

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