

House inspection checklist

If you're buying a house, use this checklist for your inspection.

Property address

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Date



GENERAL

NEW AND SECOND-HAND HOUSES

- Ask the real estate agent, seller or developer:
 - Whether there are protection orders over trees or buildings on the property?
 - What is the zoning, not only of the property but also those adjoining?
 - Are there any caveats or other charges entered on the property's title?
 - For a copy of a LIM report if one is available.
 - Is there, or has there been a claim to the Weathertight Homes Resolution Service?
 - What is the government rating valuation (new houses may not have one)?
 - Whether all building consents have been obtained? In particular ask to see the completion certificate if the house is reasonably new or if alterations have recently been carried out.
 - How much are the rates?
 - Is the house is connected to the local authority sewer or does it have its own septic tank?
 - Are the property's storm water drains connected to the local authority system? If not, where does the water go?
 - What fittings and chattels are included in the price – things like floor coverings, bookshelves and light fittings.
- Maintenance – will there be ongoing work required? What needs to be done immediately?
- How easy will it be to renovate or extend the property?
- If you can, speak to the neighbours. Do they have any disputes regarding the property you intend buying, or major plans for their property, which may affect you (such as extensions to their house, which will obscure your view)?
- New house only: What landscaping work will be required?

IN ADDITION, FOR SECOND-HAND HOUSES

- Ask the seller or agent:
 - Why they are selling.
 - Has the place been rewired recently? If so, ask to see the electrician's Certificate of Compliance.
- What repairs and renovations are needed now?
- Can you afford any immediate work required?

OUTSIDE THE HOUSE

NEW AND SECOND-HAND HOUSES

- Location – how close is it to the school, bus stops, shops, work, neighbours, etc?
- Is there adequate street lighting?
- Is road noise likely to be a problem?
- Is the section big enough to be subdivided if you wanted to do so?
- Check the survey pegs. If you can't find them, pace the boundaries and check the measurements against those given in the title.
- Does the property get enough sun in the right places? Check at different times of the day. How much sun will you get in winter?
- There should be no gaps or cracks in the weatherboards or cladding to let in rain.
- Surface drainage. Is the ground landscaped and/or are there proper drains?
- Is the property likely to flood in heavy rain? Is it near a river?
- Are retaining walls sound? Are there any bare banks that should have retaining walls?
- Is the soil reasonable for gardening?
- Is there a car-port, garage, parking? What is access like to the house?
- Are there lots of steps to the house?

- Is the clothesline near the laundry?
- Are there enough vents? An average 130 square metre house with a concrete foundation wall needs around 28 vents, evenly spaced.
- Is the entranceway protected from weather by a porch or canopy?
- Is the house a “Mediterranean” design with a plaster finish? If so, an independent inspection by a knowledgeable builder, engineer or qualified building expert is **essential** to ensure the house is not susceptible to weathertightness problems (ie, leaking).

However, as a start you can run through the following check list:

- Is there rust or staining on the exterior walls?
- Look for cracks in the plaster – in particular around windows, doors and corners.
- The cladding should be clear of the ground and decking.
- Metal or plastic flashings over all windows and doors are a must.
- Dampness around windows and doors spell trouble.
- Decks and balconies must be set below internal floor levels.
- Parapet walls should have flashings covering their top surface.
- Look for broken or cracked sealant in cladding joints and where pipes and wires go through walls.

IN ADDITION, FOR SECOND-HAND HOUSES

- Check for signs of excessive borer?
- Check for signs of damp.
- Check the weatherboards and outside walls. Could any problems be hidden behind fresh cement, paint or cladding? Tap suspect wood. If it sounds spongy and dead, beware!
- Get on the roof. Are there any signs of rust (or new paint possibly hiding rust) or cracked tiles?
- Look at the gutters. Are there any signs of rust or cracking, or fresh paint hiding this?
- Are the fences in good condition?
- Are any big pot plants hiding something?
- Make sure none of the vents are blocked.
- Check that metal flashings over windows and doors are not rusted.
- Go under the house:
 - Check the piles. Are any missing or no longer supporting the house? Are they wooden or concrete? Wooden ones could be rotten under the soil line. Push a screwdriver into a few piles below ground level. Are they solid, or does the screwdriver penetrate the pile? If it does, the pile is rotten.
 - Look around: any floor problems hidden from above should be evident.
 - Look for signs of excessive borer, gaps in flooring, dampness and other problems.

INSIDE THE HOUSE

NEW AND SECOND-HAND HOUSES

- Is there a lobby between the front door and the main living area? If not, you’ll lose heat every time the door is opened.
- Is there sufficient natural light?
- Are there enough rooms of the right size?
- Check the room layout and orientation to the sun.
- Is the use of space efficient?
- Is there adequate privacy.
- Is noise control within the house adequate?
- Is the kitchen suitable? Is there a pantry?
- Check the quality of the TV reception.
- Is there adequate storage?
- Is the house insulated?
- Check that the hot water cylinder and header tank are securely fastened.
- All fans and rangehoods should vent to the outside.
- Check the water pressure and plumbing by turning on several taps at once.
- Ensure that gas pipes are working properly by turning on several outlets at once and making sure the flame is strong and high.
- Check that window and doorframes are in good condition.
- Make sure the windows don’t stick.
- Do the doors close properly?
- Are there enough power outlets?
- Is the house wired for pay-TV (Sky or Saturn)?
- How about for fast or dial-up internet?
- Is there a burglar alarm?
- Turn on the shower. Make sure it has good pressure and is hot.
- Check that all the chattels included in the sale are in good condition.

IN ADDITION, FOR SECOND-HAND HOUSES

Go into the roof space. Are there any:

- Sagging, missing or dislodged tiles?
- Bird’s nests?
- Cracks in the chimney?
- What about insulation? Is it in good condition?
- Any leaks, water stains, or suspicious new paint on the ceilings?
- Any cracks or bulges on the walls? This could be due to subsidence, moisture or condensation?
- Check wardrobes and cupboards for mould.
- Are toilets and cisterns in good condition?