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New construction walk through inspection checklist

Your builder wants to deliver a polished product. You want a home worth your dreams and money. A blue tape inspection ensures both of you come away satisfied. Together, you can inspect the house and mark off any items that need attention – that’s where the blue tape comes in. All the tagged parts of the home create a “punch-list,” or “punch-out list,” for the builder to correct. Here are some of the areas you should review carefully. Major Damage And Repairs Needed A blue tape walkthrough helps you and your builder identify problems, both big and small. That way, you can address any issues before you move in. Some may be a higher priority or need more work than others. But, left untreated, major damage may pose a real risk to the integrity of the home and you and any other residents’ safety. Keep a watch out for red flags that require repair, such as: Uneven floors Completely broken or severely damaged appliances Completely broken or severely damaged home systems Poor ventilation Leaking roof Cracks in the foundation Other threats to the structural integrity, like rotten wood Poor drainage In a new construction, you’re more likely to find minor defects rather than major ones. However, the walkthrough gives you the chance to address anything and everything. Safety Hazards Buyers should beware of potential safety hazards in their new home. If you don’t pay close attention during the walkthrough, you may miss something that could pose a danger to you – personally and financially. Some possible risks to your new home’s interior and exterior include: Signs of pests, like rodents, termites, ants, and larger animals such as raccoons Mold growth in moist areas, like the bathroom and kitchen Improperly installed structures like handrails, flooring or lighting Faulty wiring Clogged gutters Early water damage Cracks in the foundation (allowing water and radon to seep in) Other environmental hazards such as carbon monoxide Window Quality During the walkthrough, the homeowner and construction representative inspect every surface, from floors to mirrors to walls. At that time, it’s important to check the windows as well. That involves every part of the window, including the glass, screen, latches, locks, and frame. Look for the following: Glass is clean and easy to see through, with no scratches or cracks Window frame appears square (or otherwise correctly measured) No cracks, rot, or decay in the frame or trim Screen is intact without any tears Screens do not pop out easily Opens easily and latches properly Weep holes installed Uniformly caulked Your windows are more than an aesthetic accessory. They also play a key role in protecting your home. A window that doesn’t open correctly becomes a fire hazard, and a poorly installed one invites cold air, water damage, and mold. Door And Drawer Mobility Like windows, drawers and doors need to move smoothly. Nothing should be painted shut, or you risk a safety hazard at worse and an inconvenience at best. This includes any type of door or drawer, like front doors, back doors, interior doors, garage doors, storm doors and cabinets. Look for any of these problems in your doors: Issues with closing or opening, such as dragging or sticking Not flush with the frame Noisy hinges Wood frames with damage Sensor issues with the garage door Examine your front door in particular. It’s a focal point and adds curb appeal, which can help with prospective buyers in the future. Appliance And House System Functionality Before you sit down with a checklist, you may not realize how many systems and appliances there are in a home. But each one needs to be examined during the blue tape walkthrough. So, make sure to review the functionality of appliances like: Ovens Stoves Dishwashers Washing machines Dryers Refrigerators Freezers Test these appliances as you go through. For example, see if the oven heats up, if the freezer dispenses ice and water, and if the dishwasher makes it through a run cycle. You also want to inspect home systems like: Air conditioning Heating Plumbing Electricity For instance, you can examine the wiring on your electrical systems, the ductwork for your HVAC (heating and cooling) systems, and the pipes for your plumbing. If you find any issues with a particular product your contractor installed, consider contacting the manufacturer or local supplier. Also, review the warranty process on the item in question. Minor Cosmetic Issues When you do a blue tape walkthrough, you’re looking at little problems as well as big ones. But even if they’re small, you’ll want them addressed. After all, this is your new home we’re talking about. Appearances are important, and you want to move in happy with the final product. Keep an eye out for these cosmetic issues: Cracks or blemishes in the paint Stains in the carpeting Scuff marks on the floor Scratches on surfaces like countertops or on appliances Dents in the structure Nail holes The nice thing about cosmetic concerns is that your builder can easily address them. It just takes a thorough look over to find them. So, take your time as you move through the house. Again, having others inspect with you, such as a partner or friend, may help lessen the workload. You’ve picked out all your fixtures and finishes. You’ve selected your flooring and paint colors. Now the new house you’ve been waiting for is ready! Finally, you can sign your closing paperwork and move in. Sure, there’s a final walkthrough, but with a brand new home, that’s just a formality – right? Hold on! Even though it might be tempting to rush through the final walkthrough in your newly-built home, there are actually some really important things that you need to investigate. Don’t assume that just because everything is clean and shiny that all is well. Finalizing the purchase of any home — even a brand-new home — requires keen attention to detail. To develop a comprehensive guide to new-build walkthroughs, we talked with Jason Daniels, a top real estate agent in Colorado Springs, Colorado, with a background in construction management. Daniels says that even for new construction, he recommends hiring a home inspector. For around \$350 to \$600, an inspector will take a comprehensive look at the whole home — a wise investment! However, the finer details are up to you. Take your time and work alongside your real estate agent to examine the following items carefully during your new construction walkthrough. Source: (Valmedia / Shutterstock) Exterior walkthrough inspection As soon as you drive up to your dazzling new home, pause for a smile and a little happy dance... and then let the scrutiny begin. Daniels tells buyers to bring along their files to make sure that all paint colors, upgrades, and finishes are what you’ve chosen. Landscaping and ground surfaces Curb appeal comes first. Check the landscaping carefully. How’s the grass doing? Are these the plants you chose? Do they show any signs of distress at this point? If there’s an irrigation system, does it appear it’s been working from the condition of the plants? Be sure to turn it on and ensure that all sprinkler heads are functioning properly. You’ll also need to check the porch, deck, and patio areas. If they’re made from lumber, check for proper fasteners (did you agree on screws or nails?) and spacing. For pavers and concrete, check that the entire area is level and give it a once-over for any cracks or chips. The driveway and front walkway will need the same treatment as well. External surfaces of the home Next, take some time to examine the exterior of the building. Is the overall paint tone even and is it adhering well? (Bubbling and uneven tone could indicate a problem with moisture.) Is the edging crisp and the trim completely covered? If you’re able, get a ladder and inspect the roof or use binoculars to examine the surface from the ground. Look for proper seals at the corners and edges, and double-check for any faulty materials (broken shingles, cracked tiles, and so on). While you’re up there, take a look at the gutters and make sure they are installed beneath the drip edge of the roof. Turn on all outdoor hose spigots to check for flow and pressure. Better yet, bring a garden hose along and spray around the exterior, watching for drainage issues. Is the water flowing away from the house as it should? Are there any low spots in the yard that need to be filled in, especially around the foundation? Outdoor living spaces and add-ons If your home includes additional hardscaping, such as a fire pit, pergola, fountain, pool, or an outdoor kitchen, you’ll definitely need to make sure all elements are in working order. Turn them on and test their functioning for at least five minutes. For pools, make sure that you understand the equipment and the maintenance requirements. New pools need a very specific balance of chemicals to allow the finishes to cure, so hiring a pool service professional might be a good idea at least for the first few months — check with your builder. Garage and fixtures Finally, you’ll want to check the functionality of any outdoor lighting and fans. You’ll also need to verify that the garage door works and that the surfaces have been finished per your agreement. For example, did you pay for (and thus receive) floor coating? What about custom shelving or security features? Also, check for any additional supplies that may have been leftover from your build. The garage will be the most likely place to locate these items. For homes that were chosen from a builder model, asking for leftover supplies may or may not be possible since sometimes the builder will use them on another home (and you’ve only paid for the supplies used on your home). But for custom builds, all supplies should be yours to keep. Those extra shingles and that half-can of paint may not seem like much now, but leftover supplies can prove valuable later when repairs and touch-ups need to be made. All right, here’s your new-construction exterior checklist: Landscaping and irrigation Deck, porch, patio Driveway walkway Paint Roof gutters Spigots Drainage Hardscaping and add-ons Lighting Garage Extra supplies Source: (Pixabay / Pexels) Interior walk-through inspection Oh, that new-house smell! It won’t be long now until you can move in and enjoy your gorgeous surroundings. But first, take your time during this interior walkthrough. Daniels reminds his buyers that this walkthrough is the time to catch any and all cosmetic defects. Wait until later, and your builder will likely argue that floor scratches and cabinet dents were the fault of the movers. Exit points Every door and window needs to be checked for functionality. Make sure all open and close with ease — no sticking, squeaking, or jamming. Check that each exit point locks effectively and that deadbolts have been installed where you requested. On windows, examine the screens to ensure they are free from holes and that they function properly (especially for sliding screens). Check the integrity of the glass and the seals. Are there any scratches or cracks? Have they been uniformly caulked? Consider bringing a lighter to check for air leaks (watch the flame for indications of a breeze). Interior surfaces of the home Next, move on to inspecting the walls, ceilings, and floor. Are the paint colors what you agreed upon? Does the coverage look uniform, and has the edging been done to professional standards? Look for any indication of water stains or cracking, as that could signal a plumbing, roofing, or foundation problem. Check that the trim is secure and that the caulking looks smooth. Take special care to walk slowly and methodically over the floor. Check that wood and tile has been leveled and that seams and grout lines are even. Examine the edges of all flooring. Is it tucked nicely under the trim, or are there gaps? On carpeting, make sure the installation is tight and there are no waves or wrinkles. Source: (Vecislavas Popa / Pexels) Kitchen and baths In the kitchen, you’ll want to turn on and test every appliance. Yes, that means you’ll have to wait a bit for the oven to warm up and the dishwasher to at least begin a cycle. (Take the manuals out!) Are the appliances what you ordered? Do they have any dings or scratches? Is the freezer making ice and the water dispenser flowing nicely? Don’t forget the garbage disposal! Open all cabinet doors and drawers to make sure that nothing is hindering the function and the hinges don’t squeak. Make sure counters are free of scratches and chips and that they’ve been properly secured to the cabinetry. Look at the hardware to make sure each knob and pull has been installed in the same spot. Flush the toilets, run the sinks, turn on the tub faucets and showers. Is everything running as it should? Is the toilet bolted down? Check under sinks to ensure the pipes aren’t leaking, and make sure the drains close as they should. Look over the enamel and tile to make sure there are no chips or cracks. Electrical systems The HVAC system is a big expense, so make sure all’s well there. Bump the thermostat up and down (not all at once; wait appropriately) to ensure that both the heating and cooling sides are responding. Bring a piece of tissue paper to test that the intakes are pulling air in and hold a hand up near the vents to check the flow. You’ll also want to test the light fixtures and the outlets. Bring a hairdryer or cell phone charger to make sure power is flowing. Yes, this is a tedious job, but maybe you could pass this off to older children or a friend. Also, look for GFI outlets in areas where there’s a potential for water exposure (bathrooms, kitchen, garage, laundry). Be sure to test the function of other electronics as well: Doorbells, intercom, smart home tech, electric blinds, skylights, security systems, and so on. Attic and basement Finally, the attic and basement areas will need your attention. Up in the attic, check for proper installation and floor decking in agreed-upon areas. You won’t be able to see it all, but check for any indication of roof leaks or air duct leaks where you can. Also, take a look at ventilation and lighting if applicable. In the basement or crawl space, eyeball the foundation walls for any cracks or moisture. Check for insulation and ductwork where it’s needed, too. If the basement is finished, inspect all surfaces as you would the rest of the interior. To wrap it all up, here’s an easy reference for your new-construction interior walkthrough: Doors and windows Walls, ceilings, trim Flooring Appliances Cabinets and built-ins Fixtures Sinks, toilets, and tubs Outlets HVAC Tech systems Attic Basement or crawl space Source: (Craig Adderley / Pexels) What to do if you find problems If anything on your new-construction walkthrough checklist falls short of what it should be, have your real estate agent contact the builder immediately. He or she will be able to create an itemized list of fixes to be done and work with your builder to come up with a solution. Depending upon the situation, you may not even need to delay closing. If the house is liveable and only minor things need to be changed, your agent can negotiate for a sum of money to be held in escrow until the fixes are made. If there are major issues, however, you may want to delay closing until the builder addresses the problems. You can also ask that the builder provide a home warranty, if they haven’t already. A home warranty helps give you peace of mind, knowing that if issues arise later, they’ll be taken care of as well (within a specified time limit). Hopefully, your new construction walkthrough is a pleasant experience. A thorough walkthrough using this checklist as a guide can help you move into your new home with confidence. Header Image Source: (Andrey Popov / Shutterstock)

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