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Dear Homebuyer,

Congratulations on one of the most important decisions of your life. A home inspection is not a pass/fail test; it is an education. Your inspector's job is to evaluate the visible and accessible systems and components of the home and report findings honestly and clearly. Your job is to show up, pay attention, and ask questions. This guide walks you through what your inspector will be looking at in each area of the home, what findings to pay special attention to, and the right questions to ask so you can make a confident, informed decision.

With integrity and precision,

Jason Peck, Owner and Inspector, Finer Points Home Inspections

Buyer Home Inspection Guide

What your inspector evaluates, what to watch for, and the right questions to ask.

BEFORE THE INSPECTION

- **Always attend your inspection when possible.** Being present while your inspector works gives you a real-time, room-by-room understanding of the home that no written report can fully replace.
- Schedule your inspection as soon as your offer is accepted. Most Arkansas contracts allow 7 to 10 days; do not let that window slip.
- Review the seller's disclosure form before inspection day. Note any items the seller has flagged so you can ask your inspector to pay close attention to those areas.
- Bring a notepad and your phone. You are welcome to take your own notes and photos alongside your inspector's documented report.
- Keep your group small. Bring only key decision-makers. A focused inspection is a thorough inspection.
- Confirm all utilities (gas, electric, water) will be on at the time of inspection. Without live utilities, critical systems cannot be fully evaluated.

Pro Tip: Re-read the listing notes before inspection day. Details that seemed minor during showing may look different with a fresh perspective.

EXTERIOR AND ROOF

Your inspector will evaluate the roof covering, gutters, downspouts, exterior walls, foundation, grading, driveways, walkways, decks, and all visible exterior components.

- **Roof condition and estimated remaining life** are among the most important findings. Roof replacement in Central Arkansas typically runs \$8,000 to \$15,000 or more depending on size and material.

- Your inspector will note missing, curling, or damaged shingles and any evidence of prior patching or repairs that may indicate recurring problems.
- Gutters and downspouts will be evaluated for proper attachment, drainage direction, and adequate distance from the foundation (at least 6 feet).
- The grading around the home should slope away from the foundation on all sides. Flat or inward-sloping ground is one of the most common contributors to water intrusion.
- Foundation walls will be examined for cracks, settlement, and moisture. Diagonal cracks at corners of windows or doors can signal structural movement worth monitoring.
- Exterior siding, trim, and wood surfaces will be checked for rot, moisture damage, and gaps that can serve as entry points for water and pests.
- Decks and porches will be inspected for rot, loose boards, unstable railings, and proper structural attachment to the home.

Pro Tip: Ask your inspector how many layers of shingles are on the roof. Multiple layers add cost to future replacement.

GARAGE

Your inspector will test the garage door safety systems, evaluate the fire separation wall, and inspect electrical components and visible structural elements.

- The auto-reverse function will be tested. If the door does not reverse when it contacts an obstruction, this is a safety deficiency that should be corrected.
- Photo-eye sensors will be verified for proper height (no more than 6 inches from the floor) and alignment.
- The drywall between the garage and living space is a required fire-rated separation. Any holes, gaps, or missing material will be documented.
- Electrical outlets, wiring condition, and GFCI protection will be evaluated. Extension cords used as permanent wiring are a common finding and a safety concern.
- The garage door itself will be checked for damage, balance, and smooth operation.

STRUCTURAL AND FOUNDATION

Your inspector will evaluate all visible and accessible structural components including the foundation, floor system, walls, and roof structure from the attic.

- **Foundation concerns are the most costly repairs a homeowner can face.** Your inspector will explain any cracks, movement, or moisture observed and recommend further evaluation when warranted.
- Doors and windows that stick, do not close properly, or show gaps at the frame can be indicators of foundation movement or structural shifting over time.
- The attic will be entered and inspected for proper insulation levels, adequate ventilation, signs of moisture or staining, and any evidence of pest activity.
- Crawlspace will be entered and evaluated for wood-to-soil contact, standing water, ventilation, and signs of pest or moisture damage to structural members.
- Areas with recently patched walls, new flooring, or freshly painted ceilings will be noted, as these can sometimes indicate prior damage that has been covered over.

Pro Tip: If your inspector identifies foundation concerns, ask for a referral to a structural engineer before negotiating repairs. Scope first, then price.

ELECTRICAL SYSTEM

Your inspector will evaluate the main electrical panel, visible branch circuit wiring, outlets, switches, fixtures, and safety devices throughout the home.

- The electrical panel will be identified by brand and approximate age. Certain older panel brands (Federal Pacific, Zinsco) have known safety histories and may be flagged for evaluation by a licensed electrician.
- The panel will be inspected for double-tapped breakers, missing knockouts, and signs of DIY or improper wiring.
- GFCI protection will be verified at all required locations: kitchens, bathrooms, garage, exterior receptacles, and laundry areas.
- Outlet grounding will be checked. Ungrounded two-prong outlets are a common finding in older Central Arkansas homes and may require updating.
- All accessible outlets, switches, and fixtures will be tested for proper operation.
- Smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors will be confirmed present, properly located, and functional.

Pro Tip: Ask your inspector what year the home was built and whether the electrical service size is adequate for modern household demand.

PLUMBING SYSTEM

Your inspector will evaluate the water supply lines, drain lines, water heater, fixtures, and all visible plumbing components throughout the home.

- Visible supply line materials will be identified. Galvanized steel, polybutylene (grey plastic), and lead pipes are known problem materials worth discussing with your inspector if observed.
- Water pressure will be tested at multiple fixtures. Low pressure can indicate supply line issues, mineral buildup, or a failing pressure regulator.
- All fixtures, toilets, and under-sink areas will be checked for signs of active or past leakage.
- The water heater will be evaluated for age, condition, and proper installation. Most water heaters have a lifespan of 8 to 12 years. Ask your inspector for the age; replacement typically runs \$800 to \$1,500 or more.
- The temperature and pressure relief (TPR) valve and its discharge pipe will be checked for proper installation.
- Drain flow will be observed for slow drainage or gurgling, which can indicate a blockage or venting issue in the drain system.
- Ask whether the home is on city sewer or a private septic system. If septic, a separate septic inspection is strongly recommended.

Pro Tip: If the home is more than 40 years old, ask about a sewer scope inspection. Root intrusion is common and repairs can exceed \$5,000.

HVAC SYSTEM (HEATING AND COOLING)

Your inspector will operate the heating and cooling systems, inspect the visible ductwork, evaluate the equipment condition, and check filter and maintenance indicators.

- **Ask the age of both the furnace and the air conditioning unit.** HVAC systems typically last 15 to 20 years. Full system replacement in Arkansas commonly runs \$5,000 to \$12,000.
- The filter condition will be noted. A dirty, clogged, or long-overdue filter is a reliable indicator of overall maintenance habits throughout the home.

- The system will be operated in both heating and cooling modes to confirm it responds to the thermostat and delivers conditioned air to all areas.
- Visible ductwork will be checked for disconnections, damage, and excessive dust accumulation that may affect air quality.
- The outdoor condensing unit will be inspected for physical damage, adequate clearance, and general condition.
- Ask the seller if annual HVAC maintenance records are available. A consistently serviced system signals good overall home stewardship.

Pro Tip: If the HVAC equipment is over 12 years old, get an independent HVAC quote before closing so you know what you may be facing in the near term.

INTERIOR

Your inspector will evaluate all accessible interior systems and components including windows, doors, floors, ceilings, walls, stairs, fireplace, and built-in appliances.

- Every window will be tested for proper operation, locking, and seal integrity. Fogged or cloudy insulated glass indicates a failed seal and reduced insulation value.
- All interior doors will be tested for smooth operation and proper latch engagement. Sticking or non-latching doors can indicate settling, moisture, or structural movement.
- Ceilings and walls will be carefully inspected for staining, discoloration, or texture inconsistencies that may suggest prior or active water intrusion.
- All ceiling fans, light fixtures, and switches will be tested for proper operation.
- The fireplace damper will be tested and the flue will be visually inspected for creosote buildup. Creosote accumulation is a fire hazard and a common finding in homes with regularly used fireplaces.
- Floors will be walked for soft spots, excessive bounce, or movement that could indicate subfloor damage, moisture issues, or pest activity beneath.
- All stair handrails and guards will be checked for security and proper graspability.

Pro Tip: Pay attention to any rooms that smell musty or show recently replaced carpet or fresh paint. These can be signs of moisture that was addressed but not fully resolved.

KITCHENS AND BATHROOMS

Your inspector will operate all appliances, test all fixtures, check for leaks, and evaluate the condition of surfaces, tile, and ventilation in all wet areas.

- The dishwasher will be run through a cycle and checked for leaks at the door gasket and supply and drain connections.
- All stove burners, oven elements, and the range hood fan and light will be tested.
- The anti-tip bracket on the stove will be verified. This is a consumer product safety requirement and will be noted if absent.
- Under-sink areas in kitchens and all bathrooms will be checked for evidence of past or active leaks, soft cabinet floors, or corroded connections.
- All faucets will be tested for adequate pressure and proper hot/cold orientation.
- Every toilet will be flushed and observed for proper operation, a stable base, and any signs of leakage at the floor connection.

- Tile and grout in all wet areas will be inspected for cracks, missing grout, and soft or hollow-sounding tiles that can indicate water behind the wall.
- All bathroom exhaust fans will be tested. Fans that terminate in the attic rather than to the exterior are a frequent finding and a moisture concern.
- Caulking around tubs, showers, sinks, and countertops will be evaluated for gaps, deterioration, or signs of mold.

Pro Tip: Ask your inspector to press on the floor and wall around tub and shower surrounds. Soft or spongy material almost always means hidden water damage.

AFTER THE INSPECTION: WHAT TO DO NEXT

- **Read the full report, not just the summary.** Photos and narrative descriptions provide important context that a summary list alone does not capture.
- Organize findings into three categories: safety concerns, major defects that require costly repair, and routine maintenance items. Focus your negotiation on the first two categories.
- No home is perfect. Minor maintenance items are expected in any home. Your inspector will help you understand what is significant and what is not.
- If a major concern is identified in a specialized area such as the foundation, HVAC, or roof, consider hiring the appropriate specialist for a detailed scope and repair estimate before finalizing negotiations.
- Use the report as a negotiating tool. You can request repairs, a price reduction, or a credit at closing for material deficiencies found.
- Keep your inspection report after closing. It serves as a home maintenance roadmap and documents the known condition of the home at the time of purchase.
- Ask your inspector which items are most time-sensitive and should be addressed in the first 30 to 90 days after moving in.

Pro Tip: Your inspection report is not just for closing. Save it and revisit it each year as a home maintenance planning guide.

Ready to Schedule Your Home Inspection?

Finer Points Home Inspections provides thorough, honest inspections across Central Arkansas. As a veteran-owned business, we bring the same precision and integrity to every inspection that we brought to our years of service. You deserve the full picture before you sign.

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