



Homebuyer's checklist

Before getting a house survey done, you'll want to do your own checks on your potential new home to avoid any shocks or surprises later. When out looking at properties, you can use this checklist as a reminder of 'hidden' issues to look out for - ticking off parts of the property you're happy with and making comments to follow up on.

Don't let anything put you off buying the house, but it will help give a better idea of what work might be in store once you move in and help you decide whether to make an offer.

Roof and attic	Checked	Comments
Check or find out what type of roof it has, eg a flat roof which could be used for a patio or green space		
If the roof is pitched, check for cracked or missing slates. This could be a sign of rusting and corrosion.		
Check to see if there are any recent renovations to the roof. If there are, ask why they were needed.		
Do the gutters have any holes, do they appear solidly fixed, or are there any drips or blockages?		
Does the chimney stack appear to be straight or are there any visible signs of damage? It may need to be repointed (renewing the external mortar joints) as water could enter and cause further damage.		
Can you get easy access to the attic space? If there isn't, it could show that the attic isn't checked a lot.		
Are there any damp patches in the attic?		
Look up at ceilings for cracks, drips and any staining.		
Check for loose wiring. This could mean the electrics aren't safe.		

Alarms	Checked	Comments
If there's a burglar alarm, is it remotely monitored, and does it have a maintenance contract? If there is a maintenance contract, there may be an annual charge - so be sure to ask.		
Are there mains connected smoke alarms installed and do they work?		
Check if there are any mains connected carbon monoxide alarms.		

Central heating and boiler	Checked	Comments
Is there a regular maintenance and servicing contract for the boiler?		
Find out how old the boiler is and if it has a Gas Safety Certificate.		
Look for a date on the servicing sticker or booklet – is it within the last twelve months?		
Note the general appearance of the boiler – if it's dirty or dusty it may not have been touched for some time.		
Find out what type of boiler it is, eg wall hung, combi boiler or condensing boiler.		
Check for a hot water cylinder. Is it insulated or not?		
Are there any signs of dripping or rust around any of the connections?		
Does the heating work efficiently? Ask to put the heating on at the start of your viewing – by the time you've been round the house the radiators should be getting warm.		
Does every room have a radiator?		
Is there a fireplace and is it in use? If so, ask whether the chimney been swept annually (and can they show records), what type of fuel it uses (and are there any restrictions?) and has the fireplace been serviced regularly?		

Electrics	Checked	Comments
Check the fuse box – this will give an indication of when the electrical circuits were last overhauled.		
Check the condition of the sockets and light fittings – old sockets may suggest the rest of the wiring is not up to date.		
Test any sockets that aren't in use.		
Ask to see the electrical and/or gas installations reports.		
If there are any built-in appliances, check to see they are working.		
Ask to see the gas and electricity meters and the thermostat.		

Doors	Checked	Comments
Make a note of the locks fitted on all the doors to the property. You can then compare it to the approved list of locks on your insurer's website or paperwork later, to make sure they're appropriate.		
Do the door and/or window locks have keys, and if so how many sets? Do they conform to the BSI Kitemark standard?		
Are the doors difficult to open? This could be a sign that the property has started to subside.		

Drains	Checked	Comments
Check outside for smells from any drains – this could be because there's a blockage or another problem.		
Check that any drain covers are secure and don't have any cracks.		
If any of the drains for the downpipes from gutters are missing their grates, check to see whether the drains have become clogged with leaves.		
Check the condition of the ground level gutters. Are they split, damaged or have anything obstructing them?		
Are there damp patches, discolouration or deposits of salt on the outside wall? This could mean the property has leaking gutters.		
Ask about any subsidence issues with the house's foundation. Vertical or diagonal cracks on the walls or ceilings are a common sign of subsidence.		
Is the house in a flood risk zone?		
Test the toilets. Do they flush properly? Also, check water pressure of the shower and taps.		
Ask where the stopcock is.		

Floors	Checked	Comments
Investigate under carpets for stains and signs of leaks.		
Has furniture been moved around recently? Ask why and check to see if it's hiding anything.		
Are the floors insulated? If not, is this possible?		

Damp	Checked	Comments
Look out for patches of damp or mould – while these could be a result of a temporary leak, they may indicate something more serious.		
Look inside the back of cupboards and wardrobes where signs of damp may be hiding.		
Use your nose when looking for signs of damp. It often gives off a musty smell and new patches of paint, plaster or strips of wallpaper may be hiding a problem.		

Outside	Checked	Comments
Are there any invasive plants on the property that may cause you issues in the long term? For example: Japanese knotweed .		
Check for signs of leaning, cracking or disintegration of the garden's wall or fences. Replacing a wall or fence can be costly and may cause a dispute with the neighbour. Also check to see who owns the fence or if it's a 50/50 liability.		
Look at the exterior brickwork. Is it cracked or worn? And how old is it?		

Pests	Checked	Comments
Check the attic for any sign of wasps nests – a nest can have the appearance of dried paper.		
Look for teeth marks on boxes or bags in the attic, or other signs of items being nibbled.		
Watch out for droppings – mouse droppings look like brown or black grains of rice.		
Are there dead insects or other pests on window ledges or on the floor?		
Do you notice any strange smells? Rotten smells could be dead pests behind walls or hidden away and ammonia smells could indicate the presence of mice.		

Radiators	Checked	Comments
What size are the radiators? If they're switched off, ask for them to be switched on and take note of how long they take to get hot.		
Are the valve connections rusty?		
Are there any signs of damp patches under the radiator valves?		
Are there any signs of rust on the radiators themselves?		

Walls	Checked	Comments
Have the walls been insulated? If you can't ask, the thickness of the outside walls might give a clue - thicker than 30cm is likely to be a cavity wall.		
Are there clear signs of damp? This could mean the property isn't well insulated or ventilated.		
Can you hear noise coming from other rooms and parts of the house?		
Have any walls been knocked out? Ask why and if the council allowed this.		

Windows	Checked	Comments
If the windows are new, do they have a certificate of installation and a guarantee?		
Do the windows fit snugly in their frames? Any gaps could cause rattling and could also impact security.		
Check for any misting within double glazed windows as this shows the seal is damaged.		
Check whether the windows which open are lockable, and check whether any have been painted shut.		
Is there enough ventilation going through the house? Condensation on the windows is a sign there isn't.		
If there are PVC windows, check for cracking sealant around the frame of the windows.		