

Compile a thorough checklist of prospective homes

If you're thinking of purchasing a home soon, you've probably already started looking. You may have seen quite a few and the details are starting to become somewhat hazy and jumbled.

Do you remember which one had the ensuite bath, and which one had the walkout basement? How much storage space did the first choice on your list have? Were appliances included in all of the homes you viewed? And what about property taxes and maintenance costs associated with each home? Can you remember how close local amenities — like stores, schools and public transport — were to each of the homes you liked?

Compiling a house hunting checklist as you go through homes could help you keep better track of things, so that you easily recall the advantages and drawbacks of each one.

When you see a home that really grabs your attention, take a sheet of paper and write down the location, asking price, annual property taxes, mortgage terms and any applicable zoning restrictions. A Realtor should be able to provide any information you're lacking.

EXTERIOR — Jot down your impressions of the exterior of the home, noting the lot size and shape, position of the home on the lot (facing north and south, east or west), and whether it has a private or shared driveway. Also note whether it has a large front, side and backyard, what condition the landscaping is in and whether there are many mature trees and shrubs.

What type of siding does the home have and what kind of shape is it in? Is it a detached home or a duplex? How many stories does it have? Don't forget to jot down whether it has an attached or detached garage and whether it can store one or two cars.

Also note whether there is a porch or verandah, storage shed and whether the yards are fenced. How private is the home?

While still outside, take a good look at the roof and note its general condition and age. Check to see if any roof repairs were made recently. As well, check eavestroughs and downspouts for signs of deterioration and look at the type of foundation the home has. Are there any visible cracks or holes or signs of water seepage?

Of course, you will want to hire a house inspector for a thorough, professional survey — outside and inside — of any home you're serious about purchasing.

INTERIOR — Once you've completed your checklist for the exterior, it's time to move indoors. Note whether the home has a separate front hallway with a guest closet. How many

rooms does the home contain altogether?

Check windows and note whether they are single pane or thermopane. Do they open and close without sticking? What about the doors? Also make a note of their general condition and whether the locks and latches work.

The kitchen is an essential part of any home, so note its general size and colours, whether it has an eat-in area and sufficient cupboard space. Is there a pantry or food preparation island? What conditions are the countertops and sink in? Are the cupboards old or new? What shape is the floor in and what is it made of? Is the existing lighting adequate for carrying out kitchen tasks, as well as dining?

Also make sure there are enough outlets to run your appliances. Are the fridge, stove and dishwasher included with the sale? Note how many burners the stove has and whether it's gas or electric. Is the oven self-cleaning?

Once you've completed your kitchen checklist, move on to the dining room and note its size, whether it's separate from the kitchen and the condition of the floors and walls. Are there any built-in cupboards? Is the existing chandelier being sold with the house? Take similar notes for living room. Is there a fireplace? How many windows are there?

If the home has a family room, note whether it's close or adjacent to the kitchen, if it has access to the outdoors and if it has a fireplace. Again, check the condition of the floor or carpet — and look for cracks and other potential problems.

Move on to the bedrooms and note their size and closet space, whether there are any window coverings or adjoining bathrooms. Also note the type of flooring in each bedroom and the colours the rooms are painted.

BASEMENT — Next, move down to the

basement. Note whether it is full or partial, finished or unfinished. Is there adequate headroom for moving about? Is there a fireplace or wood-burning stove? Also look for signs of moisture — such as water marks and peeling paint.

Note whether there is a utility area and whether the washer and dryer are being sold with the house. Again, look for signs of water damage.

Find out if there have been any recent renovations to the home. It's also important to ask about the type of heating, water service, plumbing (copper or other) and electrical amperage. Is the hot water heater owned or rented? Is it gas or electric and what is its capacity? What type of insulation is in the house?

— This article is provided by local realtors and the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA) for the benefit of consumers in the real estate market.



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