

Before the *Inspector Arrives*

PRE-LISTING REPAIR CHECKLIST
RESIDENTIAL · CALIFORNIA
PREPARED FOR: _____

A home inspection is not a pass or fail test. It is a list, and the buyer will price every line on it.

Most of what shows up on a report costs very little to correct in advance. Left alone, those same items get bundled into a repair request, and buyers do not ask for what the fix costs. They ask for what it might cost, which is always more. A strap that costs a few dollars at the hardware store becomes a line item. Three bent screens become a number. Ten small items become a renegotiation.

The goal is a short report. A clean inspection keeps the buyer confident, keeps your price where you set it, and keeps the deal moving instead of reopening it. Work through the list below in the weeks before we go active, and keep every receipt.

START HERE

The items that show up on nearly every report

If you do nothing else, do these twelve. They are the callouts we see most often in San Diego County, and they are the ones buyers reliably attach a dollar figure to.

- 01 Water heater not strapped at both the upper and lower third
- 02 Missing or incorrect temperature and pressure relief discharge line
- 03 Missing GFCI protection at kitchen, bath, garage, laundry, and exterior outlets
- 04 Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms missing, expired, or in the wrong rooms
- 05 Toilets loose at the floor
- 06 Leaks and corroded shutoff valves under sinks
- 07 Garage door auto reverse and photo eyes not working
- 08 Dryer vented with plastic or foil duct, or blocked with lint
- 09 Missing outlet covers, switch plates, and junction box covers
- 10 Amateur wiring and extension cords used as permanent wiring
- 11 Slow drains at sinks and tubs
- 12 Bent, torn, or missing window screens

THE FULL WALKTHROUGH

Room by room, system by system

Check the boxes as you go. Anything you cannot resolve yourself, get a licensed contractor and save the invoice. A completed repair with paperwork behind it ends the conversation.

Water heater

The single most cited appliance in California inspections. Every item here is inexpensive and every one is written up when it is wrong.

- ☐ Double strapped, at the upper and lower third of the tank, anchored into framing **REQUIRED IN CA**
- ☐ Vent pipe fully connected at the draft hood, properly sloped, correct clearance from combustibles, no gaps or rust holes
- ☐ Temperature and pressure relief valve has a full size discharge line running downward, terminating outside or at a drain, six to twenty four inches above grade, with no threads on the end
- ☐ Drip pan with a drain line where the unit sits above living space or finished flooring
- ☐ Gas shutoff valve and flexible connector in good condition, no corrosion at the base of the tank
- ☐ Combustion air openings clear, no stored items or combustibles crowding the unit

Plumbing

Buyers read water as damage. Anything wet, slow, or corroded gets flagged.

- ☐ Repair every drip and active leak, under sinks, at hose bibbs, at the water heater, and at the disposal
- ☐ Replace corroded or seized angle stops and supply lines under every sink and toilet
- ☐ Replace swollen, stained, or delaminated cabinet bases under sinks. Drying it out is not a repair **HIGH CREDIT RISK**
- ☐ Every sink and tub drains quickly. Clear any slow drain before the inspection
- ☐ Toilets tight at the floor with no rocking, fill valve not running, flush strong, no seepage at the base
- ☐ No S traps, no corrugated flexible drain lines, all traps present and properly vented
- ☐ Water pressure in the normal range and the pressure regulator functioning
- ☐ Main water shutoff located, accessible, and operable
- ☐ Re-caulk tub and shower surrounds, and seal every bath and shower fixture where it meets tile. Re-grout open joints
- ☐ Braided steel washing machine hoses, and a drip pan under the washer
- ☐ Dishwasher has an air gap or a proper high loop, and drains without leaking
- ☐ Irrigation runs on every zone, no broken heads, no leaking valves or standing water

Electrical

Small parts, large reactions. Safety items in this category almost always come back as a demand rather than a request.

- ☐ Panel: every breaker labeled, no double tapped breakers, filler plates in all open knockouts, and a grommet or connector where wires enter the enclosure
- ☐ Cover plates on every outlet and switch, and a cover on every junction box, including the garage and attic
- ☐ GFCI protection at kitchen counters, baths, garage, laundry, exterior, and anywhere within six feet of a sink. Test each one **HIGH CREDIT RISK**
- ☐ Remove all amateur or unpermitted wiring, open splices, and extension cords being used as permanent wiring **HIGH CREDIT RISK**

- ☐ Test every outlet for reversed polarity, open ground, and dead circuits. A plug in tester costs about fifteen dollars and pays for itself immediately
 - ☐ Replace every burned out bulb, including recessed cans, closets, exterior fixtures, and appliance lamps
 - ☐ Exterior outlets and fixtures have weather rated covers and are sealed at the wall
 - ☐ Bath and kitchen exhaust fans run and vent to the exterior, not into the attic
 - ☐ Smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area, and on every level. Carbon monoxide alarms outside sleeping areas. Replace any unit older than ten years **REQUIRED IN CA**
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Heating, cooling, and fireplace

Test both systems regardless of the season. An untested system is an unknown system, and unknowns get priced.

- ☐ Fresh filters installed, and a spare left on site
 - ☐ Heat blows hot and air conditioning blows cold, verified at the registers
 - ☐ Condensate line drains freely, secondary pan and float switch intact where applicable
 - ☐ All registers and return grilles present and secured, thermostat responsive
 - ☐ Seal the opening where the gas line enters the fireplace, and any other gaps in the firebox surround
 - ☐ Damper opens and closes, gas log key valve operates, no cracked firebox or missing mortar
 - ☐ Chimney cap and spark arrestor in place
 - ☐ Service the system before listing and keep the invoice with the disclosures
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Doors, windows, and screens

Nothing signals deferred maintenance faster than a door that sticks or a screen with a hole in it. These are the cheapest wins on the list.

- ☐ Every door opens, closes, latches, and locks with normal effort. No rubbing, dragging, or forcing
 - ☐ Deadbolts throw fully, all keys work, handles and hinges tight
 - ☐ Door stops present so knobs are not punching holes in the drywall, and patch the holes that are already there
 - ☐ Closet doors present, aligned, and sliding with normal effort on clean tracks
 - ☐ Cabinet doors and drawers close fully and align evenly. Adjust hinges, replace failed soft close hardware
 - ☐ Weatherstripping and door sweeps intact at every exterior door. No daylight at the bottom edge
 - ☐ Windows open, close, lock, and stay up. Nothing painted shut, no broken sash locks
 - ☐ Replace bent, torn, or missing screens on windows and sliding doors
 - ☐ Identify any fogged or cloudy dual pane glass. Failed seals are a routine credit request, so decide now whether to replace the glass or price it in **HIGH CREDIT RISK**
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Garage

The garage carries both safety items and fire separation requirements, and inspectors check all of them.

- ☐ Garage door reverses on contact, photo eyes mounted below six inches and aligned, manual release cord functional **HIGH CREDIT RISK**

- ☐ Door from garage into the house is fire rated, self closing, and self latching, with intact weatherstripping and no pet door
 - ☐ Fire separation drywall intact on shared walls and ceiling. Patch every hole and open seam
 - ☐ Springs, cables, rollers, and brackets in safe condition, with no frayed cable
 - ☐ Clear access maintained to the panel, water heater, and attic hatch. Move storage before inspection day
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Roof, exterior, and grounds

This is where the expensive findings live. Small corrections here prevent a general inspector from recommending a specialty inspection.

- ☐ Gutters and downspouts clear and discharging away from the foundation
 - ☐ Grade slopes away from the house, with no standing water or negative drainage at the perimeter
 - ☐ Trim vegetation six to twelve inches clear of the roof and siding, and remove branches resting on the roof
 - ☐ Eliminate wood to soil contact. Move stored lumber, firewood, and planters off the structure **TERMITE CALLOUT**
 - ☐ Repair wood rot at fascia, trim, door jambs, garage trim, posts, and deck framing **HIGH CREDIT RISK**
 - ☐ Seal or repaint exposed and peeling wood, and seal open stucco cracks
 - ☐ Handrails and guardrails secure, baluster spacing correct, stair treads and deck boards sound
 - ☐ Gates open, close, and latch, and fence posts are solid
 - ☐ No missing or broken roof tiles or shingles, no exposed nails, no cracked or lifted flashing, roof and valleys clear of debris
 - ☐ Crawlspace and foundation vent screens intact and rodent free
 - ☐ Pool or spa: barrier and self latching gate in place, GFCI protection at the equipment, no leaks at the pad
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Finishes that read as maintenance

Cosmetic in isolation, but together they set the tone for how the rest of the report is read.

- ☐ Fix the source of any ceiling or wall stain first, then repair and paint. Never paint over an active leak
 - ☐ Replace missing register grilles, vent covers, and trim pieces
 - ☐ Touch up scuffs, nail pops, and drywall dings in high traffic areas
 - ☐ Every light fixture works and has all of its globes, shades, and covers
 - ☐ All built in appliances operate through a full cycle
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Inspection day access

Anything the inspector cannot reach is written up as not inspected, and that phrase invites a second inspection or a blanket credit request. Access is free to fix.

- ☐ Clear path to the attic hatch, crawlspace access, electrical panel, water heater, furnace, and every exterior wall
- ☐ Gates, sheds, side yards, and panel doors unlocked. Leave keys or remotes for anything that stays locked
- ☐ All utilities on, including gas, and pilot lights lit
- ☐ Pets secured and, if possible, off site for the appointment

- Personal storage pulled back from garage walls, closets, and under sink cabinets

OLDER HOMES

Four things worth knowing before a buyer finds them

On a home over roughly thirty years old, these four items account for most of the truly large credit requests. Knowing the answer in advance lets us price for it or address it on our terms instead of theirs.

- **Sewer lateral camera scope.** A few hundred dollars now, and it is the single most common five figure surprise in escrow
- **Roof condition report.** Remaining life stated by a roofer carries far more weight than a general inspector's estimate
- **Termite and wood destroying organism report.** Section one findings are far cheaper to clear before the buyer's report names them
- **Electrical panel brand.** Federal Pacific, Zinsco, and Challenger panels draw an automatic buyer and insurer response. Confirm what you have

CAUTIONS

Four things not to do

Do not do your own gas, electrical, or structural work. An unlicensed repair that looks wrong is worse than the original finding, and it invites scrutiny of everything else.

Do not do permit required work without the permit. Unpermitted improvements are a disclosure issue, a lender issue, and a valuation issue all at once.

Do not paint over stains, mold, or rot. Inspectors carry moisture meters, and concealment is a materially different problem than a repair.

Do not assume a repair removes the disclosure. California requires you to disclose known material conditions whether or not they were corrected. The correct answer is to disclose it and attach the receipt.

ON DISCLOSURE

Fixing an item and disclosing an item are two separate obligations. Repairing something in advance does not erase the duty to disclose it, and a seller who repairs quietly and says nothing is in a worse position than one who repairs openly and documents it.

Keep every invoice, receipt, warranty, and service record in one folder. When we deliver those alongside the disclosures, the buyer sees a maintained home rather than a list of problems, and that reframing is worth more than any single repair on this page.

Work through what you can and mark what you cannot. Send the list back with your notes and we will decide together which remaining items are worth correcting, which are worth disclosing and pricing, and which are not worth touching at all. Not every line here needs to be done. It needs to be decided.

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QUESTIONS ON ANY ITEM ABOVE, CALL OR TEXT ANYTIME