TRUSTED
HOME INSPECTIONS

THE PRE-LISTING EDITION · 2026

Prepare Your Home *for Sale.*

A Room-by-Room Guide from a Trusted Inspector.

Ten years of inspections, distilled into a checklist you can walk through this weekend. The small things buyers notice, the big things inspectors flag, and the simple fixes that keep your sale on track.



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Why This Guide Exists.

Most sellers do not know what buyers and inspectors actually notice. The gap between the two is where deals slow down, prices drop, and good homes pick up a reputation they did not earn.

I have spent ten years climbing into Portland-area attics, crawling under houses, and scaling roofs. Unfortunately, the inspection and report pattern is almost always the same. Sellers focus on what is visible from the curb. Buyers and their inspectors focus on what is hiding behind the water heater, under the toilet, and at the edges of the roof. Small things, repeatedly, create outsized impressions in both directions.

The single best investment a seller can make before listing is a pre-listing inspection. Not because it surfaces problems, but because it surfaces them on your timeline, when you have leverage, instead of in the middle of negotiation when you do not. You get to choose what to fix, what to disclose, and what to price around.

This guide is the next best thing. It walks you through your own home the way I would, room by room, system by system, with the specific items I see written up most often. Use it to see your house through a buyer's eyes, and through mine.

Russ Motyko

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

01

Read the intro

Each section opens with a short paragraph on what buyers and inspectors look at, and why it matters to your sale.

02

Walk the checklist

Carry the guide with you. Five to eight printable check boxes per area, written in plain language, none of them expensive.

03

Read the Inspector's Eye

A short, candid note on what tends to spook buyers in that part of the home, and how to get ahead of it.

A WORD BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Schedule a pre-listing inspection.

It is the single highest-leverage step a seller can take. You will know what is there before a buyer does, on your timeline, with room to fix, price, or disclose on your terms.

Book Your Inspection →

01 Roof

The roof is the first place a buyer's agent looks and the first place an inspector points a camera. Drone shots and listing photos make damage obvious from a distance, which is why a tidy, well-documented roof sets the tone for the entire walkthrough.

- [ ] **Shingle condition**
  Look for curling, cupping, missing tabs, or granules collecting in gutters.
- [ ] **Flashing and seals**
  Check around chimneys, vents, and skylights for lifted metal or cracked sealant.
- [ ] **Gutters cleared**
  Clean debris and confirm water moves freely toward downspouts during a hose test.
- [ ] **Downspouts directed**
  Extensions should carry water at least four feet away from the foundation.
- [ ] **Moss and biological growth**
  Treat moss before listing. It reads as neglect even when the roof is structurally fine.
- [ ] **Visible sagging or dips**
  Walk the perimeter and sight along ridges. Any waviness should be looked at by a pro.
- [ ] **Roof penetrations**
  Boots around plumbing vents are the most common leak point and the cheapest to fix.
- [ ] **Roof age documented**
  Pull permits or invoices. Buyers will ask, and a confident answer prevents a low offer.
- [ ] **Skylight condition**
  Check seals and interior staining. A leaking skylight reads as a roof problem to buyers.
- [ ] **Chimney cap and crown**
  A cracked crown or missing cap is an easy fix that prevents a much larger write-up.

INSPECTOR'S EYE

The roof is the single most-asked-about system in the buyer's first conversation with their agent. A small repair invoice in your disclosure packet is worth more than the repair itself, because it removes the costliest surprise on the table.

02 Attic

Few sellers visit their attic, which is exactly why inspectors love them. Most of what we write up in this section is invisible from the living space and almost always inexpensive to address before a buyer's inspector finds it.

- [ ] **Insulation depth and coverage**
  Look for thin spots and compressed areas across the attic floor.
- [ ] **Ventilation pathways clear**
  Soffit vents should not be blocked by insulation. Baffles solve this in an afternoon.
- [ ] **Bathroom fans vented outside**
  Fans terminating into the attic deposit moisture where you cannot see it.
- [ ] **Signs of moisture**
  Stained sheathing, rusted nails, or a musty smell all suggest a ventilation or roof issue.
- [ ] **Mold**
  If you see any mold, reach out to a remediation contractor before listing.
- [ ] **Pest evidence**
  Droppings, chewed insulation, or nesting material need to be addressed.
- [ ] **Accessible hatch and pull-down**
  A clear, working access point shows the home has been maintained, not hidden.
- [ ] **Wiring tucked and supported**
  Loose junctions or missing covers are common, easy fixes that look bad in a report.
- [ ] **Roof sheathing visible**
  No active leak stains. Look at every penetration and the underside of the ridge.
- [ ] **Storage limited and tidy**
  Remove heavy items and anything that clutters or blocks access to the attic.

INSPECTOR'S EYE

Attic bypasses and inadequate ventilation are among the most common findings inspectors report in this region. Most are sub-$200 fixes that read as multi-thousand-dollar concerns to a nervous buyer.

03 Exterior

Buyers form their first impression of your home before they ever walk through the front door. Inspectors form theirs during the slow lap around the foundation. The exterior is where those two perspectives overlap most.

- [ ] **Siding condition**
  Check for soft spots, separation at seams, and paint failure on the south and west walls.
- [ ] **Trim and fascia**
  Probe wood trim near downspouts and at corners. Soft wood here is a top-five repair callout.
- [ ] **Paint and caulk**
  Repaint or touch up before photos. Fresh caulk lines signal a cared-for home from ten feet away.
- [ ] **Grading slopes away**
  The first six feet of soil should fall away from the house at a noticeable angle.
- [ ] **Walkways and driveways**
  Tripping hazards become liability questions during a showing. Lift, level, or seal.
- [ ] **Landscaping cleared**
  Vegetation should be at least 12 inches off siding and 18 inches off the roof.
- [ ] **Exterior lighting works**
  Replace burned-out fixtures. Buyers notice them at evening showings.
- [ ] **Hose bibs and outlets**
  Test each one. Frozen or leaking exterior fixtures are an unwelcome surprise on inspection day.
- [ ] **Deck and railings**
  Probe ledger boards, confirm rail height and stability. Loose rails are a safety flag.
- [ ] **Fence and gates**
  Repair leaning sections and broken latches. The yard is part of the buyer walkthrough.

INSPECTOR'S EYE

Buyers form first impressions before they walk through the door, and those impressions color every room they see afterward. A weekend on the exterior changes how every interior photograph reads.

04 Foundation

Foundation language scares buyers more than any other category, often out of proportion to the actual condition. Honest documentation and basic perimeter maintenance significantly reduce the buyer's level of concern.

- [ ] **Visible cracks photographed**
  Hairline cracks are normal. Document them now so any change later is obvious and answerable.
- [ ] **Efflorescence checked**
  White mineral deposits indicate past moisture. Note where they appear and whether they are active.
- [ ] **Perimeter drainage**
  Confirm gutters, downspouts, and grading work together to move water away from the wall.
- [ ] **Crawl space**
  Should be relatively clean and clear of debris. Vapor barrier should be in place and intact.
- [ ] **Sump pump tested**
  If you have one, run it. A working pump on inspection day is a small but reassuring detail.
- [ ] **Vents and access points**
  Damaged crawl vents or a broken access door is a pest entry point and a common write-up.
- [ ] **Posts and beams sound**
  In the crawl space, look for rot at post bases and any sag at center beams.
- [ ] **No standing water**
  Even a small puddle in the crawl on a dry day suggests a drainage issue worth solving now.

INSPECTOR'S EYE

Foundation concerns trigger fear disproportionate to their actual severity. Proactive disclosure, with photos and dates, almost always resolves the conversation faster than waiting for someone else to bring it up.

05 Electrical

Electrical findings are some of the most common in any inspection report and almost universally inexpensive to correct. They also disproportionately rattle buyers, who tend to imagine larger problems behind small symptoms.

- [ ] **Panel labeled and accessible**
  Each breaker clearly labeled. Thirty-six inches of clearance in front of the panel.
- [ ] **No double-tapped breakers**
  Two wires under one breaker lug is a flagged item nearly every time. A licensed fix is quick.
- [ ] **GFCI in wet areas**
  Kitchen, bathrooms, garage, and exterior outlets should test and reset properly.
- [ ] **AFCI where required**
  Newer code coverage in bedrooms. Worth confirming if you have updated any circuits.
- [ ] **Visible wiring tidy**
  Junctions in covered boxes. Check for loose, damaged, and hanging wires in attics, basements, crawlspaces, and garages.
- [ ] **Smoke and CO detectors**
  One on every level, in every bedroom, and outside sleeping areas. Test each unit and confirm that date of manufacture is less than 10 years ago.
- [ ] **Switches and fixtures work**
  Walk every room and operate each switch. Replace any that are loose or dead.
- [ ] **Outlet covers in place**
  Missing or cracked covers are tiny issues that add up across an inspection report.
- [ ] **Service entry condition**
  From outside, confirm the electrical service mast is plumb and the drip loop is intact at the meter.

INSPECTOR'S EYE

Double-tapped breakers and missing GFCI outlets are flagged constantly and are inexpensive to fix. Few items return a higher ratio of buyer confidence per dollar spent than these.

06 Plumbing

Plumbing tells a buyer how recently the home was loved. Drain speed, water pressure, and what is happening under the sink are immediate, visceral signals that go beyond the inspection report.

- [ ] **Water pressure consistent**
  Run two fixtures at once on different floors. Sluggish or fluctuating pressure deserves a look from a plumber.
- [ ] **Drains run quickly**
  Fill each sink, then release. Slow drains are a buyer red flag and usually a simple clear.
- [ ] **Under-sink dry**
  Wipe cabinet floors clean today. A bead of fresh moisture next week tells a clear story.
- [ ] **Water heater age**
  Note manufacture date on the label. Be aware that water heaters that are over 15 years old are often flagged during an inspection.
- [ ] **Water heater straps and pan**
  Two seismic straps in our region. A drip pan with a routed drain on upper floors.
- [ ] **Main shut-off accessible**
  Confirm you can find and operate it. Buyers often ask to see it during the walkthrough.
- [ ] **Toilets seated firmly**
  No rocking. A loose toilet hints at flange or subfloor problems beneath.
- [ ] **Visible supply lines**
  Check braided supply lines at every fixture and replace any that are leaking or visibly damaged.
- [ ] **Drain trap condition**
  Look for corrosion at p-traps under sinks. A cheap part replacement quiets a write-up.

INSPECTOR'S EYE

Slow drains and water stains signal deferred maintenance to buyers, regardless of the actual cause. Twenty minutes with a snake or a bottle of cleaner often saves a paragraph in the inspector's report.

07

HVAC

Heating and cooling systems are read as a proxy for how the entire home has been maintained. A clean filter and a folder of service records do more to build confidence than almost any other single act of preparation. If a service has not been performed in the last year, one is highly recommended before listing.

- [ ] **Fresh filter installed**
  Replace it the week of listing photos. It is a small, telling detail.
- [ ] **System age documented**
  Pull the data plate and write the install year into your disclosure. Lead the conversation.
- [ ] **Thermostat tested**
  Confirm heat and cool both cycle. A failed call for cool on a hot day stalls the showing.
- [ ] **Registers unobstructed**
  Move furniture and rugs that block supply or return vents in any room.
- [ ] **Service records gathered**
  Collect all service records. A record of service speaks to a well-kept home.
- [ ] **Outdoor unit clear**
  Two feet of clearance on all sides. Trim shrubs and rinse the coil before listing.
- [ ] **Condensate line clear**
  A clogged drain is a top-five HVAC finding. Clear and pour a cup of vinegar through it.
- [ ] **Ductwork visible and sealed**
  In the crawl or attic, look for disconnected runs and torn insulation on the trunk.

INSPECTOR'S EYE

A dirty filter on inspection day tells buyers the system has not been cared for, and that one impression colors how they read every other system in the report. It is the cheapest preparation step in this entire guide.

08 Interior

Interior issues are usually cosmetic and individually, they are minor. But a long list of small issues in a report negatively color the buyer's impression of the entire house.

- [ ] **Walls and ceilings touched up**
  Patch nail holes, repaint scuffs. Stage walls so eyes land on the room, not the marks.
- [ ] **Floors clean and sound**
  Squeaks and soft spots are common write-ups. Address what you can.
- [ ] **Doors operate correctly**
  Every door should latch and not rub. A few minutes with a screwdriver fixes most of these.
- [ ] **Windows open and lock**
  Open and close every window. Replace cracked and failed panes, and locks that don't work.
- [ ] **Smoke and CO detectors**
  Confirm placement, test each unit, and replace any older than ten years.
- [ ] **Staircase safety**
  Check for loose and wobbly guardrails and handrails. No loose treads or wobbly newel posts.
- [ ] **Fireplace and chimney**
  Damper operates. A recent sweep certificate is a powerful reassurance for buyers.
- [ ] **Garage door operation**
  Check the door for damage. Garage door opener should open and close the door without excessive vibration and noise.
- [ ] **Window seals intact**
  Check dual-pane windows for fogging between panes. Disclose any failed seals.
- [ ] **Trim and baseboards**
  Re-caulk gaps and touch up scuffs. Crisp trim lines lift the entire room in photos.

INSPECTOR'S EYE

Cosmetic issues like scuffed walls or sticking doors are minor on their own, but they compound into a poor impression of how the home has been kept. Buyers translate that impression directly into their offer price.

09 Kitchen

Buyers spend more time in the kitchen than any other room during a showing, and inspectors spend more time documenting it than almost any other space. A well maintained kitchen speaks volumes.

- [ ] **Appliances functional**
  Run and clean each one. Buyers may not know how a furnace works but they can definitely see if the oven is caked with years of grease.
- [ ] **Cabinet interiors**
  Clean and check for damage. Be on the lookout for moisture stains.
- [ ] **Exhaust fan vents outside**
  A range hood that recirculates is allowable in older homes but one vented outside is preferred. Confirm that it is not venting into the attic or crawlspace.
- [ ] **Under-sink dry and tidy**
  Check the cabinets for leaks, moisture damage, and stains. This comes up more often than you would think.
- [ ] **Counters and backsplash sealed**
  Caulk lines should be clean and continuous, especially behind the sink and stove.
- [ ] **Refrigerator water line**
  If present, check the connection and the floor beneath. A slow drip here can rot a subfloor unseen.
- [ ] **Outlets GFCI protected**
  Every counter outlet should test and reset. This is one of the most cited kitchen items.
- [ ] **Drawers and cabinet doors**
  Tighten loose hinges and align drawer faces. Buyers open everything they walk past.

INSPECTOR'S EYE

Kitchens and bathrooms sell homes, and buyers inspect these rooms more closely than any other. A spotless cabinet interior carries more weight in a showing than most sellers realize.

10 Bathrooms

Bathrooms are small, water-rich rooms where small problems compound quickly. The room rewards thirty minutes of attention more visibly than almost any other space in the house.

- [ ] **Caulk and grout intact**
  Re-caulk tubs, showers, and counters. Fresh white lines read as a recently cared-for room.
- [ ] **Exhaust fans working**
  Each fan should pull a tissue against the cover. Vent termination should be outside, not the attic.
- [ ] **Toilet seated and steady**
  Check that toilets are properly secured to the floor and do not move.
- [ ] **No staining or visible mold**
  Address ceiling stains and treat any biological growth before listing photos.
- [ ] **Water pressure adequate**
  Run the shower and sink simultaneously. Note any drop that affects daily use.
- [ ] **Shut-offs operate**
  Each fixture should have a working angle stop. Frozen valves are an inexpensive fix.
- [ ] **Tub and shower drainage**
  Drains should clear within seconds, not minutes. Pull the stopper and clean the trap.
- [ ] **No leaks**
  Check around toilets, tubs, showers, and sinks for any signs of active or past leakage.
- [ ] **GFCI outlets functional**
  Every bathroom outlet should test and reset. Inexpensive to fix and often written up.
- [ ] **Vanity interior dry**
  Clear and inspect under each vanity. Moisture damage and staining is a concern for buyers and inspectors.

INSPECTOR'S EYE

Soft flooring around toilets is one of the most common bathroom findings and signals water damage history to even an untrained buyer. Identifying and addressing it before inspection day is one of the highest-leverage moves in this guide.

BEFORE YOU LIST

The Smartest Move You Can Make *Before You List.*

Sellers who know what is in their home can fix it, price around it, or disclose it on their own terms. Sellers who do not know are negotiating blind. A pre-listing inspection costs a fraction of a single repair credit and removes the most common reason a deal stalls in the final week: a surprise nobody saw coming.

It is not about avoiding bad news. It is about replacing surprise with information, and giving buyers a reason to trust the home they are about to buy. That trust shows up in the offer, in the timeline, and in how smoothly you get to the closing table.

STEP ONE

Book a Pre-Listing Inspection

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KEEP READING

Visit Our Blog

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I built this guide because I want your sale to go smoothly. If you have a question while you walk through your home, do not hesitate to reach out. I would be happy to help.

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