

How to Look at Houses

Water where it shouldn't be. Look for:

- Stains on basement walls
- Stains on ceilings
- Moss, mildew or stains on lower siding
- Stains or mildew on underside of roof
- Soggy areas in yard
- Eroded areas in walkway or driveway

Building lines that are not straight or true. Look for:

- Roof that sags in middle
- Walls that curve
- Windows or doors that look crooked
- Porches that lean or sag

Structural problems. Look for:

- Diagonal cracks above doors and windows
- Slipping or shifted foundation
- Floors that feel spongy or uneven
- Inside doors or windows that don't fit
- Houses that are built on wood posts or sill beams on ground

Utility systems problems. Look for:

- Very high heating or air-conditioning bills (ask to see the bills)
- Leaking plumbing, especially the main water line (turn on the water and look at the pipes)
- Main electrical service that is too small (turn many lights and appliances on at the same time to see if they blow a fuse or circuit breaker)
- Odd smells, such as sewer gas
- Single-pane windows that offer little insulation
- Lack of insulation in attic (there should be thick insulation)

Serious finish problems. Look for:

- Signs of termites or ants
- Old, flaky paint on sills or trim or exterior
- Floor covering that is worn in large areas
- Siding that is wavy or spongy
- Underneath roof cover that is seriously worn or has many layers