

THE FIRST-TIME BUYER'S RED FLAG CHECKLIST

Avoid \$100K+ in Repairs

The Home Inspection Checklist That Saved Our Clients Thousands

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HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST

- Print this checklist before your home inspection
- Walk through the home with your inspector
- Check boxes for any issues found
- Note severity: ● CRITICAL · ● MAJOR · ● MINOR
- Take photos of red flags
- Review findings and decide next steps

Disclaimer: This checklist is a guide only and does not replace a licensed professional home inspection.

SECTION 1: FOUNDATION & STRUCTURAL

Critical Red Flags

- **Horizontal foundation cracks** ●
 - *Why it matters:* Structural failure (\$20K-\$100K+)
 - *Action:* Structural engineer inspection immediately
- **Water stains or moisture on foundation walls** ●
 - Mold risk and foundation damage
 - Get sewer scope + waterproofing estimate
- **Gaps between wall and floor (>¼")** ●
- **Sloping/uneven floors (>½" drop)** ●
- **Bowing or leaning walls** ●
- **Temporary jacks or supports** ●
- **Mold or mildew smell** ●

San Diego Watch-Outs: Soil settlement · Expansive clay · Earthquake damage

Notes: _____

SECTION 2: ROOF & EXTERIOR

- Missing/damaged shingles ● (\$5K-\$15K)
- Sagging roof line ● (\$20K-\$50K+)
- Multiple roofing layers ● (\$15K-\$25K)
- Flashing damage ● (\$1K-\$3K)
- Roof age >20 years ●

San Diego Watch-Outs: UV damage · Salt-air corrosion · Tile roof aging

Notes: _____

SECTION 3: WATER DAMAGE & PLUMBING

(#1 Hidden Cost for First-Time Buyers)

- Water stains on walls/ceilings ●
- Soft drywall or flooring ●
- Musty or moldy smell ●
- Visible mold ●
- Slow drains / backed-up toilets ●
- Galvanized or polybutylene pipes ●
- Water heater >10 years ●

Notes: _____

SECTION 4: HVAC & ELECTRICAL

HVAC

- System >15 years old ●
- Rust or corrosion ●
- Uneven heating/cooling ●

Electrical

- Knob-and-tube wiring ●
- Aluminum wiring ●
- Outdated or corroded panel ●
- No carbon monoxide detector ●

Notes: _____

SECTION 5: WINDOWS & DOORS

- Fogged or cloudy windows ●
- Rotting frames ●
- Drafts or poor seals ●
- Locks not functioning ●

Notes: _____

SECTION 6: MOLD & MOISTURE

- Visible mold ●
- Moisture readings >15% ●
- Damp crawlspace/basement ●
- Condensation issues ●

Notes: _____

SECTION 7: NEIGHBORHOOD & TITLE

- Flood zone ●
- Liens or back taxes ●
- Pending lawsuits ●
- High crime indicators ●
- HOA financial problems ●

Notes: _____

SECTION 8: COSMETIC RED FLAGS

(What They're Hiding) - Fresh paint over stains ● - New flooring before sale ● - Cheap flip finishes ● - Rushed closing timeline ●

Notes: _____

SECTION 9: VA LOAN REQUIREMENTS

If using a VA loan, the home must be **safe, sound, and sanitary**: - No pest or termite damage - Roof in good condition - No lead-based paint hazards - Functional HVAC - Safe electrical system

VA Advantage: 0% down · No PMI · Seller must make repairs

DECISION TREE

● Found **CRITICAL** Issues?

- Get inspections (structural, plumbing, mold, electrical)
- Get estimates
- Walk away **or** negotiate repairs/price

● Found **MAJOR** Issues?

- Budget and negotiate

● Only **MINOR** Issues?

- Proceed with confidence
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FINAL CHECKLIST BEFORE OFFER

- Inspection complete
 - Red flags identified
 - Repair estimates received
 - Title search complete
 - Flood zone checked
 - HOA reviewed (if applicable)
 - VA appraisal requirements met
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