



A BUYER'S GUIDE

6 Things to Check Before Buying a Home

Don't get caught off guard. Six big-ticket systems every buyer should look into before taking the plunge — so you can buy with confidence.

Prepared for home buyers across the greater Houston area



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Educational guide — current as of 2026. General guidance only and not a substitute for a licensed home inspection. Always rely on a qualified, licensed inspector before you buy. Equal Housing Opportunity. If your home is currently listed with a REALTOR® or broker, please disregard any solicitation — this is shared for education, not to interfere with an existing agreement.

START HERE

Fall in love with the home — but check the bones first.



Buying a home should feel exciting, not nerve-wracking. The best way to keep it that way is to know what to look for before you commit, so you're not blindsided by a big repair bill a month after closing.

This guide walks through six of the most expensive systems in any home — the ones that quietly make or break your budget. None of this replaces a licensed inspection; think of it as the smart-shopper's eye that helps you spot warning signs early and ask the right questions.

A little curiosity up front protects a very big purchase. Here's exactly what to look into, and the warning signs worth a closer look.

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SECTION 1

Electrical: wiring and the panel

Old or faulty wiring is both a safety concern and a costly fix. It's also easy to overlook because so much of it is hidden behind the walls. A few simple checks tell you a lot about what you're walking into.

What to look into



Ask for update dates

Find out when the electrical system was last updated. Older wiring may need work to be safe and up to code.



Look at the panel

Glance at the electrical panel for tidy, professional workmanship versus a messy patchwork of fixes.



Test the outlets

Bring a phone charger or small device and check that outlets throughout the home actually work.

WHY IT MATTERS

Electrical problems range from a minor annoyance to a serious hazard, and rewiring a home is rarely cheap. Catching concerns before you buy means you can negotiate the repair — or the price — instead of footing the whole bill yourself later.

SECTION 2

Plumbing: leaks and water damage

Water is patient — a small, slow leak can do expensive damage over time before anyone notices. When you tour a home, take a few minutes to run the water and look in the places leaks like to hide.

What to test and inspect



Run every fixture

Turn on faucets, flush toilets, and run the showers to check water pressure and drainage.



Check the appliances that use water

Dishwashers and laundry hookups rely on plumbing — make sure they're in good working order.



Don't skip the extras

Test utility sinks and outdoor faucets, which are easy to forget but just as prone to problems.



Peek under the sinks

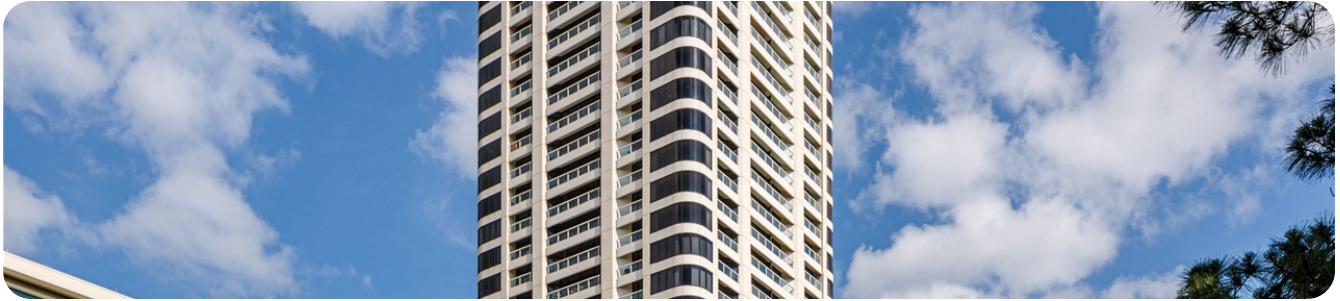
Look beneath sinks and around fixtures for leaks, mold, or signs of past water damage.

TEXAS NOTE

In our humid Gulf Coast climate, moisture and mold deserve extra attention. If you spot water stains, a musty smell, or soft spots, flag them — and lean on your inspector to look closer. Catching a moisture issue early is far cheaper than living with it.

SECTION 3

Major appliances and HVAC



Ask about upgrade dates

Find out how old the big-ticket appliances are. Knowing their age helps you predict which ones might need replacing soon — and budget for it before it's a surprise.

Test what conveys

Run the appliances that stay with the home: refrigerator, oven, microwave, dishwasher, and washer and dryer. A quiet, working appliance today saves a costly one tomorrow.

Heating and cooling

The HVAC system is one of the most expensive things in any home. Ask its age and service history, and confirm it heats and cools the way it should.

Built to last — or not

Appliances and HVAC units don't last forever. A cluster of aging systems isn't a deal-breaker, but it should shape your offer and your budget for the first year or two.

HOUSTON-AREA REALITY

Air conditioning isn't a luxury here — it runs hard for much of the year. A tired or undersized HVAC system can mean high bills and an expensive replacement, so make its age and condition one of your first questions, not an afterthought.

SECTION 4

Foundation and structure

Foundation issues top almost every buyer's worry list — and for good reason, since major structural repairs can be among the costliest a home will ever need. The encouraging part is that warning signs are often visible if you know where to look.

Warning signs worth a closer look



Sagging floors or ceilings

Floors that slope or ceilings that dip can hint at structural movement underneath.



Bowed or cracked walls

Walls that bow outward, or stair-step cracks, deserve a professional's eye before you commit.



Musty or damp smells

A persistent musty odor in lower areas can point to moisture problems that affect the structure.

TEXAS SOIL NOTE

Much of the Houston area sits on clay-heavy soil that expands and contracts with our wet-and-dry swings, which puts extra stress on foundations. Some movement is common locally — what matters is whether it's been monitored and addressed. A foundation specialist's report is well worth it when there's any doubt.

SECTION 5

The roof and the windows

The roof and windows are your home's first line of defense against the weather, and replacing either is a meaningful expense. A few minutes of looking — and opening and closing things — tells you how much life they have left.

What to check



The roof's age and condition

Ask how old the roof is; one past about 25 years may be nearing the end of its life. Look for cracked or buckling shingles, granules in the gutters, sagging, or any moss or mold.



Windows and doors

Check their age and whether they've been updated. Open and close them to feel for drafts — leaky windows quietly drive up heating and cooling costs.



Workmanship counts

Poorly installed windows and doors waste energy year-round. Smooth operation and a tight seal are good signs of quality work.

STORM-COUNTRY NOTE

Along the Gulf Coast, your roof takes a beating from heat, heavy rain, hail, and the occasional storm — and insurers care a great deal about its age and condition. A newer, well-maintained roof can mean a smoother insurance experience, so it's worth knowing exactly what you're getting.

SECTION 6

Turning checks into a confident offer

These six checks aren't about finding a perfect home — no home is perfect. They're about knowing what you're buying so you can offer wisely and budget honestly.

1

Always get a licensed inspection.

Your own walkthrough catches the obvious; a professional inspector catches the rest. It's one of the smartest dollars you'll spend in the whole process.

2

Use what you find to negotiate.

Inspection findings are leverage. You can ask the seller to make repairs, credit you toward them, or adjust the price — that's a normal, expected part of the deal.

3

Budget for the big systems.

If the roof, HVAC, or appliances are aging, plan for those costs in your first couple of years so they're expected, not emergencies.

4

Mind the Texas specifics.

Foundations on clay soil, hard-working AC, and storm-ready roofs all matter here. Factor our climate into both your checks and your budget.

5

Lean on your agent.

A good REALTOR® helps you read the findings, weigh what's worth worrying about, and turn it all into a smart, well-supported offer.

LET'S TALK

Work with Allen



A new home is a big purchase, and you deserve to feel confident about it. When something doesn't look right during a showing, I'd rather you ask than wonder — that's exactly what I'm here for.

Have a home you're checking out?

If you have questions or concerns about a home you're considering, give me a call. I'll help you spot what to look into, connect you with trusted inspectors, and make sure the inspection findings work in your favor. No pressure — just honest guidance for an exciting decision. When would be a good time to connect?

Reach out for a free, no-pressure consultation

Call or text: (832) 709-2540 · allen@allenmarkel.com · allenmarkel.com

If a home has issues that aren't worth the headache, I'll tell you straight. My job is to help you buy the right home — not just any home.