

14 things to check when on a viewing

Viewing Guide

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Begin

Are you going to view a property? Here's a brief list of some of the things you should look for

1. Try and spot the signs of damp

Damp, and poor ventilation are both big considerations, especially with older buildings. Check for rising damp or damp around the ground floor walls. Bubbles in the wallpaper, mould on the ceilings, condensation on the windows or rotting window frames can all be signs of damp or poor ventilation.

If you can't spot anything, follow your nose – damp leaves a very distinct, musty smell. It's also a good idea to keep your eyes peeled for any recent repainting that doesn't match the rest of the house. It could be an attempt to cover up the damp patches.

2. Check the electrics

Pay attention to the number and location of the plug sockets, it's also worth checking to see what sort of condition they are in. Older properties may lack the number of electrical sockets which are required today.

Older electrics may eventually need replacing and this could be expensive, so make sure you know whether the wiring in the house is up to scratch.

3. Keep an ear out for noise from neighbours and traffic

When viewing a property listen out for noisy neighbours. If there's a TV or radio playing in the property you are viewing, ask for it to be switched off – it could be hiding noise from next door.

It's not just the neighbours you need to think about – transport noise can be just as noticeable in a property. It doesn't have to be road traffic either; rail lines and flight paths are all worth thinking about.

Try and visit at different times of the day, if you get the chance. The street may be pretty quiet at 10am on a Monday, but there could be plenty of noise come Friday night.

4. Check out the local area

Research the nearby area before you go to a viewing, and if there's a pub or bar nearby, pop in. It's a good chance to get a real feel for the area and soak up the atmosphere. It might also give you an indication if there might be a noise problem at closing time.

5. Check the roof

Get outside and take a look at the roof. Does it look old and in need of repair, or is it in good condition? Roof repair can be a big, expensive job, and generally something to be left to the professionals.

Keep an eye on the chimney too. Does it look off-centre? If so, it may need repointing in future, which can be another expensive job.

6. Find out what direction the house faces

Finding out if a property gets the sun can mean the difference between a home that's warm and bright, or one that's always a bit dingy. Another consideration would be, are there any big trees, and how close are they to the house? Also what about neighbours' fences? You may have an amazing south facing garden, but you might never see it.

7. Check mobile phone signal

When you first arrive, check your signal. And if there's anyone else with you on the viewing, try and ring them. With modern day reliance on mobile phone signals it can be a real frustration to realise your new home is a phone signal black hole. It's no fun having to nip to the upstairs bathroom every time you need a signal.

If there's no signal nearby, don't give up hope. Some mobile phone providers do sell devices that work with your broadband to give you 3G signal so check what the various providers can offer.

8. Look out for storage space

Get a feel for how much storage space is in a property. Check under the stairs, the garage, and any big cupboards. These can all add up.

9. Check to see if your existing furniture fits

Rooms can look larger with either no furniture or someone else's furniture in it, but will yours fit? Bring the measurements of large items of furniture you want to bring with you such as beds, tables and wardrobes before you go on a viewing.

10. What about the loft?

Ask the estate agent or owner if you stick your head upstairs into the loft, but be very careful if you decide to go up any further, not all lofts are floored and you don't want to fall through the bedroom ceiling!

Take a look to see how the roof has been built, ask if you can take some photographs, this will assist you if you want to talk to a builder to establish if a loft conversion would be possible. A lot of heat is lost through the roof of a house, so also check the level of insulation it's good to know if the property is likely to be energy efficient.

11. Watch out for cracks

Small, hairline cracks can appear in both older properties and new builds, and can just be a sign of the house settling so don't panic. If you do spot larger cracks, look a bit closer and see if they may be a major part of the structure. It's something that you may wish a professional surveyor to look at.

12. Check the plumbing

Check the water pressure from various taps, showers etc, is it a steady stream, or a dribble? Also check the hot tap to check how long it takes for the hot water to come through. A property may be amazing, but if the shower can only manage a weak dribble you may regret your purchase every single day. Remember to incorporate in the cost of a replacement if you definitely can't live without a decent shower to start your day.

13. Test the heating

Ask if you can turn on the heating to see how long everything takes to warm up. Find out when the boiler was installed, when it was last serviced, and if there's a warranty that comes with it. Older boilers will eventually need replacing, so bear that in mind.

Check what kind of boiler it is – if it's a combi boiler, it'll mean instant hot water and energy efficiency. If not, there's a water tank and maybe higher running costs to think about.

14. Check out the neighbours/neighbourhood

Have a good look at the condition of nearby properties, this can often tell you a lot about your neighbours. Does the property look well maintained, or is it a bit "unkempt"?

Remember, these could be your new neighbours, do you want to be looking at their front garden full of rubbish every morning.

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YOUR HOME MAY BE REPOSSESSED IF YOU DO NOT KEEP UP REPAYMENTS ON YOUR MORTGAGE