

Your home is conditionally sold and the buyer has scheduled a home inspection. Should you be worried about what the inspector might find? The answer depends, of course, on the condition of your home and how well you've maintained its major components over the years.

Regardless of what the inspector may uncover, however, you shouldn't be overly concerned about the actual home inspection. Keeping in mind that disclosure laws and customary real estate practices vary from place to place, here are six suggestions as to how you might help the home inspection process go smoothly:

1. Leave the premises.

It's perfectly reasonable to absent yourself from your home during the home inspector's visit and turn over the duties to your real estate agent. Your agent should be familiar with the home inspection process and able to act as your representative. In fact, many listing agents prefer that the seller not be at home during the buyer's home inspection.

2. Be courteous.

Some sellers mistakenly assume the home inspector is an adversary. Experienced professional home inspectors aren't on a mission to find fault with every tiny aspect of your home. The home inspector's role is to offer the buyer a fair assessment of the property. Tip: Don't keep the inspector waiting on your doorstep and allow at least two hours for the inspection.

3. Don't attempt to refute negative comments about your home during the inspection.

Inspectors don't appreciate being followed around by argumentative or defensive home sellers (or sellers' real estate agents). The time to explain and negotiate (if necessary) will come when you sit down with your agent.

4. Don't make statements about your home that are beyond your personal knowledge or can't be verified.

For instance, if the inspector asks you how old the roof is or when certain appliances were installed, check your records before you answer. If you have documentation, provide a copy of it. If repairs or modifications were made prior to your purchasing the home, don't guess when that work was performed. The same caution about misrepresentations applies to questions about whether permits were obtained for remodeling, the exact square footage of your home, the name of the architect who designed it and so on. Don't give guesses as factual answers.

5. Don't block access to normal living areas of your home.

If the home inspector can't enter a room or complete some other aspect of the inspection, that will be noted in his or her report and the buyer may question it.

6. Make agreed-upon repairs promptly.

The buyer may ask the inspector to okay any repairs you agree to make as a result of the inspection. The sooner you make the repairs, the sooner the contingency can be met. Delaying the repairs until the last minute won't stop the buyer from having those items re-inspected, but it could delay the closing of your sale.