

10 Red Flags to Look for When Touring a Home



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While most listings will disclose any known issues a residence might have, the seller may not always be aware of a problem, and occasionally a listing may intentionally omit something.

To avoid unexpected repair costs or a lengthy inspection process, it's always a good idea to look out for red flags while you tour a home for the first time. Taking these signs into consideration before moving forward will help you save time and money on repairs in the future.

Let's go over 9 red flags to look out for when touring a home.

1. Water Damage

Water damage can cause a plethora of issues for a house and should be one of your top concerns when touring a home. Look for stains on the ceiling, brown streaks or tints on walls, rusty pipes, and evidence of standing water.

If a home has a basement sump pump, check the conditions surrounding the pump, and inspect the area between the walls and flooring. Take a peek at the crawl space to see if it's muddy or damp.

2. Plumbing Issues

While it's impossible to know the condition of the pipes under the ground and in the walls when touring a home, you can inspect what you can see. Check under sinks, faucets, around toilets, bathtubs, in the basement, and in the crawl spaces for evidence of leaks.

It's also important to find the sewer cleanout, assess its condition, and understand whether or not it's easy for a professional to use if needed.

Some homeowners will have a professional plumbing service like [CW Service Pros](#) inspect their lines for damage before listing their house. While that's a great idea and can give you peace of mind, it's still a good idea to look out for large soft spots in the yard, low water pressure, and drains that don't drain properly.

3. Foundation Issues

Cracks are very common in homes, especially older houses. However, they can also mean a home has foundation problems that need to be addressed. If you notice cracks that are 1/2 inch wide or larger, a foundation expert will need to examine the condition.

When touring a home, check how well the doors and windows operate. When doors don't close well, it could mean the framing members have shifted and the door frame is no longer square. Occasionally, instead of addressing the home's foundation, a homeowner will shave the door down in order to get it to close. Look for evidence that a door has been cut to fit.

Check for uneven floors and cracks above windows and doors. While many foundation issues can be fixed, they can be pricey.

4. Water Drainage

When touring a home you may be interested in buying, it's important to consider where the water drains. Be sure to check the slope of the area around the home. See if there's good drainage or if water is allowed to collect around the foundation or other areas of the yard. Standing water can cause problems with mosquitoes and other pests, mud, and issues with the foundation, walkway, and other structures.

5. Scents Galore

If a home has a lot of scents masking the natural smell of the home, like delectable [baked goods in the oven](#) or candles in every room, it could be a sign that the sellers are trying to cover up suspicious smells like mildew, mold, smoke, or pet odor. While it doesn't always mean a seller is covering up something, it's important to take it into consideration to protect yourself from potential hazards moving forward.

6. Active Insect Infestation

It's best to recognize the presence of pests like termites before you undergo the home inspection process. Termites can jeopardize a contract and cause a real headache for you in the future.

Look for tiny brown droppings on floors near walls, hollow sounds when knocking on wood surfaces, and the presence of mud tubes near the foundation.

7. DIY Additions

While many homeowners are capable of home improvements, not everyone has sufficient skill and knowledge to do things properly and to code. DIY projects could have structural, plumbing, and wiring issues.

8. Fresh Paint

While having freshly painted walls may just be a nice way for the current homeowner to get their home ready for the market, it's still a good idea to look at where the paint has been applied and whether it's been used to cover stains or other defects.

9. Saggy Ceilings

Sagging ceilings are a sign that there's been a roof leak, structural movement causing the drywall to loosen from ceiling joists, or an insect infestation that has serious effects on the joists.

10. Little Maintenance

Look for burnt-out light bulbs, long grass and weeds in the yard, leaky faucets, faded paint, and dents and dings throughout the house. If the home doesn't look taken care of, odds are other areas of the house have received little maintenance as well.

Buyer Beware

Buying a new home is an exciting time, especially for first-time homebuyers. Purchasing a house is the biggest investment most people will make in their life. While there are a lot of things to consider before rushing into the [home-buying process](#), the cost and headache of home repairs should be a top concern.

An open house is a great opportunity to tour a home and decide whether it's the right fit for your lifestyle and needs. However, there are some important things to consider while touring a home for the first time. You want to be aware of the red flags the home might have before deciding to look at it again or make an offer.

When in doubt, ask a [realtor with great testimonials](#) for their professional opinion.