

# The Home Inspector

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We, as home inspectors, all play an important part to the real estate transaction. We all also could easily become "The Weakest Link," should things not go right.

Did you ever wonder who home inspectors are? Who is doing all this inspection work in the field? Who is going into the lion's den with upset clients? Have you ever hired a home inspector? Was that inspector like you?

It looks deceptively simple. The reality is that it is very complex. It's harder than it looks. We are in front of an audience. It is a performance by any sense of the word, though it may only be for a homebuyer. Often though it is a whole crew of people. It is as true in business as in the arts or sports worlds, people who are very good at what they do make it look simple.

Home inspecting is a poorly understood profession. Home inspecting is hard work. It requires lots of technical knowledge, a keen eye, powers of deductive reasoning, focus, quick thinking, the ability to read people and put them at ease, good communication skills to transfer information and lots of energy. Some inspectors may ask themselves at times, "Is it all worth it?"

We've talked about some of the home inspection realities. Let's try to build the ideal home inspector. There are thousands of them in the field already.

The perfect inspector knows everything about houses. He/she is familiar with every building material, every mechanical and electrical system that's ever been used, and every modification that homeowners have ever made to any of these. He/she is completely up-to-date on every new housing related product and method that comes onto the market and is able to anticipate the failure modes of every building material and component. He/she also knows how to evaluate these systems almost instantly and determine whether they are performing properly.

The inspector enjoys people. Don't get the idea that the inspector is one-dimensional. Because the inspection is an interpersonal process, the inspector has to enjoy people and get along with all the parties, all in high stress situations. He/she is a great communicator and must be able to convey his/her observations, conclusions and recommendations into the head of the clients, overcoming all barriers that exist to both verbal and written communication. He/she uses exactly the right words, in exactly the right number, at exactly the right time.

We learn to adjust expectations of all parties. The inspector can radically change the perception or expectations of the client, perhaps the Realtor's and seller, clearly defining the limitations and scope of the home inspection without diminishing the perceived value of the process. It's tricky.

Yes, as mentioned they are actors or performers. The inspector

must perform high-level intellectual activity (observing, evaluating, analyzing and drawing conclusions about systems based only on a one-time visual examination) while at the same time building rapport and credibility with an audience. For the most part, there is no set script and the inspector has to improvise his/her presentation, gearing it to the specific audience without sacrificing any of the technical work.

They are diplomats. The inspector must report the findings in a way that makes the client understand the physical condition of the home. At the same time we are building rapport with the agents and the seller. The goal is not to make enemies of some while befriending others. The perception of the inspector developed by each audience member must be similarly positive, even though the message may be more palatable to some.



We rely on clues, symptoms; tell tales and indirect evidence to form opinions. The list of limitations is virtually endless for the inspector. Nonetheless, the perfect inspector derives accurate conclusions from the tiniest shreds of evidence. He/she is a detective and investigator.

The ideal home inspector is organized but flexible. Inspectors have a routine they follow meticulously. However, they find a way to adjust the routine to all circumstances without diminishing the thoroughness and effectiveness of the inspection.

There are physical challenges. The perfect inspector does not have to be an Olympic athlete, but he/she has to be able to carry ladders, tools, climb ladders, and crawl through attics and crawlspace areas. They will be able to handle tools with the dexterity of a surgeon and write or use a keyboard with speed and accuracy.

The perfect home inspector is constantly in the field. Come rain, sleet, snow, cold and heat the inspector is ready to perform. It may be 20 below zero or 112 degrees. He/she is comfortable operating out of his/her vehicle and spending little or no time in an office. He/she takes time to research, managing to stay current with building materials and systems innovations.

So is it worth it? Sometimes it's not easy being in a performance business. While all these things can be challenging, the rewards are similarly great. The gratitude from some clients at the end is sometimes better than the fee. The knowledge that you have genuinely helped someone make a significant decision in his or her life is a great feeling. Home inspectors can alter people's lives in a positive way. There are very few professions where, over the course of three hours, a practitioner can develop rapport, earn respect and deliver a complete product and service with immediate recognizable value. Driving away from a home knowing that you have used your skills to help someone is a wonderful feeling. And, we're ready to go tomorrow.