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Just a Typical Home Inspection

by Paul Rogoshewski of [Harmony Home Inspection](#)

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Well you've found your dream home after searching for several months. It's in the right town, close to work, the schools are good, the price is, oh well, the price is as good as its going to get! The house has a snazzy modern kitchen, the bathrooms have been remodeled, and the house has a fresh coat of paint. Its just perfect!

Most houses sell on looks. The snazzy kitchen and fresh new paint do wonders for sales appeal, and you're just totally enamored with your new home. You know you should get a home inspection just in case, so you talk to your friends about who they used, search the web, peruse qualifications, affiliations, testimonials, and fees for the various inspectors, call up a few and go with the one you felt best about.

He shows up the day of the inspection, and after introductions and signing the inspection contract, he gets started and you follow him around as he does his thing. The first thing he says is that the roof appears to be at the end of its life and you should anticipate replacing it in the near future. You think, O.K., I didn't notice that but I can deal with that. He checks some areas around the window trim with a screwdriver and finds that some moisture damaged wood had been painted over and several sills will need eventual replacing. You start to wonder what else he'll find., its only been a few minutes since he started the inspection.

He's making notes on his clipboard as he checks various items on the outside of the house. You ask him what he's writing and he gives you a run down on the what's OK and not OK so far. You realize this is not going to be a picnic and that you're not going to have the time of your life. This is serious business and everything he is saying is translating into dollars and cents. The cash register in your brain is starting to go ka-ching, ka-ching, ka-ching. He explains that there are no perfect houses, they all have problems, and that you should try to remain calm and take things in stride. You calm down a bit, are glad you hired him, and at the same time you are wondering if ignorance is bliss.

The inspector says you have some typical cracks in the foundation and they are not a structural concern, but they

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should be sealed up to prevent moisture entry and termite entry. He says to get a crack repair specialist to do it (ka-ching). You feel a little better though because you remember seeing those cracks and you had a major concern about them. You were wondering if there was something structurally wrong with the house. The cracks were the reason you thought you should have an inspection in the first place.

The inspector points out a few other concerns on the exterior, namely a set of stairs with no railing and some offsets in the concrete walkway that he calls a trip hazard. He says both conditions are unsafe and should be corrected and you're thinking this guy is too much of a perfectionist. He goes on to talk about a 1998 Harvard University study that concluded that trips and falls are the number one health and safety hazard in a home. You realize again that he appears to really know what he's talking about and you're happy about that. But not too happy about that cash register in your brain though, ka-ching!

The inspector says he is now ready to do the garage and then after that the basement. You had noticed that he had tested an exterior outlet with some sort of device. He does this again at the garage outlet and states that the GFCI receptacle is inoperative, a safety hazard, and needs repair by an electrician. He explains that a GFCI is a safety device that can actually save your life in certain instances, and should be present at all areas where electricity and water are in close contact, such as exteriors, garage outlets, kitchen counters, bathrooms, unfinished basements, and whirlpools. Since you have an older house, he is expecting that you have some in a few places. He says he may also recommend additional GFCI outlets be added as a safety upgrade. He also tests, among other things, the garage door and states that the auto-reverse mechanism is inoperative, a serious safety hazard, and needs to be adjusted or repaired.

On to the basement. He checks the framing at the perimeter of the house with a three foot long probe and states everything seems OK, looks at the rest of the basement framing, makes a few checks, and its on to plumbing. He checks the main line, the supply lines, the gas lines, the drain lines. Everything is going much better now. At the new water heater he pauses, checks the label and states the water heater may be at the end of its service life. You're thinking, "but it looks brand new, how can this be?" He states that the tank appears to be about 10 years old as indicated by the serial number on the nameplate, which is beyond the normal life expectancy of a water heater and you should plan on replacing it before it becomes a problem. Ka-ching, ka-ching!

On to electrical. The inspector unscrews the service panel door, looks inside for a while and states that there are a few double tapped circuits that should be separated by using "skinny" breakers and that labeling could be improved. Not so bad. He also notes a few uncovered junction boxes that need covers and an open splice, where two wires are connected with tape, important fire safety hazards that need correction.

He checks the gas heater and gives it a clean bill of health. Its a ten year old cast iron boiler that he says should last a long time.

He says the worst is over now and you follow him upstairs. The upstairs inspection seems to move much faster.

The inspector checks the kitchen, no real problems except some dings in the vinyl floor. The toilet in the bathroom needs a new wax seal, a sink needs a new faucet, small stuff in comparison. He moves through the dining room, living room, and bedrooms, checking electrical outlets and windows, looking at the ceiling, walls, and what he can see of the floor. He also checks the heat in each room with a cool little laser thermometer as he cruises from room to room. A few things come up, nothing major. He has been shutting all the windows in the house as he goes for the radon test.

Last place he goes is the attic. He gets up in the scuttle hole and disappears from view, but you hear him walking around above you. He says that the framing is okay but you could use more insulation for energy savings and you will also need some extra attic ventilation as well. The bathroom ventilator terminates in the attic and can cause condensation problems, he says. He recommends rerouting it to the outside. Almost done now.

He places radon canisters in the basement and you discuss the protocol of the test and when to pick up the test canisters.

Back to the kitchen where he makes his final touches to his report, hands it to you, tells you to make sure you read it carefully. You hand him his check and you say your good-byes.

Well that's how a typical home inspection goes in an older home. Sometimes its an old roof or an ancient boiler, sometimes its the electrical service. The point is that almost all older homes need repairs and some of these will be major. You must decide whether the house is worth it at the current price, whether you'd like to negotiate a lower price, or whether you'll walk away due to unanticipated major repairs.

Your not exactly overjoyed, there is a lot to consider and you have a little more homework than you bargained for, but you're glad you hired that home inspector!

Paul Rogoshewki is an ASHI certified and a Massachusetts Licensed Home Inspector #243. He is a graduate of the esteemed North Eastern University Home Inspection Program and has over fifteen years experience in home inspections, building analysis, energy conservation, and residential construction. Paul is a very active member and Director in the local New England chapter of the American Society of Home Inspectors. Mr. Rogoshewski performs home inspections in the Boston Suburban, MetroWest, and East Central Massachusetts area. Visit Paul's website at <http://www.harmonyhomeinspection.com/>, send him an [E-mail](#), or call him at (978) 568-8100 for more information.

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