

► 7.0 INSPECTION TOOLS

The most important tools that home inspectors have are their eyes, ears, noses, sense of touch and, of course, their brains.

The following tools are also useful. We've broken them down into a basic and optional list. There's nothing magic about this list. Some people will think there are other tools that should be on the basic list, and some will think that some of the basic tools are optional. We offer this simply as a starting point.

BASIC

Binoculars

To look at parts of the home you can't get to.

Flashlight

To look at poorly lit parts of the house and to scan along interior surfaces for irregularities. Flashlights can also be used to tap on siding to determine the substrate. Some inspectors use the end of their flashlight to push open the attic access hatch to avoid getting fingerprints on it.

Spare Flashlight Batteries and Bulbs

To make sure you always have a working flashlight.

Ladder – Step, Extension and/or Foldable

To get to roofs and attics.

Screwdrivers — Assortment

To open electrical panels, remove access hatches and so on.

Carpenter's Awl

To probe wood for rot or insect damage.

Telescopic Mirror – Small

To inspect furnace heat exchangers and other confined areas.

Measuring Tape – 25-Foot-Long, One-Inch-Wide Blade

To measure structural members, roof areas, chimney heights, window sizes, stair risers, etc.

Electrical Circuit Tester

To check that receptacles are wired correctly.

Knife

To probe wood for damage, scrape off paint labels, break paint seals on access hatches, dig paint out of screw slots, etc.

Gloves

To protect hands from hot roofs and irritating insulation.



Coveralls

To keep clothing clean while in attics and crawlspaces. A plastic bag for soiled coveralls is a good idea.

Pliers – We like Channel Lock or Slip Joint

To turn screws where slots are worn or where nuts have been used instead of screws.

Briefcase or Tool Kit

To carry your tools.

OPTIONAL**Tool Belt**

To carry tools and keep hands free.

Mask

To avoid inhaling insulation fibers in attics.

Flashlight Belt Loops

This loop attaches to your belt and you can hang your flashlight from it to keep your hands free.

Trouble Light – A Plug-in Light With Extension Cord

To illuminate crawlspaces and other poorly lit areas where a flashlight may not be adequate.

Drop Sheet

To put over clothes in closets and below attic hatches to protect the home from dirt and insulation.

Large Mirror – Six Inches By 10 Inches

To look behind water heaters, furnaces, oil tanks and other spaces that are too small to get into, but not as confined as a furnace heat exchanger.

Wet Wipes, Paper Towels, Towels or Rags

To clean up during and/or after an inspection. We prefer not to use the seller's washroom facilities and hand towels. Towels and rags are also useful for wiping off data plates on heating and cooling equipment so they can be read.

Moisture Meter or Moisture Scanner

To look for elevated moisture levels in suspect areas and to check stains for evidence of moisture.

Voltage Detector

To determine whether wiring is energized.

Ampmeter

To verify correct operation of electric furnace, for example.



Plumb Bob

To measure the amount by which columns or walls are out of plumb.

Mason's Level – Four-Foot Spirit Level

To measure amount by which walls or columns are out of plumb, and floors, walls or ceilings are out of level. Can also be used to measure slope of gutters, waste plumbing pipes or appliances vents.

Extendable Probe

To check for rot in places that cannot be reached from the ground or floor level.

Nut Driver

To remove nuts that may have been used in electrical panels, access covers, etc.

Power Screwdriver

To facilitate removal and replacement of screws from panels, access hatches, etc.

Crescent Wrench

To remove and replace bolts.

Hammer

To pull out and replace nails, sealing, access hatches and so on.

Goggles

To keep insulation and other irritants out of your eyes.

Camera – Polaroid, 35mm, Digital or Video

To record your findings. Note: Some inspectors include photographs of the home in their reports. Some give copies of videotapes to clients.

Carbon Monoxide Sensor

To check for holes in heat exchangers and possible backdraft problems.

Combustible Gas Analyzer

To check for gas leaks, backdraft and holes in heat exchangers.

Compass

To determine which way the house faces. This can be helpful in order to know where prevailing winds or wind-driven rain comes from. Also, if you use the compass points to describe locations of the house in your report, this helps to ensure that you describe the house correctly.

Samples of Various Sizes of Electrical Wire

To help you identify wire sizes in the field.

Wire Gauge

To help you identify wire sizes in the field.

Samples of Various Plumbing Pipe Sizes and Materials

To help identify plumbing pipes in the field.



Magnet

To help differentiate between galvanized steel and copper gutters, galvanized steel and brass piping, etc.

Latex Gloves (Surgical Gloves)

To keep hands clean and avoid getting fingerprints on house components.

Electrical Tape

To make temporary repairs to problems (not recommended by writers, but done by some inspectors).

Thermometer

To check temperature rise and temperature drop across furnace heat exchangers and air conditioning and heat pump coils.

There are other instruments that may be used during home inspections. These are a majority of the common ones.

