



The HomeOwners Alliance guide to:

# Top Tips: things not to forget when viewing a property

Would you spend just 20 minutes viewing a property that is going to be your home for many years? Some buyers do – and live to regret it. Don't remember the things you should have looked for after you have left

## Is there damp?

The main giveaway signs are a mouldy smell, flaky plaster, and watermarked walls or ceilings. It sounds obvious, but make sure you look closely near the ceiling and around the skirting boards. Another clue might be if the room has just been repainted – possibly covering any damp

## Is the building structurally sound?

If your house looks and feels solid and structurally sound you may not need a surveyor at all. Big cracks are what you are looking for – you should expect some hairline cracks. Look especially around where extensions join, end-of-terrace walls, and bay windows, all of which can start to fall or bow away from the rest of the house. If you see major cracks or have any doubts it might be worth getting a surveyor [LINK – what survey should I have] – if only for peace of mind. If any walls look like they are seriously bowing consider engaging a structural engineer.

## How much storage space is there?

Storage space is a valuable but often overlooked asset. Where will you keep your vacuum cleaner, towels, spare linen, and boxes of junk? Is there room for cupboards or shelves to be built in? Especially in newly built houses, storage space can be scarce

## Which way does the house face?

In winter, during a cloudy day or at night, it is difficult to tell the difference between a **north** and **south** facing house or garden – but in summer it can make the difference between a home that is full of **light** and warmth, and one that is frustratingly **dark**. Your favourite plants might notice too, and protest by dying. Don't be shy about taking a **compass** with you to the viewing – you might have one on your iPhone

## Are the rooms big enough for your needs?

Occasionally, it has been known for sellers to put smaller furniture in rooms to make them seem bigger

## Have you been fooled by staging?

Cleverly placed mirrors, strategic lighting, delicious smells, cosy fires, and fresh licks of paint are all tricks sellers use to make their home more appealing. Make sure you don't get fooled. Click here [WC – How to make your home more saleable – and valuable] for more tricks of the trade that sellers often use.

## Do the window frames have cracking paint? Is the double-glazing intact?

The state of the external window frames is a great indicator of the state of the house – if people look after those, they are likely to have taken great care of the rest. If you can easily push your finger into wooden



window frame, they are usually **rotten**. If there is **condensation** between double-glazed window-panes it means that they are faulty

### How old is the roof?

Replacing roofs is an **expensive** business, and newer roofs have a life expectancy of only 15-20 years, depending on the materials. Also, if the property has a flat or nearly flat roof, check out the material with which it sealed. Nowadays a membrane is used and is better than asphalt and gravel, which can leave seams and edges unsealed

### Are there enough power points and what condition are they in?

Dodgy **wiring** can be dangerous, and rewiring your new home can be an **expensive** business. Also out the fuse board – often an indication of the state of the wiring. Does it look old and outdated?

### Is the plumbing up to scratch?

Run the **taps** to check the water pressure. Ask if the **pipes** are insulated, and ensure they are **not lead** which would have to be replaced. Do the **radiators** actually work? How old is the boiler? If the hot water tank is situated in the roof it is an old one, and may have to be replaced soon

### Is the property adequately sound-proofed?

If the sellers have the radio or television on ask for it to be turned down to ensure that you can't hear your neighbours every word

### What's the attic like?

People often ignore the attic, but it is an important part of the house. How easy is it to **access**? Is there much storage space? Could it be converted into extra rooms? Is there insulation?

### What's the area like?

Are you near a **pub** or **bar** or **kebab** shop that becomes rowdy in the evening?

Can you walk to **shops** to get a pint of milk, or do you have to drive?

Is it easy to get to public **transport**?

Are there **noisy** roads or train tracks nearby?

Are you underneath a flight path?

### Is there sufficient drainage in the area?

Check the whereabouts and levels of external drains. Are the drains accessible and are they fully functional? Keen gardeners may use lots of extra water which can cause severe structural problems for potential home improvements such as conservatories or patios. If you are concerned about insufficient drainage for a property you wish to buy, then get a structural survey.

### And most importantly, does it *feel* like you could make it your home?

If you do like a property, arrange another viewing for a different time of day, and scout out the local area a bit more (see our guide *How to choose a new area to live in*). If you can, take somebody with you who might be able to notice things you don't.



## Links:

DirectGov advice -

[http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/homeandcommunity/buyingandsellingyourhome/buyingyourhome/dg\\_4018088](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/homeandcommunity/buyingandsellingyourhome/buyingyourhome/dg_4018088)

**See what other people are saying about viewing homes in our forums - <http://hoa.org.uk/forums/>**

## Contact

If you'd like more information contact:

**T** +44 (0)20 8292 0361

**M** +44 (0)7947 240293

**E** [comment@hoa.org.uk](mailto:comment@hoa.org.uk)

HomeOwners Alliance Limited

[www.hoa.org.uk](http://www.hoa.org.uk)

Legal disclaimer: The information contained in this guide should not be regarded or relied upon as a complete or authoritative statement of the law. HomeOwners Alliance makes every effort to ensure that the information is accurate; but it accepts no liability for inaccuracies, or the consequences of following our advice. If you think that you have a legal problem, you should get advice.