



Appropriate (and Unreasonable) Inspection Repair Requests

The seller just accepted your offer on the house. Congratulations! Most buyers include a home inspection contingency in their offer. It's a crucial step that will alert you to problems that may need to be addressed, like malfunctioning appliances or cracks in the foundation.

Inspection reports can be long and extensive. Your buyer's representative can guide you through the findings and help you decide on your next steps with the seller. What should you include in your repair requests? What's asking too much?

As a general rule, problems with non-functioning systems and safety issues are legitimate negotiable repairs. Or, if you discover substantial structural defects or serious hazards, you may want to back out of the contract.

On the other hand, issues that have already been disclosed or a long list of nickel-and-dime requests will only generate ill will with the sellers and potentially derail the transaction.

If your goal is to reach the closing table, it may be best to pass on these requests:

✓ 1. Normal wear and tear.

Chipped paint on the baseboards. A cracked mirror. Scratches in hardwood flooring. Unless you're buying new construction, most homes have a few cosmetic defects. Sellers are typically unwilling to negotiate on flaws that were visible when you made your offer.

✓ 2. Inexpensive repairs.

It would be nice if buyers could get sellers to take care of every small repair, from a torn window screen, or a cracked switch plate, to a burnt bulb in a ceiling fixture. However, common sense and intelligent compromise say it's better to focus on big-picture items.

✓ 3. Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

Even though many municipalities have rules regarding these safety items, it may be preferable to pass on smoke and carbon monoxide detector requests. That way, instead of settling for cheap replacements, you can shop for a system that satisfies your long-term preferences while living in the home.

✓ 4. Landscaping modifications.

It's unreasonable to expect sellers to trim foundation plantings, level out uneven walkway bricks, or repair a loose fence board. Again, these items were visible when you toured the home and will likely irritate the sellers, especially if extreme cold (or heat) makes it difficult to complete the requests.

✓ 5. Code updates.

In many locations, inspectors are obligated to list any item in the house that does not meet the current code requirements. That doesn't necessarily mean the house needs to be brought up to code. Typically, these items are grandfathered into the purchase.