



Fees vary according to thoroughness

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Q. Before we bought our home, we called five home inspectors to compare quotes for an inspection. What surprised us was the wide range in prices. By shopping around, we saved nearly \$200 on the price of our inspection. Why do some inspectors charge so much more for the same service?

A. Home inspectors don't charge more for the same service. In nearly every case, they charge more because their inspection services are more thorough and more comprehensive, because they are significantly more experienced at inspecting homes, and because they disclose more of the conditions that would be of concern to you as a buyer. Inspectors who charge less, particularly those who charge \$200 less, are generally new to the inspection business and lack the skills to perform the kind of inspection you, as a buyer, would want. They charge less because, as brand new inspectors, they are trying to jump-start their fledgling businesses. The question you should now be asking isn't "why do some inspectors charge so much more?", but rather, "what defects did my bargain home inspector fail to disclose?"

When shopping for a home inspector, the last question you should ask is "how much is the fee?" The primary and essential questions are:

- How long have you been a home inspector?
- How many homes have you inspected?
- What are your professional credentials?

The purchase price of your home was probably in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. An investment of this size warrants a degree of scrutiny that far outweighs the value of a \$200 savings in the cost of an inspection. The defects that await discovery by a qualified home inspector might involve repair costs of several hundred or several thousand dollars. These defects could involve significant safety issues related to electrical, heating, and fireplace systems, the integrity of the roof, the framing construction in the attic, the foundations, ground drainage, etc.

The ability of a home inspector to discover the many possible defects in a home increases with years of professional experience, and home inspectors who acquire high levels of such experience set their prices accordingly and fairly. Home buyers who price-shop for their home inspection are hereby warned that they will get what they pay for.

Q. I'm trying to sell my home and my agent presented an offer that sounds fishy. The proposal is to have the house appraised for more than I am asking. The buyer would get financing for the inflated price and I would refund the excess money to him after the close of escrow. What's your take on this?

A. Don't even consider doing this. It's an old trick that allows a buyer to purchase a property with no down payment. The practice is totally fraudulent and could get you into serious legal trouble with the mortgage lender and the IRS. Any agent who would present an offer of this kind should be reported to the state agency that licenses real estate professionals.

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