

THE TARTAN TEAM

Real estate in SW Washington • Real Broker, LLC

Home Touring Checklist

What to look at, in the order we look at it

From Disclosures with Nick & Dave

Single-family homes • Pacific Northwest

Bring it on every tour

BOTTOM LINE

Think like water. Then look for anything that's moving.

Most of what goes wrong with a house in the Pacific Northwest is water going where it shouldn't, and most of what's expensive is structure. Everything else on this list is either a system with a service life or a preference you can change later. Walk the house in that order and you'll spend your attention where the money is.

Water

The number one killer of buildings

Structure

Hard to fix; look for dips, not cracks

Systems

HVAC, electrical, plumbing, sewer

Floor plan

The other thing you can't change

A touring aid, not a substitute for a professional inspection. Get the inspection. Use this so you know what to ask the inspector, and so you don't pay \$700 to learn something you could have seen from the sidewalk.

SECTION 1

Before You Go

Five minutes of research sets what you're looking for.

- ☐ *Year built* — each era has its own materials and problems. Pre-1980s: seismic, foundation waterproofing, original wiring.
- ☐ *Lot and hazards* — county GIS for floodplain, wetland, liquefaction, slope. Ridge-top means fire.
- ☐ *Utilities* — public water and sewer, or well and septic? Natural gas, or all-electric?
- ☐ *Permit history* — no permits on a 30-year-old house is normal. No permits on a finished basement is a question.
- ☐ *The market* — in a bidding war, this list is your eyes-open budget. In a slow market, it's leverage.

SECTION 2

Walking Up: The Exterior

Where does the water land, and where does it go?

- ☐ *Roof* — condition, age, sag, patching, moss.
- ☐ *Gutters and downspouts* — present, attached, clean. Water kicked well away from the house, not two feet and done.
- ☐ *Grade* — slopes away from the foundation on all sides. Watch for low spots that pool.
- ☐ *Flashing* — where a roof meets a wall, and above windows and doors.
- ☐ *Siding* — type and condition. Look hardest at the lower and upper corners of windows and doors for softness or rot.
- ☐ *Windows* — age, install quality, caulking. Sloppy inserts on an older house are a water problem waiting.
- ☐ *Stone or brick facade* — on a pre-1980s house: any gapping or pulling away from the wall.
- ☐ *Foundation* — visible cracks, white mineral staining, wet spots at grade.

SECTION 3

Through the Door

Smell first. Then look for water.

- ☐ *Smell* — musty means moisture or ventilation. Animal is fixable with money; musty needs a cause.
- ☐ *Ceilings and walls* — stains, bubbling, patched drywall that doesn't blend.
- ☐ *Floors* — stains that could be water from above rather than a pet.
- ☐ *Basement or crawl space* — dampness, wall staining, smell. Concrete is not waterproof.
- ☐ *Wet locations* — under sinks, around toilets, behind the washer, at the water heater.

SECTION 4

Structure: Is Anything Moving?

A crack on a flat wall is usually the drywall settling. A crack with a dip is something else.

- ☐ *Floors* — flat underfoot. Dips, slopes, bounce. Squeaks are usually subfloor, not structure.
- ☐ *Ceilings* — bows, humps, or a line where a wall used to be.
- ☐ *Removed walls* — open plan in an older house: who did it, was it permitted, was it load-bearing?
- ☐ *Cracks* — hairline in a flat surface is benign. A crack where the surface is visibly out of plane goes to an engineer.
- ☐ *Doors and windows* — that stick or won't latch can mean movement.
- ☐ *Exposed framing* — basement, crawl, garage: replaced or undersized joists, notched beams, homeowner repairs.

SECTION 5

Mechanical Systems

Age, condition, and does the work look like a licensed pro did it?

- ☐ *Furnace or heat pump* — age and last service. Fifteen years on a furnace is a good run.
- ☐ *Water heater* — age, location, any sign of leaking.
- ☐ *Electrical panel* — brand and age. Some panels are insurance and appraisal flags. Capacity for EV, heat pump, modern appliances?
- ☐ *Wiring* — knob-and-tube or original early-1900s wiring in older city homes. Insurers care.
- ☐ *Plumbing supply* — galvanized steel rusts shut from the inside; old copper fails at the joints; PEX is modern. Three materials in one system means nobody planned it.
- ☐ *Water pressure* — run the highest faucet in the house.
- ☐ *Orderliness* — clean, labeled, straight runs suggest a pro. Tangles and mismatched materials suggest an uncle with a Honda Civic.

SECTION 6

Wastewater and Water Source

The part nobody thinks about until it's a \$20,000 problem.

- ☐ *Public sewer* — the line from the house to the main is usually yours. Ask about a sewer scope, especially with older pipe or big trees.
- ☐ *Septic* — age, last pump and inspection, and room on the lot for a replacement drainfield.
- ☐ *Well* — age, flow, water quality test.
- ☐ *Treatment* — softener or filtration — what is it treating?

SECTION 7

How the House Lives

Finishes are easy to change. The floor plan isn't.

- ☐ *Bedrooms* — where the primary sits relative to the others, and whether that's what you want.
- ☐ *The grocery route* — garage to kitchen. Walk it.
- ☐ *Light* — at the time of day you'll actually be home.
- ☐ *Walls you'd move* — note them, then assume you can't.
- ☐ *Ignore for now* — paint, fixtures, appliances, countertops. All changeable.

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If you don't know what you're looking at, take a photo. Send it to a friend in the trades or ask an AI tool what it is — then you'll know what question to ask the inspector. Want a second set of eyes on a house? Book a Strategy Call at thetartanteam.com/book. Prepared by The Tartan Team as a touring aid; not an inspection, appraisal, or legal opinion.