

Your home inspection starts here.

A buyer's checklist from Mary McCauley | Schedule early. Be there. Leave time for answers.

Buying your first home? This is your chance to learn how it works. You pay for the inspection, and it is your report. I want you there to see what the inspector sees and understand the findings.

1. Set the window, then book immediately

- ☐ We propose the inspection period in your offer. We look at the calendar, including holidays, and consider what the property may need. About 7 days is typical in my experience, but I have seen 5 and even 10. The right window depends on the property.
- ☐ Listing agents generally prefer the period to be as short as possible, so we may get pushback on the timing we propose. Once the terms are agreed, book immediately: all inspections, results and follow-up need to fit within the agreed window. Confirm the deadline and required response method. We can request an extension, but it may not be granted.
- ☐ Ask the inspector about the fee, what is included, when the report will arrive and any additional tests the property may need. I have recommendations for most services, from home inspectors to mold specialists. Ask me early so we can coordinate.

2. Be there and follow along

- ☐ Plan for roughly 1-4 hours, depending on the home's size and the scope of the inspection. Confirm the time with your inspector and keep your schedule open.
- ☐ Follow the inspector where it is safe and permitted. Listen, take notes and ask brief clarifying questions at natural pauses. Save longer discussions for the wrap-up so the inspector can stay focused and work through the home.
- ☐ The listing agent may or may not attend. When present, they typically stay out of the way and can answer questions or get answers from the sellers.

Make the inspection useful.

Questions for the inspector, perspective on the report and an optional test to consider.

3. Ask the question I always come back to

“What are your top three concerns?”

I usually ask this when the inspector finishes. Ask why each concern matters, whether it needs a specialist, and what should happen next. Still read the full report; the top three are a starting point.

4. Put the report in perspective

- ☐ Expect a very detailed report. It may include maintenance, aging components and minor repairs alongside more significant findings. Not every item is a renegotiation issue.
- ☐ Read it promptly. Ask the inspector to clarify findings and limitations. Then we will review the larger concerns, any specialist follow-up and your options under the contract. Any repair or credit request is subject to negotiation.
- ☐ Keep the inspection deadline in view. Arrange follow-up right away and confirm any required notice is delivered on time. Save the report for your future maintenance planning, too.

5. Optional: your choice about radon testing

- ☐ Radon testing is your choice as the buyer and is typically an additional fee. If you choose it, arrange it when you book the inspection. Ask when to expect results. We will confirm who sets up the test and who picks it up. The inspector sometimes handles pickup, but I often do it. You do not need to pick it up yourself.
- ☐ For the lab-analyzed testing I commonly coordinate, plan on about 2 days in the home before pickup and submission to the lab. Results may take another day after that; transport and lab timing can add time. Other devices may report differently. Confirm the schedule with your provider.
- ☐ If you choose testing, we will coordinate access for setup and pickup. Follow the tester’s instructions for conditions in the home and leave time to review the result before your deadline.

Need an inspector or a specialist? Call or text me at (978) 496-6739.

Companion reading: [Massachusetts home inspection changes](#). Timing here reflects Mary’s typical experience, not a guaranteed schedule or a legal deadline. Your contract controls. Updated September 19, 2026.