

Important !!

You are buying a second hand property. The owner is only obligated to disclose hidden defects that he knows about. If he doesn't know about a defect, doesn't consider it a defect or doesn't disclose a defect and you can't prove he knew, he is not legally bound to correct it. **DO YOUR CHECKS, DEFECTS ARE ON YOU TO FIND.**

Questions to ask

1. Why is the house for sale

This is just a good to know. If they are moving overseas, they may be in a rush to sell and you could use that to your advantage during negotiations.

2. Is there anything you should know about the house or the area

A burgeoning nearby informal settlement, for example, could be a deterrent or there might be a known rat problem, or noisy neighbours.

3. What is included and what is excluded from the sale.

Some people will include things such as curtains and garden furniture in the sale. Make sure you see what is being offered and establish what fixtures and fittings are covered by this question before making an offer on a house.

4. When did the property go up for sale?

This timing could influence the price. If it's been on the market for a while, and hasn't sold, it could be because it is overpriced or that there are problems you don't yet know about. The seller might be persuaded to accept a lower offer.

5. Ask the estate agent what offers have been made and at what values?

They might not tell you the values, but it's worth a try.

6. When would the owners like occupation?

If the seller has somewhere else to go, they will be keen to close the deal quickly. That's to your advantage.

7. Have any major Renovations or work been done

When last was the geyser replaced; how much are the utility bills; how old is the property? All of these speak to future maintenance of the property, which will affect your budgeting.

8. Ask about Servitudes!

Ask the sales agent if they know about any servitudes registered over the property. Although most servitudes are a non-issue it is good to know where you can and can't build should you want to in the future. A servitude is described as a limited real right over immovable property. This right is registerable and allows the holder of the servitude to exercise some right over another person's property. In most cases the city council will have a servitude to reach a drain system on your property.

GOOD TO KNOW

Some good things to test and try before buying your first home, often these things don't mean much to you in the moment, but they may become important later.

1. Check the water pressure.

Water pressure is a little harder to get right if it is too soft so checking a tap or two in the property for water pressure. This is a very good to know.

2. Check for Asbestos

It may be worth googling what it looks like and keeping that in mind. Although asbestos is certainly not the end of the world, it can be costly to replace if it starts to leak and you can't use an asbestos roof for potable water collection. On top of that, asbestos does not need to be disclosed as a defect by the seller because it is not one.

3. Check for damp.

In many coastal towns or low-lying areas damp can be a re-occurring issue that is not of much concern. In these areas damp is often a seasonal problem and needs to be factored into on going maintenance costs. However, permanent solutions can be costly and if you are uncertain get the appropriate expert to have a look and give a quote.

Keep in mind that damp can also point to a more sinister problem such as a leaking pipe or a roof leak, so damp around bathrooms, kitchens or coming from the ceiling do need to be looked at more closely.

4. Roof leaks

These are hard to spot but don't be afraid to grab a ladder and put your head in the ceiling and have a look for any rust or water marks.

Keep in mind a roof that has been repaired may need replacing in a couple of years. Why it was repaired (age or maybe a branch falling through it) talks a lot about what to consider.

5. If the property has a pool check the water level.

If the owner needs to constantly top up the pool this could indicate a leak of some sort. Obviously in summer months water evaporates but the owners will know if they need to top it up excessively.

6. Extensions

If you come across a property with extensions or add ons, be mindful that if they aren't on the plans they could have been built over man hole covers or servitudes which could create a massive issue for you down the line.

7. Wooden Floors

It is worth standing in each corner of each room in a house that has wooden floors often when the floor supports have started to rot the corners of the room are first to go. Check how bouncy or noisy they are both could be an indication. In most cases, you will be able to get just that section repaired, but keep it in mind.

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