

New Inspector helpful hints

Getting Started

Now you are licensed.....so now what?

Vehicle

You will need a reliable vehicle, sounds simple right? Actually, it's more than just that. Your vehicle defines your business. I've seen guys use their car with their ladder and tools laying in the back seat, bumper stickers, mismatched or missing wheel covers, etc. Not a good look!

Not impressive or professional.

The vehicle should be covered, as in a small SUV, Van, or pick up with a rear bed cover. Weather is fickle, be prepared, it can change on a dime and think about your equipment.

Do you want to have permanent signage or removable magnetic signs? Some communities **you** live in may not allow permanent signage on your vehicle so magnetic signs would be a viable option.

Just don't forget to take'em off before you enter the car wash!

Depending on how you do your tax deductions, I would recommend a separate gas card for accurate records. Don't forget the Speed Pass for tolls. Use a mileage log booklet and keep track of weekly mileage personal and business weekly and monthly. Saves a lot of time for the end of the year tax prep.

Oh yeah, definitely invest in a good GPS. Don't forget your cell phone can also act as your back up. I'm a big believer in back up! Who you gonna call? Cue the music.

Sounds silly but don't forget to check your **GAS**. It would really suck to run out of gas on the way to a distant inspection. Don't laugh, it happens. Check oil too.

Also, if you haven't checked your spare tire in a while, it would be a good idea. I once had a flat and found out after I changed to the donut spare that it did not have any/enough air in it. The Road Warrior truck had a compressor and inflated it and to my surprise stayed inflated.....go figger.

Insurance

Confirm vehicle insurance is current, have readily available. Also, Road Service phone number, just in case.

Recommend having E/O insurance (at least for the first year).

Recommend having the recommended Liability coverage.

Recommend carrying copy of all coverage and HI license.

Equipment

I recommend at a minimum:

- (1) 13' collapsible A frame ladder
- (2) Smaller 6 ' collapsible A frame ladder (for older home w/lower ceilings)
- (3) Small collapsible step stool (beats lugging a full-size ladder around)
- (4) Moisture Meter
- (5) Laser temperature gun
- (6) GFCI testers (at least two)
- (7) Old style two prong adapter plug for outlet testers
- (8) Screwdriver-manual and battery powered with flat and phillips head bits
- (9) Small hand held mirror (for looking up chimney flues)
- (10) Flash lights-1000 lumens (at least two)
- (11) Extra batteries (for all equipment including key fobs)
- (12) Tape measure and/or old style wooden fold out ruler
- (13) Tool bag and hip pouch
- (14) Pens/Markers/pads
- (15) Camera (s) Main and back-up (Nothing worse than dropping one in the middle of an inspection (been there, done that!))
- (16) Umbrella/Rain jacket/Boots (for sprinklers and doggie yard bombs)
- (17) Slip in shoe covers
- (18) Safety glasses
- (19) Long collapsible pole (for RTW access)
- (20) Business cards
- (21) Small rubber ball (to test floor level)

- (22) Fold up razor knife (to trim around painted electrical panels)
- (23) Small socket set and hex wrench set
- (24) Collapsible cup (for testing refrigerator water/ice)
- (25) Large flat head screwdriver (for older main panel screws)
- (26) Small binoculars (for roof)
- (27) Level
- (28) Rubber gloves
- (29) Strap on ice walkers for shoes (for roof inspection)
- (30) Small fire extinguisher
- (31) Small multi-tool
- (32) GPS
- (33) Toilet paper and paper towels (for vacant houses)
- (34) Phone (recommend a separate phone for the business)
- (35) **Whatever else Ben Gromiko recommends**

Pricing/Fees

Be aware of your competitors fees. Adjust accordingly if necessary and be ready to defend why. Many Inspectors will offer multiple inspections at a reduced rate if done together. Cheaper is not better.

I recommend you get paid at the time of the inspection. Also do not accept the payment at closing. A lot can happen between inspection and closing, so if it falls thru your chances of getting paid really suck!

When the agent tells you the client(s) are first time home buyers and what can you do for them as they do not have a lot of money, you can say:

“In my humble opinion perhaps they should **not** be buying a house until they have sufficient back up funds”

OR

“What is **your** first time buyer commission discount?”

OR

“Why is it that the one person with the most potential liability (**the inspector**) is always expected to discount their services?”

OR

“I do not offer discounts”

OR

Offer a reduced price you can live with in order to get the job. Ya gotta eat.

ALSO:

Be able to accept Credit Cards.

Cash or checks are typical. Even Bank Money Orders are suspect. (give receipts)

Double check info on check. (date, amount, signature, etc.)

Recommend checking weekly forecasts for probable scheduling .

Next is my form I send to Agents

Requested Information for Inspections

(Please have any applicable information ready when scheduling an inspection)

Name of Buyer (s)/Owner (s)

Buyer contact info and availability (Name, phone, email)

Property Address/ TOTAL square feet/Age of property

Copy/Link MLS listing

Vacant/Occupied status

Utilities status (Electric, Water, Gas)

Access (Supra, Lockbox, numerical, Alpha, CBS code)

Alarm system/Code

Gated Community-Gate code

Inspection Type requested (Home Inspection, Four Point, Wind Mitigation, Roof Certification)

Preferred Time/Date if any

Inspection agreement must be signed prior to inspection

Inspection fee is to be paid at the time of the inspection

Forms

You should be familiar with any/all forms needed for every occasion. You should have an Inspection Agreement signed by the buyers **before** you perform the inspection. (as required by FL Statutes)

You should carry extra copies of all forms, license, insurance coverages with you. Sh*t happens!

I also recommend you constantly review and update the forms as necessary or inspired.

Reference Materials/Agent info

I recommend carrying information sheets (A/C serial model breakdown, Code references, etc.) Check out <https://www.building-center.org>

Be sure to have the buyer's agent name and number with you. Too many times I have arrived on scene to find the electric, water or gas not on.

Don't fully trust the agent to be correct all the time. Now you have a situation. Especially if the inspection is with the buyers present and is far away from home.

I can't tell you how many times I showed up for an inspection and the utilities were not just off but the water meter was locked by the county, the electric was turned off to the property, and just for fun the gas was locked too!

Waddya do now? This problem could have been avoided!

Agent Contacts

Be prepared to visit and drop off your business cards to **EVERY** agent office within your inspection area. Be prepared to face some scrutiny as well as indifference.

Most agents either have “a guy” or a table full of wannabe’s.....just ask to be put in the mix, give them a dozen or so cards (w/holder, with one taped to it, for refills) and take their business cards for reference and return at least once a month to check in to see if they need more cards, answer questions, etc.

Discussion of your fees should be based on the property in question. No one size fits all.

Also, on occasion I am invited to speak at an Agents Sales meeting. It’s a really great time to clear up many misunderstandings about our inspections.

Many if not most agents do not really understand why we do what we do. I like to start off my meetings by stressing four very points of interest.....

1. I am **NOT** your friend. (then look around at the look of horror on some faces.)
2. I am **NOT** here to help you sell this house, regardless of how many times you may refer me. (same look of horror and disgust remain.)
3. HOWEVER, I am **NOT** your enemy either! (Perhaps a smile or two)
4. I am **not** here to “blow the deal”, at least not intentionally.....I always like to say “the HOUSE committed suicide”.
5. Then I proceed to explain the whys and why nots and take questions.

Phone Conversation w/potential buyer

Identify yourself and your business name

LISTEN.....

Most initial calls are for quotes.....don't be rushed into quick pricing

QUALIFY.....

What does the caller want.....which inspections? When? Why? Ask questions:

Buyer's name (s); address of the property; age of the property; is it vacant or occupied; Utilities (electric, water, gas-ON or OFF); Agent info; referring contact; buyers phone number; email address; age of roof; property access (Supra, Lock box, etc); one or two story; gated community; pets; alarm code; CBS code.

Before you can quote you must get all the pertinent information up front.

Also, it's a good idea in the conversation is to ask what the buyers occupations are/were. Be nice to know if you are dealing with a retired tradesman, lawyer, cop, etc. Also if they plan to be present at the inspection.

Word of advice, **whenever** you inspect, take pictures as if you need them for **every** type of inspection, saves return trips and late requests for additional info/reports. Remember, you don't use all the photos in your report but it's good to be able to prove current condition vs later when you get a call and are accused about missing an "obvious" problem.

If inspection is sold, advise buyer you will be sending them the Inspection Agreement to review and sign and return to you. Also, request they contact their agent to advise them of the inspection date and time and to send you a copy or link of the MLS listing to review.

I recommend you get the software needed to send for online signature, otherwise advise the buyer to sign, scan and return asap.

Then, start investigating the property on local county websites, check permits, etc.

Make notes of any discrepancies or questions that may arise.

Payment and Form must be received before release of the inspection report.

Prior to inspection

Double check all paperwork, forms, address, etc.

Confirm approximate travel time to inspection (GPS for alternate route)

Check weather forecast for the day in your area, dress accordingly

Check/recharge all equipment-confirm battery back-ups

Go to bathroom before arriving on scene

Confirm with buyers if they will be present for the inspection, recommend arriving before they do so you can get started without being distracted

During the Inspection

I am going to assume you have a fundamental technical knowledge, this is only helpful hints as to procedure only.

First, I recommend you have a set system of inspecting. A specific order of what to do. This way you lessen the possibility of forgetting something or somewhere.

For example, I take the exterior pictures first, then I start to make my notes concerning what I see (as well as what I **don't** see).

Then, I do the same thing with the interior. I have a list of Room Names and Areas I photograph before doing that room or area. (really helps if it is a large home). That way I get familiar with the layout and tend not to forget something or somewhere.

Listen to that little voice that questions you whether or not you checked something.....stop and double check. I always do what the "little voices" tell me, ask my wife.

Before you leave a room or area, double check your notes, look around again. Nothing worse than something in plain sight and overlooked!

After the inspection

Double check information on customers check (date, amount, signature.)

Double check any/all paperwork if signatures are needed-do not accept unless the signature is complete and legible. (no chicken scratches)

Double check you have all your equipment. (can't tell you how many times I've left my flashlight in the attic or my ladder in the garage).

Confirm all utilities are left in the original state upon arrival. I make notes of same on arrival so I can know to be sure.

Confirm all doors and windows are locked. Lights out.

I recommend completing and sending the Inspection reports that evening.

I don't like to wake up to yesterday's work, gotta be ready for the next one!

And hopefully many more!

