

Chapter 09: Inspection Guide

Yes, you should inspect a brand-new house. What phase inspections cover, what blue tape means, and what municipal inspections don't do.

LEVEL 2 · UNDER CONTRACT · CHAPTER 09 OF 16

09. Inspection Guide

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Why inspect a new home at all

Municipal inspections verify code minimums, in limited visits, by inspectors covering many sites a day. Code-minimum and defect-free are different standards. New homes routinely have real findings — HVAC ducts never connected, missing insulation, plumbing left untested, flashing errors — that are trivial to fix before drywall and miserable to fix after move-in. An independent inspector works for you, on your schedule, to your standard.

The three-inspection framework

Pre-drywall inspection: after mechanicals, before insulation and drywall. The most valuable inspection you can buy — the only look you will ever get inside the walls. Verifies framing, plumbing, electrical, HVAC, and window flashing while everything is visible and fixable.

Final inspection: before your walkthrough, a full top-to-bottom of the completed home — roof, attic, appliances, systems, drainage, and finish quality. Bring its findings to the builder's walkthrough as your punch list, with documentation.

Eleven-month warranty inspection: one month before the builder's standard one-year workmanship warranty expires, a re-inspection catches everything that settled, cracked, or failed in the first year — while the builder is still obligated to fix it. Widely skipped, consistently worth it.

The blue-tape walkthrough

Before closing, you'll walk the home marking cosmetic defects — chipped tile, paint flaws, scratched glass — with blue tape. Take your time; bring strong light; check every surface, door, drawer, and window. Photograph everything and get the completion commitment in writing. Cosmetic items are dramatically harder to get fixed after you close.

Choosing an inspector

Use a licensed inspector with specific new-construction and phase-inspection experience — inspecting an unfinished house is a different skill than inspecting a resale. Confirm the builder's inspection-access policy before you write the contract (Chapter 4, question 8). A builder that refuses third-party inspections is telling you something.

Reporting note: Phase inspections on a new build typically cost a few hundred dollars each — among the highest-leverage money in the entire purchase relative to what they can catch.