

Picky Home Inspectors and Inspection Conditions

If ever a common denominator existed among home inspectors, it is being labeled as too picky. And whether accurate or meant as an off handed compliment, it often speaks to a lack of understanding about home inspections. At the heart of this is the difference between documenting *condition* versus documenting *conditions*. Describing the *condition* of systems and components is a legal necessity in that it documents the scope of the inspection and provides a written record verifying that these systems and components were indeed inspected. This is a wholly different matter than documenting *conditions* such as construction defects, damages, or health and safety issues.

Statements describing condition don't necessarily include a recommendation for corrective action and are also designed to make the buyer aware. This helps the buyer gain a sense of the overall condition of the home, which is presumably why they requested an inspection in the first place. Understand that an inspector doesn't have a choice about just documenting some things and not others. He or she will have no idea how the home will be lived in and maintained so every contingency must be considered. In terms of findings and recommendations, an inspection is an all or none proposition. To make assumptions, or only document what "seems" to be important is tantamount to legal suicide.

Examples describing condition may include verbiage indicating the exterior paint has weathering, the interior flooring is worn, the stairwell has limited headroom, or the water heater is older and could fail in the near future. However, being made aware your water heater is older and knowing you should posture yourself for replacement costs is a lot different than being advised to arbitrarily replace the unit simply because it is older. Now that would be picky.

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