

2 Overlooked Things You Must Inspect Before Buying a House

By [Candace Davison](#) | Oct. 6, 2021

When you're considering [buying a house](#), the initial [home tour](#) is crucial. It can reveal so much you don't see in realtors' photos, but the whole experience often takes less than half an hour. You're running through a whole checklist of questions—How old is the roof? When was the HVAC system last updated? Does the home have a history of lead paint, sinkholes or poltergeists?—while simultaneously mapping out how you'd live in said space. It's a whirlwind. But while you're there, there are two warning signs that should be at the top of your checklist—and they're all too easy to miss.

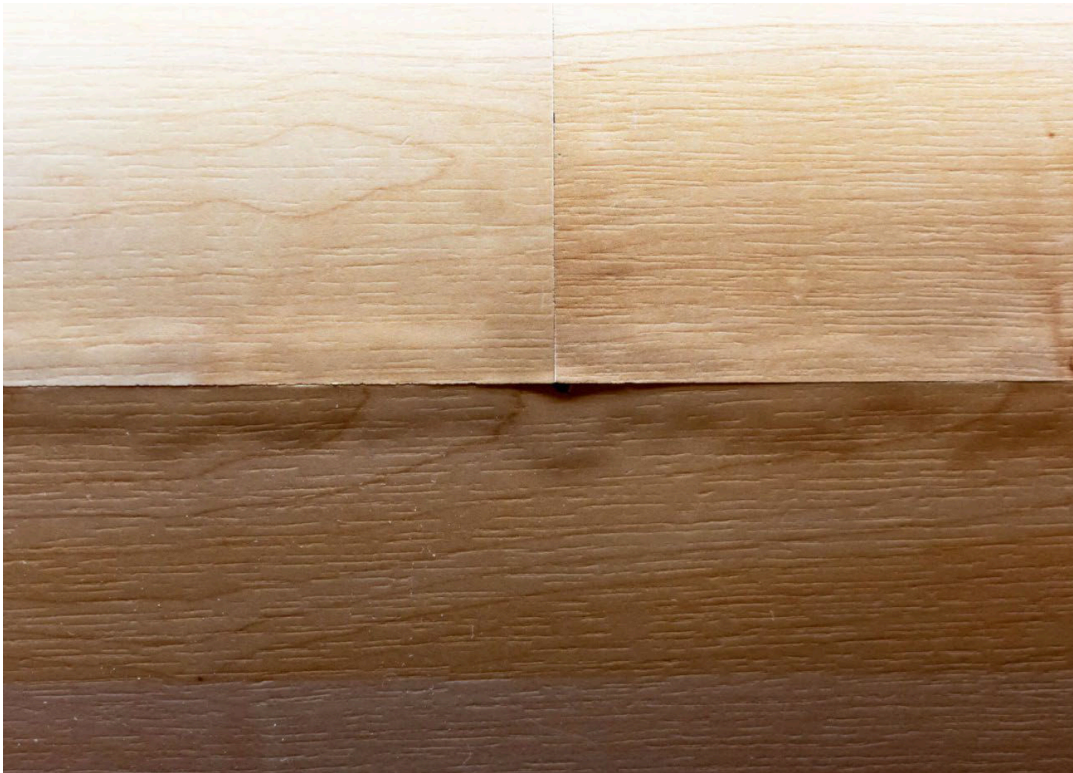
WATCH OUT FOR:



1. PRESSURE CRACKS

When It's No Big Deal: If it's a hairline crack—as in, the fissure is less than 1/8-inch wide—and is less than 16 inches long, don't stress. Most houses experience some settling, so this is really more of an aesthetic issue.

When It's a Red Flag: If the crack is more than 1/8-inch wide, and if one part of the wall or ceiling is sticking out farther than the other side, you've got a more serious problem, says Ted Speers, president of drywall repair service [The Patch Boys](#). If it's near a window or door, check for any issues opening or closing the doors. Any sticking or jamming “may indicate an issue with the framing,” he adds.



2. DISCOLORED, BUBBLING PAINT OR LAMINATE

When It's No Big Deal: We hate to be the bearer of bad news, but if you see any stained areas (or bubbled paint) on the walls, floor or ceiling, it's worth a closer look. It could be a sign of water damage.

When It's a Red Flag: If you gently tap the drywall and it “has a soft texture, it may signal that a water leak is still present,” Speers says. “Water leaks are commonly caused by roof issues or plumbing problems, so it’s critical to find out the cause of the problem. Did someone overflow the tub once, or is it an ongoing roof leak? You may need a professional to open the wall or ceiling to inspect it properly.”

Talk to the sellers to find out whether the home has had issues with leaks in the past and what was done to repair them. You’ll want to factor in the potential cost of repairs into the offer you make, should you decide to go through with buying the house. (On average, water damage repair costs homeowners about \$3,184, according to [HomeAdvisor](#), but that figure can vary greatly, depending on whether we’re talking about replacing a pipe or the entire roof.) You can also negotiate with the seller to have the repairs made *before* you close on the home.

Whatever route you go, one thing’s for sure: Don’t skip an [inspection](#). It’ll help you assess all of the home’s potential repairs and pain points, so you have a better sense of what you’re getting yourself into (and how much it might cost you down the road). Money pit averted.