

Home Inspection Report Reference Guide

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I recently received a call from a new realtor after performing an inspection and sending the report. While this is common, and typically results in a discussion about a particular defect and its significance with respect to the overall condition of the property, I was surprised that the agent was confused about the meaning of the language used.

After I thought about the conversation for a few moments, I realized that the agent was right. The typical home inspection language is a little confusing, and frankly prior to becoming a home inspector, I didn't know the specific meaning of many of the commonly used words contained in a typical inspection report. Therefore, I decided to compile and produce a document containing commonly used words and phrases* in home inspection reports that real estate professionals can quickly refer to for explanations.

I hope this document proves to be useful and perhaps provides a better understanding of inspection reports.

Sincerely,

Tripp Kivett

* Information from PHII (Professional Home Inspection Institute)

Activate To turn on, supply power, or enable systems, equipment, or devices to become active by normal control means. Examples include turning on the gas or water supply valves to the fixtures and appliances and activating electrical breakers or fuses.

Additional Inspection Services Those services offered in addition to the home inspection as defined in these standards, including but not limited to the following examples: wood-destroying insect organism and environmental testing.

Adversely Affect Constitute, or potentially constitute, a negative or destructive impact.

Alarm Systems Warning devices, installed or free-standing, including but not limited to: carbon monoxide detectors, flue gas and other spillage detectors, security equipment, ejector pumps, and smoke alarms.

Appliance A household device operated by the use of electricity or gas. Not included in this definition are components covered under central heating, central cooling, or plumbing.



Architectural Service Any practice involving the art and science of building design for construction of any structure or grouping of structures and the use of space within and surrounding the structures or the design for construction including, but not specifically limited to, schematic design, design development, preparation of construction contract documents, and administration of the construction contract.

Area Wall The wall, of metal or concrete, that forms the open area.

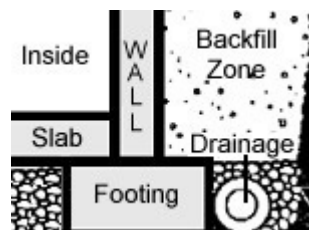


Ash Dump A trap door to let the ashes drop from the fireplace to a pit below, from where they can be easily removed.



Automatic Safety Controls Devices designed and installed to protect systems and components from unsafe conditions.

Backfill Earth, once dug out, that has been replaced and tamped down around the foundation.

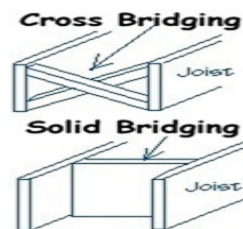


Baluster Vertical rods or spindles supporting a rail.

Basement Floor Slab The 4- or 5-inch layer of concrete that forms the basement floor.

Beveled Siding Sometimes called clapboards, with a thick butt and thin upper edge lapped to shed water.

Bridging Cross bridging or solid. Members at the second or third points of joist spans to brace one to the next and to prevent their twisting.

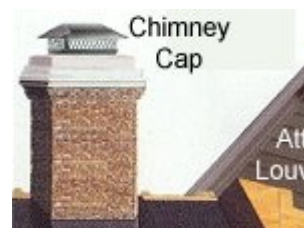


Building Paper Paper placed outside the sheathing, not as a vapor barrier, but to prevent water and air from leaking in. Also used as a tarred felt under shingles or siding to keep out moisture and wind.

Ceiling Fans The ceiling frame is the horizontal area between the top of walls and the roof. It consists of ceiling joists, trimmers, hanging beams and counter beams.

Chimney A vertical masonry shaft of reinforced concrete or other approved noncombustible, heat-resisting material enclosing one or more flues. It removes the products of combustion from solid, liquid, or gaseous fuel.

Chimney Cap Generally made of concrete, it protects the brick from the weather.



Chimney Flashing A material, usually metal, that provides a tight joint between the chimney and the roof.

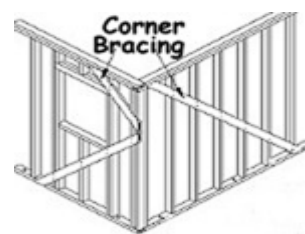


Cleanout Door The door to Erie ash pit or the bottom of the chimney through the chimney can be cleaned.

Collar Bean A tie that keeps the roof from spreading. Connects similar rafters on opposite sides of the roof.

Component A part of a system. An example of a component is a thermostat, which is part of the heating system.

Corner Bracing Diagonal strips to keep the frame square and plumb.



Corner Post The vertical member at the corner of the frame, made up to receive inner and outer covering materials.

Cornice A decorative element made up of molded members usually placed at, or near the top, of an exterior or interior wall.



Decorative Ornamental; not required for the operation of the essential systems and components of the home.

Describe To report a system or component by its type or other observed, significant characteristics to distinguish it from other systems or components.

Detrimental Conditions Any conditions that, in the opinion of the inspector, may likely be unsafe, unhealthy, or in any way harmful to the inspector or to the components of the property.

Dismantle To take apart or remove any component, device, or piece of equipment that would not be taken apart or removed by a homeowner in the course of normal and routine homeowner maintenance

Downspouts The pipe leads the water down from the gutter.

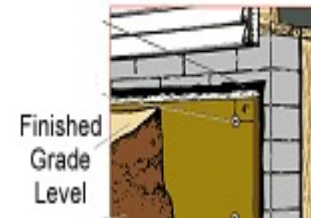


Engineering Service Any professional service or creative work requiring engineering education, training, and experience and the application of special knowledge of the mathematical, physical, and engineering sciences to such professional service or creative work as consultation, investigation, evaluation, planning, design, and supervision of construction for the purpose of assuring compliance with the specifications and design, in conjunction with structures, buildings, machines, equipment, works, or processes.

Evaluate To ascertain, judge, or form an opinion about an item or condition.

Finish Flooring Usually hardwood, of tongued and grooved strips.

Finished Grade Line The top of the ground at the foundation.



Firebrick A special brick that can withstand the heat of direct fire without breaking.

Flue Liner The flue is a hole in the chimney. The liner, usually terra cotta, protects the brick from harmful smoke gases.

Functional Drainage A drain is functional when it empties in a reasonable amount of time and is not subject to overflow when one of its supply faucets is left on.

Functional Flow Sufficient water flow to provide uninterrupted supply to the highest, unrestricted tap (faucet furthest from the source) when a single intermediate, unrestricted tap is operated simultaneously with uninterrupted flow.

Furring False work or framework necessary to bring the outer surface to where it needs to be.

Further Evaluation Examination and analysis by a qualified professional, tradesman, or service technician beyond that provided by the home inspection.

Gable The triangular end of a building with a sloping roof on each side.

Girder A main beam upon which floor joists rest. Usually steel, but can also be wood.



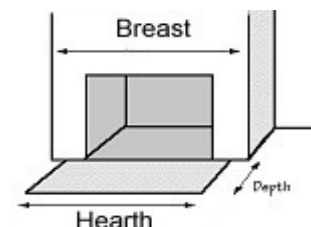
Gravel Fill Crushed rock or rubble placed under the slab to allow drainage against a damp floor.

Gutter The trough that gathers rainwater from a roof.

Habitable In a condition suitable for human habitation.

Habitable Spaces Rooms or spaces used for sitting, sleeping, bathing, toilets, eating, or cooking. Not considered habitable spaces by these standards are closets, halls, storage spaces, and utility areas.

Hearth The floor of a fireplace that extends into the room for safety purposes.



Heat Source A heat source may be a radiator, convector unit, radiant panel, heat pipe, ductwork, grille, register or other device(s) from which heat is intended to be emitted

Home Inspection The process by which an inspector visually examines the readily accessible systems and components of a home and operates those systems and components utilizing the Standards of Practice as a guideline.

Inspect To examine readily accessible systems and components of a building in accordance with these Standards of Practice, using normal operating controls and opening readily open-able access panels.

Installed Attached such that removal requires tools

Intended Function Performing or able to perform the usual function for which an item is designed or fitted; and be in a condition (state of repair) appropriate to this function, its age, and location

Joist The structural members or beams that hold up the floor or ceiling, usually 2 x 10's or 2 x 12's spaced 15 inches apart. A framing member laid horizontally in order to support a floor or ceiling.



Lintel The structural beam over a window or door opening. Also called a header.



Louvers A series of slanted slots arranged to keep out rain, yet allow ventilation.

Methal Lath A mesh made from sheet metal onto which plaster is applied.

Newel The post that terminates the railing.



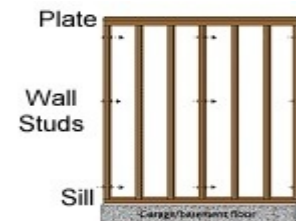
Observe To see through visual directed attention.

One-hour Firewall A fireproof wall used as a barrier to prevent the spread of fire.

Operate To cause equipment or systems that have been activated to perform their intended function(s), such as turning on a water faucet or turning up the thermostat on an activated heating system.

Pex Cross-linked polyethylene is a form of plastic tubing used for domestic water piping and hydronic radiant heating and cooling systems.

Plate The board laid across the top ends of the studs to hold them even and rigid.



Readily Accessible Available for visual inspection without requiring moving of personal property, dismantling, destructive measures, or any action that will likely involve risk to persons or property.

Readily Openable Access Panel A panel provided for homeowner inspection and maintenance that is within normal reach, can be removed by one person, and is not sealed in place.

Representative Number One component per room for multiple similar interior components such as windows and electric outlets; one component on each side of the building for multiple similar exterior components.

Roof Board Also known as a ridge board, this is the board that follows along under the roof ridge.



Roof Drainage Systems Components used to carry water off a roof and away from a building.

Roof Insulation An insulating material in blanket form attached between rafters.

Roof Rafters The structural members that support the roof.



Roof Ridge The top intersection of two opposite adjoining roof surfaces.

Roof Sheathing The boards that provide the base for the finished roof.

Roofing The wood, asphalt, tile, slate, metal, or other material that form the outer protection against the weather.

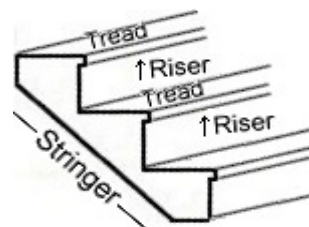


Service Lateral The underground service conductors including risers, from the last Company pole, pull box, slicing chamber, transformer terminals, or vault to the service-entrance conductors. When the service point is at the last Company pole, pull box, slicing chamber, transformer terminals or vault, the service lateral is owned by the customer. When the service point is at the meter in underground residential developments, the service lateral is owned by the Company.

Stair Rail The bar used for a handhold when the stairs are used.

Stair Riser The vertical board connecting one tread to the next.

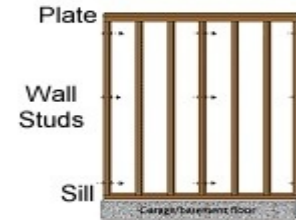
Stair Stringer The sloping board that supports the ends of the steps.



Storm Sewer Tile The underground pipe that receives water from the downspouts and carries it to the storm sewer.

Structural Component A component which supports non-variable forces or weights (dead loads) and variable forces or weights (live loads).

Studs The vertical wood members of a house, usually 2 x 4's generally spaced every 16 inches.



Sub Floor The rough boards that are laid over the joist. Usually laid diagonally.

System A combination of interacting or independent components, assembled to carry out one or more functions.

Technically Exhaustive An investigation that involves dismantling, the extensive use of advanced techniques, measurements, instruments, testing, calculations, or other means.

Termite Shield A metal baffle to prevent termites from entering the frame.

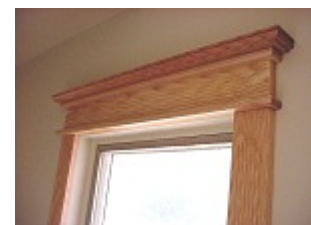
Underfloor Crawl Space The area within the confines of the foundation and between the ground and the underside of the floor.

Unsafe A condition in a readily accessible, installed system or component that is judged to pose a significant risk of personal injury during normal, day-to-day use. The risk may be due to damage, deterioration, improper installation, or a change in accepted residential construction standards.

Wall Insulation A blanket of wool or reflective foil placed inside the walls.

Window An opening in a building for admitting light and air. Usually has a pane or panes of glass and is set in a frame or sash is generally moveable for opening and shutting.

Window Casing The decorative strips surrounding a window opening on the inside.



Window Sash

The inner frame, usually moveable, that holds the glass.



Wiring Methods

Identification of electrical conductors or wires by the metallic sheathed cable (“Romex”), “armored cable” (“BX”), or “knob and tube”, etc.

“non-