A home inspection is:

- A high liability, In depth
- Multi disciplined technical analyses of a home
- Conducted under adverse conditions
- In front of a demanding audience
- Requiring the generation of an incredibly detailed report,
- Prepared in an un-realistically short time frame, for an inconceivably low fee.
Argument for our existence

• Just because you know how something is built,
• Does not mean that,
• You understand the innumerable insults a human being can heap upon a domicile.
• Mike (Confucius) Nelson
Module 1 Assumptions

1. You understand basic business procedures.
2. You can manage basic office procedures.
3. You comprehend the term “service related”.
4. You have begun raising the awareness of your business in your area of operation.
5. You know what a home inspection is, and is not.
6. You are adhering to a recognized standard of practice and code of ethics.
7. You have an understanding of building practices.
The call has come! Now what?

1. Have you sent out the contract?
2. Give client the contract at least 24 hours ahead of the inspection.
3. Mapquest or GPS?
4. Are you familiar with the neighborhood?
5. Do you have the CEO on speed dial?
6. Have you given yourself enough time?
7. Do you have marketing materials ready?
Prior to the inspection.

- Computer on board? Camera, voice recorder?
- Extra report forms?
- Batteries, replacement tools?
- Booties, slippers etc?
- Change of clothes or uniform? Coveralls, gloves.
- Water / dehydration.
- Snack or packed lunch.
- First aid kit?
- Emergency roll of toilet paper.
The neighborhood (driving in)

- Study the geography.
- Study the vegetation.
- Study the roofs.
- Study the sidewalks and driveways.
- Study the utilities, underground or overhead.
- Are you in a safe part of town.
- For rough parts of town, book early appointments.
- Is your vehicle secure?
How early is early?

1. How much time are you going to allow to get there?
2. Arriving early is in your best interest.
3. Take time doing the neighborhood survey.
4. Meet the owners, and see if dogs are present.
5. Having a review of the property partially done prior to clients arrival gives you info to give. Take control.
6. Once clients arrive, get contract, discuss clients concerns.
7. Establish expectations immediately
Managing expectations

- Your clients think you are there to find everything.
- They may believe you are infallible.
- They may believe you can see through walls.
- They may believe you are Karnak the Great!
- Explain you don not have a large “S” on your chest.
- Explain you do not carry a crystal ball.
- Explain to them what safety issue means.
- Elaborate on “not a cosmetic inspection”
The Practical route.

- Where do you start?
- Let the fence or garage be your guide. Or pick a spot.
- Do 2 full circuits around the home from that spot.
- One circuit up close, one far away, with binoculars, if needed.
- Consider making a diagram of the home as you go.
- This helps when the call comes 3 months later.
- Also if done properly, shows all non visible areas.
- I remember the diagram better than the address.
What do we put on the diagram?

- Don’t worry about scale.
- Show general layout of building.
- Mark all utilities, over head? Underground?
- Mark all trees and bushes.
- Mark all exterior defects visible.
- Do a simple grade plan.
- Show areas blocked by sheds, ivy, lumber etc.
- These items are often moved, and trouble behind them found, and you get the call. Pics?
DECK moss

28 yr old, 1500 s.f. 3 bed 2 bth

A.S. roof 12 yrs old

IVY

tree

Water valve 60 psi 8 am

Roof damage

Electric O.H. drip loop missing

TREE

concrete driveway cracks

north
Diagram continued.

- Have lots of room for comments.
- Log what the owners and agents say, date time, etc.
- Note what material the driveway is made of.
- Note what material the roof is made of.
- Note any fishponds, pools, dangerous statues, birdbaths, large drop offs, low wires, decks etc.
- If not doing a pool inspection, note the lack of safety fencing, wires over pools etc.. Disclaim pool
- Sketch out patios, decks, sidewalks, permanent play equipment.
Diagram continued.

- You can make the diagram a business control form.
- Contract received?
- Payment received.
- Report delivered?
- Permission from client to give copies out?
- Ladder, tools all back in order.
- This checklist should be completed prior to leaving the site. This will remind you of things you might have forgotten.
REPORT CHECK LIST

Address: _________________________              Report # ____________

DATE_________________________                 Time ________________

- Confirmation to buyer’s agent.______________________________ N/A
- Confirmation to seller’s agent.______________________________
- Inspection complete / re-schedule date? __________
- Follow up visit complete. Date _________________
- Client paid at time of inspection.
- Signed contact – contract faxed to buyer or agent.
- Report delivered to:_________________ date __________
- Report Release OK’d by Client _________________
REPORT CHECKLIST & DIAGRAM

Address of inspection, date time.
Client info, sellers info, agent info.
Inspection complete, follow up visit.
Persons in attendance.
This form can be as simple or complex as you need.
Just leave enough room for your diagram.
Exterior Concrete Issues

Concrete has 2 main characteristics,
1. It’s Grey
2. It Cracks

I use this as a deflector from the clients or agents asking about common cracks in the concrete.

If the concrete is lifting and separating, this is a failure of the material, even though it is likely still providing the surface coverage.
Why do we have concrete on the driveways, sidewalks and garage?

- So we don’t walk, drive and park on the dirt. This is also a good deflector for questions in the garage and on the driveway.
- This will hopefully point to the fact that smaller cracks are normal and can alleviate wasted time.
- Just because it is unsightly, does not mean it is not performing its intended function.
Personalize your inspection

- Pick someone you know with a disability, and inspect the home as if they were your clients.
- Think of the small children while doing the inspection, and how dangers are present to them, that we might look beyond because of our size.
- Fish ponds, birdbaths that tip, ornamental yard pieces that could injure.
- Kids often require several stitches from tripping.
- Also look for areas of water / ice collection.
Well the siding and roof are good!
After the diagram

- Look at the trouble spots, infer impact on interior.
- Remember the iceberg principle. 10% visible.
- Clues from fresh paint.
- Clues from deferred maintenance.
- Clues from ponding stains.
- Clues from soffit & fascia stains.
- Gaps in the exterior = trouble from wind driven rain.
- Exterior Materials, the good, the bad, the ugly.
Proper site drainage

- The roof and surface runoff must be managed.
- Improper soil moisture management = structural issues.
- The structural phase of home inspection starts with the surrounding grade.
- The proper soil slope, away from the foundation, ensures long term building stability.
- All homes move, most homes have cyclical movement.
- Thus additions may establish differential movement.
What does a foundation do?

- Most people answer: it holds up the structure.
- In actuality, it distributes the building load to the supporting soils.
- I.E. problematic soil conditions = building problems.
- This is a good educational tool to discuss with your clients.
Redneck High Rise??
Video: Mapping A house

- One of the best inspection videos ever made, even though it’s old.
- It discusses engineered soils.
- It gives a good example of human decisions interrupting good planning.
- No - I’m not being paid to say that!!
Foundation failure

- Freeze Thaw can exert 3000 lbs per square foot of pressure laterally on the foundation walls.
- Hydrostatic pressure can exert 10 times that force, i.e. 30,000 lbs of pressure.
- Pay attention to the drainage.
- Poor drainage can quickly lead to structural issues.
California split level
Foundation Failure

- Understanding what is failing and why.
- Tracing the Load Path.
- Is it bad construction?
- Are there outside forces acting upon the structure?
- Is it age related?
- Lack of or deferred maintenance?
- Was the site prepared correctly prior to build?
Overview of house structure

collar tie
roof rafter

ceiling joist

bearing wall
exterior wall

floor joist

bearing beam

foundation wall

column

footing

cross section
Foundation exterior limited visibility

- # 1 rule of home inspection
- Just write what you see! Do not verbally speculate.
- Look for matching clues on opposite sides of the home. i.e. small cracks in slab perimeter.
- You can use a probe through the carpet to trace cracks.
- Ascertain possible effects on the foundation,
  soil erosion, improper footings, deterioration of foundation material.
- Bad home owner decisions.
A Problem?
Differential foundations
Stone, block and brick hybrid
Exterior Materials

- Wood, finish maintenance is vital.
- Wood products, pressed paper, moisture-warping.
- Some need perfect maintenance.
- Mineral siding, potential asbestos, brittle etc.
- Metal siding. Dents, painting, gaps, bonding?
- Vinyl siding. Warping-displaced-damaged-gaps.
- Stucco gaps, cracks, layer de-lamination, weep screeds.
- Exterior Insulated Finish Systems, moisture entrapment, rot, structural sheathing failure.
Exterior penetrations

- Windows often have caulk issues, deteriorated paint.
- Gaps around piping, wires, electrical boxes etc.
- Cracks in stucco, gaps in vinyl, wood etc.
- Is the stucco weep screed buried in soil, concrete?
- Is the wood siding in contact with soil / concrete?
- Are there areas of potential moisture and pest penetration? Missing underlayment?
- Are trees / plants creating these conditions with the home?
Loose mineral siding & paint issues
Retro fit by homeowner
Decks & Porches

- Attachment to house flashed? Almost never.
- Proper joist hangers? Adequate nailing?
- AQC rated hardware?
- Earth to wood contact?
- Safety railing?
- Hand railing?
- What about pool / deck combos?
- Get to know the pool safety requirements by heart.
Screws have no shear rating
Safe surfaces
Issues that are not fully visible

- Stinking standing water may indicate a septic failure.
- Pipes sticking out of the ground may indicate a buried oil tank. **Major liability issue**
- Significant depressions may indicate past digging, possible pool fill ins.
- While these are not visible, they bear some scrutiny.
Heat from septic tank and leach lines melted the surface snow, no visible standing water.
Exterior fixtures and sprinklers

- Leaking faucets can deposit significant levels of moisture to the surrounding soils.
- They also can run down the siding causing moisture damage.
- Sprinkler overspray can do tremendous damage.
- Most types of siding are not designed to be blasted day in and day out with sprinklers.
Let the home tell its story

• Do not speculate.
• Write what you see.
• Do not give repair advice. (business decision)
• Never discuss a homes value.
• Never advise clients on what to ask to be repaired.
• Take your time.
• Review your report.
• Let the agents do their job, and do yours to the absolute best of your ability.