

THE BLACK HILLS PRE-LISTING PLAYBOOK

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Are you about to list your home for sale?

This checklist is designed to help you prepare your home so that there are less potential holdups during your buyers inspection window in escrow.

WHY PRE-LISTING PREPARATIONS WORK

Selling a home is as much about managing momentum as it is about price. Once a contract is signed, the buyer's home inspection is often the single biggest hurdle standing between "Pending" and "Sold." When an inspector delivers a lengthy report filled with minor maintenance oversights such as burned-out bulbs, loose handrails, sticking doors, or missing outlet covers.. it creates a psychological perception of deferred maintenance.

Buyers begin to wonder what larger, hidden issues might have been ignored.

By proactively identifying and correcting simple, low-cost repairs before the home goes on the market, you eliminate unnecessary friction, protect your negotiating leverage, and prevent minor items from becoming costly repair demands during escrow. Preparing your home ahead of time ensures a clean inspection report, builds buyer confidence, and keeps your closing moving smoothly on schedule.

This guide was created by InterNACHI®-Certified Professional Inspector Scott Rohe, owner of Ridgeline Home Inspections, LLC. Scott brings a disciplined attention to detail and a calm, objective approach to evaluating properties throughout the Black Hills region. He is dedicated to helping homeowners protect their equity, eliminate surprise repair delays, and navigate the escrow process with complete clarity and confidence.

PHASE 1: THE QUICK-FIX CHECKLIST

These simple, high-impact items are easy to address ahead of time and routinely eliminate dozens of minor flags on a home inspection report.

EXTERIOR

- ☐ **Clear Vegetation Around Siding & Roof:** Trim tree branches back at least 6 to 10 feet from the roofline. Cut back bushes and ground cover at least 6 to 12 inches from exterior siding and foundation walls to prevent pest intrusion and moisture retention.
- ☐ **Clean Out Gutters:** Remove any debris from gutters and keep an eye on them during the next rain storm. If you notice water pouring over make sure to clean out the downspouts.
- ☐ **Extend Downspouts:** Ensure all gutter downspout extensions discharge water at least 3 to 5 feet away from the foundation wall to prevent soil saturation and basement water intrusion.
- ☐ **Seal Exterior Wall Penetrations:** Apply exterior-grade silicone caulk around hose bibbs, exterior light fixtures, wire entry points, and small gaps around window trim.
- ☐ **Secure Deck & Porch Handrails:** Ensure all guardrails and stair handrails are rigid and firmly anchored with no wobble.
- ☐ **Check Hose Bibbs:** Ensure garden hoses are disconnected (especially during cold weather months) and inspect outdoor faucets for leaks when turned fully on.

+ Inspector's Tip:

The \$12 Downspout Saver: Look at where your gutter downspouts end. If they dump water right at the base of the foundation, slide a \$12 flexible downspout extension onto the end to direct roof runoff at least 3 to 5 feet away. Roof water pooling at the foundation is the #1 cause of damp basements on inspection reports.

The Exterior Dryer Vent Check: Walk up to your outside dryer exhaust vent, pull out any packed lint, and move the damper flap. Verify that the flap opens freely when the dryer runs and closes completely when it stops. A clogged vent is a top fire safety flag on reports, while a flap stuck open invites birds, mice, and cold drafts directly into your laundry room.

ELECTRICAL

Electrical safety is a primary focal point during any home inspection, but many common callouts are simple, low-cost fixes you can handle yourself. Taking a few minutes to address loose cover plates, burned-out bulbs, and life-safety detectors prevents minor items from triggering unnecessary concern on a report.

- ☐ **Test & Replace GFCI Outlets:** Test all Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) outlets in kitchens, bathrooms, garages, basements, and exterior locations using the "Test/Reset" buttons. Replace any failed outlets.
- ☐ **Replace Burned-Out Bulbs:** Replace missing or dead lightbulbs in every fixture (interior, exterior, attic, and crawl space) so the inspector can verify the circuit operates.
- ☐ **Install Cover Plates:** Ensure every switch, outlet, and open electrical junction box has a secure, undamaged cover plate installed. Gently tighten loose mounting screws with a screwdriver.
- ☐ **Service Smoke & Carbon Monoxide Detectors:** Test all detectors. Replace batteries in older units, and replace any smoke detectors over 10 years old or CO detectors over 5–7 years old.
- ☐ **Remove Permanent Extension Cords:** Unplug and remove any extension cords, power strips, or flexible wiring being used as permanent power sources. Especially those routed along baseboards, through walls, ceilings, doorways, or under carpets. Extension cords are rated strictly for temporary use, and inspectors flag them as potential fire and shock hazards.

+ Inspector's Tips:

The Nightlight Sweep: Grab a inexpensive plug-in nightlight or phone charger and walk room to room. Plug it into every outlet. If the plug falls out loosely or hangs crooked, the outlet receptacle springs are worn and the outlet should be replaced.

The GFCI Chain Reaction: If an exterior or bathroom outlet seems "dead," don't panic. One GFCI outlet in a garage, basement, or master bath often controls multiple downstream outlets elsewhere. Find all GFCI outlets in the house and press **RESET** on each one before calling an electrician.

Label Your Panel: Spend 20 minutes with a Sharpie ensuring your electrical panel's labeling is legible and accurate. When an inspector opens an electrical panel and sees neat, clearly labeled breakers, it immediately signals that the home has been cared for.

PLUMBING

Plumbing systems receive heavy scrutiny during an inspection because unaddressed leaks can quickly lead to costly moisture damage. Tackling minor drips, slow drains, and simple fixture tune-ups beforehand demonstrates proactive home care and ensures your plumbing receives a clean bill of health.



Fix Minor Leaks & Drips: Check under all kitchen and bathroom sinks with a flashlight while water is running. Tighten loose slip-nuts or supply lines and replace worn faucet cartridges if dripping.



Clear Slow Drains: Remove clogs from sink pop-up stoppers and tub drains to ensure free water flow. You can pick up a disposable nylon drain snake at your local hardware store for \$5-10, and it only takes a few minutes to clear each drain.



Clean Faucet Aerators: Unscrew the tip of kitchen and bathroom sink faucets to clean out trapped grit, rust, or mineral sediment. Clogged aerators cause weak water flow, which often gets flagged on reports as low water pressure, even when the house has perfect pressure and just needs a 30-second aerator rinse.



Check Water Heater Discharge Pipe: Verify the Temperature and Pressure Relief (TPR) valve on the water heater has a proper discharge pipe (typically copper or CPVC) terminating 6 inches above the floor or catch pan.



Service Running Toilets: Replace worn flappers or fill valves if toilets ghost-flush or continuously run. Ensure toilet bases are securely bolted to the floor without rocking (caulk around the front and sides of the toilet base, leaving the rear open).

+ Inspector's Tips:

The Food Coloring Toilet Test: Put 5 to 10 drops of dark food coloring into the upper toilet tank and wait 15 minutes without flushing. If colored water trickles down into the toilet bowl, your flapper valve has a silent leak. A \$5 flapper replacement at the hardware store fixes it in 5 minutes.

2-Minute Sink Drain Restoration: Slow bathroom sinks are almost always caused by hair trapped on the pop-up stopper rod under the drain. Reach underneath the sink, unscrew the small retaining nut on the back of the drain pipe, pull out the stopper rod, clear the debris, and reinstall.

Cabinet Under-Sink Trays: Place an inexpensive plastic shelf liner or dish tray under every sink cabinet. It protects the wood, catches accidental drips during inspection, and proves to buyers that you proactively monitor for moisture.

HVAC & INTERIOR

Your heating, cooling, and interior components dictate daily comfort and offer immediate insight into how well a property has been maintained. Simple steps like changing air filters, clearing vent pathways, and adjusting sticking doors go a long way toward ensuring your home's interior systems operate smoothly without raising red flags.



Replace Air Filters: Install a fresh, clean furnace/AC air filter. A dirty filter restricted air flow flag is one of the most common HVAC notes on a report.



Clean Supply & Return Grilles: Vacuum dust off all wall/ceiling vents, cold air returns, and exhaust fans.



Adjust Sticking Doors & Latches: Lubricate door hinges, tighten loose door knobs, and adjust strike plates so all doors latch smoothly without sticking.



Verify Window Operation & Locks: Ensure all windows open, stay open on their own, and lock properly. Repair torn window screens where applicable.



Clean Window Tracks & Frame Weep Holes: Vacuum dust, grit, and debris from all window tracks and ensure the small exterior frame drainage slits (weep holes) are clear. Dirty tracks make sashes bind and stick, which inspectors often flag as mechanical failure or structural settling, while clogged weep holes force rainwater to back up into wall cavities.

+ Inspector's Tips:

Date-Stamp Your Furnace Filter: Write today's date on the cardboard edge of your new air filter using a permanent marker before sliding it into place. When the inspector pulls the filter to check HVAC cleanliness and sees today's date, it sets a positive, well-maintained tone for the entire heating system.

The Pillowcase Fan Cleaning Trick: Slide an old pillowcase over each ceiling fan blade, then pull it back toward you. All the trapped dust falls directly inside the pillowcase instead of scattering onto your floor or furniture.

3-in-One Door Latch Fix: If an interior door doesn't click shut properly or pops open, spray a dab of dry silicone lubricant into the latch mechanism. If it still sticks, check the hinge screws on the door frame—tightening a loose top hinge screw often lifts the door just enough to align the strike plate perfectly.

PHASE 2: INSPECTION DAY PREP

An inspector needs unrestricted access to every part of the home. When areas are blocked, the inspector must disclaim them on the report, which often leads to buyer anxiety and/or demands for re-inspections.



Clear All Access Areas: Ensure clear, unobstructed paths (at least 3 feet of clearance) to the electrical panel, main water shut-off valve, water heater, furnace/air handler, attic access hatches, and crawl space entries.



Unlock Utility Spaces & Outbuildings: Leave keys or combination codes for locked gates, detached garages, sheds, electrical panels, or crawl space access doors.



Provide Maintenance Records: Gather service receipts, roof repair permits, HVAC maintenance logs, appliance manuals, or receipts for recent major improvements and place them on the kitchen counter.



Secure Pets: Plan to have all pets removed from the premises or safely secured during the 3- to 4-hour inspection window.



Leave Utilities Active: Ensure all electricity, gas, and municipal water valves are fully turned on. Inspectors cannot turn on main valves or breakers that are off at the time of inspection.



Empty Dishwasher & Laundry Appliances: Ensure the dishwasher, washing machine, and dryer are completely empty of dirty dishes and laundry. Inspectors run functional test cycles on major appliances during the inspection, and loaded machines prevent full testing or cause unnecessary delays.



A little upfront effort goes a long way toward protecting your equity and your peace of mind. By addressing these simple maintenance items and ensuring full access on inspection day, you eliminate the friction that often stalls transactions during escrow.

A clean, well-prepared home gives buyers complete confidence in their decision, minimizes unnecessary repair demands, and keeps your transaction moving smoothly all the way to a successful closing.



This guide was prepared for you by Ridgeline Home Inspections, LLC.

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- **Pre-Listing Home Inspections:** Comprehensive evaluations for sellers who want to uncover potential deal-breakers, perform repairs early, and list with total peace of mind.
- **Buyer's Home Inspections:** In-depth property inspections designed to help buyers understand the condition of their future home before closing.
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- **Radon Testing:** Continuous digital monitoring to accurately measure levels of odorless, invisible radon gas in the home, delivering fast, precise reports needed for real estate transactions and family health peace of mind.
- **Water Quality Testing:** Certified laboratory water sampling for both private wells and municipal drinking supplies. Well water testing packages are customized to meet strict FHA, VA, USDA, and conventional loan compliance requirements.

Disclaimers & Legal Limitations

Safety First: Know Your Limits

While the items on this checklist are straightforward maintenance tasks, safety always comes first. Never put yourself in danger or attempt repairs beyond your comfort level. If you are uncomfortable working around electrical components, plumbing, gas lines, or ladders, hire a qualified, licensed, and insured trade professional. A repair done improperly can cause costly property damage—or worse, result in personal injury.

Informational & Educational Use Only

This checklist is provided solely as a general educational resource to assist homeowners and real estate professionals in preparing a property for market. It is not a substitute for a comprehensive, professional home inspection conducted in accordance with SDREC standards of practice. Completing the items on this list does not constitute a formal warranty, guarantee, or structural certification of the property, nor does it guarantee a flawless buyer inspection report.

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