

# 9

## **ESSENTIAL** APARTMENT INSPECTION CHECKLIST

**Bonus**  
**COVID-19**  
**Cheat Sheet**



## Open apartment inspections and how they've changed during COVID-19.

The real estate market is still very active. With less competition, there's never been a better opportunity for buyers who remain in the market.

It is common knowledge that before you buy an apartment, you need to inspect it. In the face of COVID-19 restrictions, many sellers and agents are offering more information to help buyers make the best decision possible. Virtual tours for properties, as well as one-on-one viewings by appointment, are the options currently available to replace classic open inspections.

Most real estate agents will also organise live viewings. They will generally use video communication apps and software such as FaceTime, WhatsApp, Zoom or Facebook and Instagram live. These viewings will allow you to ask about precise features in the property and have all your questions answered quickly.

If you wish to inspect the property in-person, most real agents offer one-on-one home

inspection by appointment. These private inspections will always be conducted following all government social distancing and hygiene regulations.

To make the most of in-person viewing, increase your decisiveness and improve your decision making capacity, you will need to follow a methodical process. Using a checklist during your inspection journey will help you take an objective, systematic approach, and allow you to better manage your limited inspection time.

With a written record, you will be able to compare features between apartments, giving you a solid basis for finding the best property that matches your requirements.

This guide will help you learn what to expect during this process, including how open apartment inspections differ from other types of inspections. The nine detailed checklists will contribute to streamlining the inspection process, every time.



## COVID-19 Cheat Sheet

The real estate market is still very active. With less competition and record-low interest rates, there has never been a better time to buy. Here is how you can best prepare for purchasing during COVID-19.

### Bonus Cheat Sheet



#### Live viewings

Live viewings use video communication apps and software such as FaceTime, WhatsApp Zoom, Facebook and Instagram live. These viewings are an excellent opportunity to ask the real estate agent to look at precise features in the property or have any of your pressing questions answered on the spot.

Facebook Live also offers the added bonus of being recorded. Replays will be available on the real estate agent's Facebook page as soon as the live ends for people not available at the time of the inspection or wishing to have another look.



#### Home Loans

Interest rates are at record lows, and banks are still very eager to lend and secure quality borrowers. Moreover, they also have access to a \$90 billion stimulus package from the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA). These factors contribute to making getting a loan easy, as long as you have a secure job and a good credit history.



#### Making an offer

If you have found the perfect property, and now wish to make an offer or start negotiations with a seller, you can do it the exact same way you usually would. The only difference is that most activity during your buying journey will likely happen online and over the phone.

# COVID-19 Cheat Sheet

## Bonus Cheat Sheet



### In-person inspections

One-on-one home inspections are being offered by appointment only. These private inspections give you an excellent opportunity to see the apartment in-person. They will allow you to document all the things you want to observe that you might not be able to assess virtually.



### Buying in a virtual environment

Even before COVID-19, many people were purchasing properties without physically seeing them. They might have been interstate, overseas or simply unable to attend an open home before buying.

In a COVID-19 world, the way you inspect a property has changed, but the way you purchase hasn't (even if this happens with an online auction). What matters most when buying a home is making sure that the property is structurally sound and that there are no hidden issues. Despite the lockdown, all the standard procedures and checks, such as pest and building reports, remain the same, so you don't have to worry about sacrificing any part of the buying process.



## Understanding open apartment inspections

### What is an open apartment inspection?

An open apartment inspection is a scheduled time for potential buyers to view a property. At the moment, these inspections are taking place online, virtually, and as one-on-one inspections by appointment only. They are often advertised in the real estate section of newspapers, on property listings, and on real estate agency websites to attract the maximum number of potential buyers. Generally, you would be able to attend these without having to register with the agent in advance. However, agents are organising separate one-on-one inspections during COVID-19 to show apartments to potential buyers.

When you attend an inspection, you might be asked to provide proof of identity and contact details as a condition of entry and as a security precaution for the seller. The real estate agent will be present during the inspection, and usually the homeowner won't be on the premises. You might spend around 30 minutes at an inspection.

### How do they differ from building inspections?

Professional inspections (such as building and pest inspections) are carried out by qualified building inspectors, surveyors, or architects before you exchange the contract of sale. They provide details about specific elements like structural condition, safety hazards, heating and cooling, plumbing, and electrical systems. Open apartment inspections are the responsibility of the buyer. They tend to be largely visual and fairly limited.

### Why open apartment inspections matter

As a buyer, an open apartment inspection lets you see the ins and outs of the property. This can help you avoid any potential issues with the property down the track. As an inspection gives you insight into the condition of the apartment, you can make an informed decision about whether it's the right property for you and how much you should offer for it.

Any property can have issues, and these may be minor or significant. With an accurate assessment of the property's condition at an inspection, you can also plan for renovations and changes, and then factor these costs into your total spend.

An open inspection allows you to listen for noises (such as main-road traffic, flight paths, and railways) and check for smells (indicating dampness or mould), alerting you to any property damage that you can then raise with the owner through the agent. Often, this can help with new negotiations of the sales price, and might mean repairs are added to the contract of sale.

Open apartment inspections offer a convenient way to check out multiple properties on the same day. Whether you are buying to live or as an investment property, you can get a good feel for the property or residential area by having a number of properties to compare. This includes location, size, age, style, and access to facilities. You will also get a chance to assess the surrounding streets, local traffic conditions and proximities to amenities.

Without an inspection, you can't gain an accurate understanding of the property. Virtual tours over communication apps, property photos and videos can assist in your assessment of the property.



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## Using a property inspection checklist

Most good checklists begin with the basics, and an apartment inspection checklist is no exception. Make a start with a thorough read of property listing. You might be surprised how the exercise of writing down the property's features can impact how prepared you'll feel once the inspection rolls around.

Before each inspection, have the following checklists ready to help you document your observations and give you a better foundation for making an informed decision.



## Checklist # 1

**Property information**

The first section of your checklist should include all the key property details. This will help you identify the property, recall when you inspected it, and contact the right agent if you need further information. In addition, you can record key details like sale price, auction date, and if offers have already been made.

<b>Address of property</b>		
<b>Inspection date/time</b>		
<b>Name of real estate agent</b>		
<b>Name of real estate agency</b>		
<b>Agent contact details</b>		
<b>Sale price</b>		
<b>Sale price negotiable</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Auction date (if applicable)</b>		
<b>Expected auction price</b>		
<b>Any offers already made</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>How much / details</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>





## Checklist # 2

**Property details**

Once you've collected the main details, it's important to start creating a profile of the property you've inspected. This approach will help you shortlist properties by documenting key features and location benefits. For example, if the property has restrictions on renovations, it might not align with your long-term plans.

The property features included here can have ramifications for usage, lifestyle, or appeal to potential tenants if it's being purchased as an investment property. For example, the direction the apartment faces and the amount of sunlight it gets can impact energy bills which might be a deterrent for those looking to move in. On the other hand, quality insulation, effective sound-proofing, and extra external storage can be major advantages when it comes to attracting tenants.

**Land size (sq. metres)**

**Total property size (sq. metres)**

**Age of home**

**Any existing approved extension plans?**

- If yes, details

**Yes**

**No**

**Easements on property**

**Yes**

**No**

**Covenants/restrictions on changes**

**Yes**

**No**

**Stories / floors of building**

**Yes**

**No**



<b>Which way does the apartment / unit face?</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>West</b>
<b>Rainwater tanks</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>		
<b>Solar panels</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>		
<b>Do you need to renovate?</b> - If so, what do you need to do?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>		
<b>Noise from neighbours, traffic, railway, aircraft, etc.</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>		
<b>Security:</b> - Gates - Locks - Staff	<b>Yes</b> <b>Yes</b> <b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b> <b>No</b> <b>No</b>		
<b>Sufficient insulation</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>		
<b>Sufficient sound proofing</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>		
<b>Extra storage / storage cages or enclosures</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>		
<b>Proximity to:</b> - Schools - Public transport - Parks - Shops				



<b>Views</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
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<b>Rates/fees:</b>		
- Council	<b>Yes \$</b>	<b>No</b>
- Body corporate (annual fees, levies, and charges)	<b>Yes \$</b>	<b>No</b>
- Other	<b>Yes \$</b>	<b>No</b>

<b>Any proposed maintenance or other building works?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
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<b>Pets allowed</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
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<b>Other body corporate or owners corporation rules</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
- Details		

<b>Are there potential zoning changes?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
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**Notes**



## Checklist # 3

**Area outside the apartment or unit**

The body corporate or owners corporation will likely be responsible for managing common areas and spaces outside the apartment. Some prospective buyers might overlook these details but the reality is that property costs and considerations exist beyond the walls of the open apartment.

This checklist will allow you to carefully assess these common areas as they can enhance the type of recreational and lifestyle options you or your tenants enjoy.

In addition, assessing these areas will reveal how well the body corporate takes care of the property and surrounding areas. An apartment building with worn roofing, guttering, and drain pipes might need to have these items replaced soon. This would mean that you would need to contribute to the cost in some way as a strata title owner.

**Outdoor areas**

- Size of the front area (sq. metres)
- Size of back area (sq. metres)

**Yes****No****Is the paint work in good condition?****Yes****No****Is the fencing in good condition?**

- Front
- Back

**Yes****No****Yes****No****Is the landscaping well maintained?**

- Front
- Back

**Yes****No****Yes****No**

<b>Are the shared/common areas in good condition?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Is the building free from mould?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Are the walls in good condition?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Are the porch/stairs in good condition?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Is the front door in good condition?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Are the windows in good condition?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Is there good security?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Is there a lift?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Pool</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>BBQ area</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Tennis court</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Deck/verandah</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Balcony</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>



<b>Clothing lines</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>		
<b>Roofing type</b>				
<b>Roof, guttering, and drain pipes appear in good condition</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>		
<b>Front yard faces</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>West</b>
<b>Backyard faces</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>West</b>
<b>Notes</b>				

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## Checklist # 4

**Interior of apartment or unit**

Spaciousness, natural light and storage are some of the key characteristics of great living spaces. Most potential buyers will focus on these features from the moment they step in the door, which might make this checklist the easiest or fastest to fill in.

In living rooms, dining areas, and studies, look for essentials like power points and in-built heating and cooling options. Consider the flooring type and if it suits your lifestyle and plans for the particular room.

Checking what is in good condition and what might need repairs or replacement helps you better understand the property's value. It allows you to evaluate whether the property needs extra work, or if extra finance is necessary if you were to make an offer on the property.

	LIVING ROOM	DINING ROOM	STUDY
<b>Size</b>			
<b>Good amount of natural light</b>	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
<b>Are walls in good condition?</b>	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
<b>Is the ceiling in good condition?</b>	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
<b>Are windows in good condition?</b>	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
<b>Flooring type</b>			
<b>Are the floors sloping/bouncy/damaged?</b>	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No



	LIVING ROOM	DINING ROOM	STUDY
Is the carpeting in good condition?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Enough storage	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Air-conditioner / ceiling fan	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Media outlets	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Telephone points	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Heating / fireplace	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Need for renovations	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is there excessive noise from traffic or neighbours?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Odours or unusual smells	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No

**Notes**





## Checklist # 5

# Bedrooms

When it comes to bedrooms, comfort and relaxation are likely your top priorities. This checklist covers many of the same details as checklist #4, however it encourages you to think about what you or a prospective tenant might value from a personal space like a bedroom.

The bedrooms should be big enough to accommodate common furniture items, and ideally they won't be affected by lighting and noise from outside. If you're concerned about noise levels, ask the agent about the apartment's sound-proofing features and try to inspect the property at different times of the day.

Ensuites, walk-in robes, and generous storage might also be on your must-have list for bedrooms. Having your ideal choice of flooring in the bedroom is also potentially vital, so consider the flooring type and ease of replacement if you'd prefer something else.

	BEDROOM 1	BEDROOM 2	BEDROOM 3
<b>Size</b>			
<b>Will the room be affected by noise and light? e.g., street lights, trucks, neighbours, etc.</b>	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
<b>Ensuite</b>	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
<b>Walk-in robes</b>	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
<b>Built-in storage</b>	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
<b>Air-conditioner / ceiling fan</b>	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
<b>Heating</b>	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No



	BEDROOM 1	BEDROOM 2	BEDROOM 3
Telephone points	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Flooring type			
Are the floors sloping/bouncy/damaged?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is the carpeting in good condition?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Need for renovations	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Need for painting	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Odours or unusual smells	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Notes			



## Checklist # 6

# Bathrooms

A well-maintained bathroom can be a major selling point for buyers, as bathrooms have a strong impact on comfort and lifestyle. With this checklist, you'll likely be able to move at speed through the items and reach conclusions as to whether or not the bathroom needs improvement. You'll want an apartment with a sufficient number of bathrooms that ideally won't need major renovations or upgrades.

Look out for cracked bathtubs, stained or worn showers and damaged vanity units. A paint job might not cost you much, but if the tiling, bathtub, and vanity units need replacing, you'll be spending a lot more.

As in other rooms of the apartment, check if there are unusual odours that might indicate the presence of mould, mildew, or faulty plumbing.

	BATHROOM 1	BATHROOM 2	BATHROOM 3
<b>Size</b>			
<b>Ensuite</b>	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
<b>Shower</b>	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
<b>Bathtub</b>	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
<b>Vanity</b>	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
<b>Toilet in bathroom</b>	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
<b>Ventilation</b>	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No



	BATHROOM 1	BATHROOM 2	BATHROOM 3
Exhaust fan	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Storage space	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Hot water comes through quickly	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Tiled/painted			
Flooring type			
Need for renovations	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Need for painting	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Notes			



## Checklist # 7

**Kitchen**

When attending the open inspection, you'll want to give the kitchen extra attention, as it's usually the most costly room to renovate if it needs upgrading. This checklist covers the most common kitchen inclusions and allows you to make a call on whether they are good, bad or just OK.

Minor changes like cupboard replacements are relatively affordable, but new appliances will cost much more. Carefully check crucial aspects like the benchtops, condition of appliances, cupboard space, ventilation, and power points.

Determine what you are looking for in a kitchen and check if it fulfils these criteria. If you are looking for an investment property, consider if it's spacious enough for the type of household your ideal tenants belong to. Adding storage is generally fairly easy, but you might find it difficult to install a bigger bench and expand the cooking area.

<b>Size</b>			
<b>Enough storage</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
<b>Breakfast bar / benchtop / countertop</b>			
<b>Enough bench space</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
<b>Cooktop condition</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>OK</b>	<b>Bad</b>
<b>Oven condition</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>OK</b>	<b>Bad</b>
<b>Exhaust fan</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	



<b>Hot water</b>	<b>Gas</b>	<b>Electric</b>	
<b>Rangehood</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
<b>Condition of dishwasher</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>OK</b>	<b>Bad</b>
<b>Are there enough power points?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
<b>Is the lighting adequate?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
<b>Does it need renovation?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
<b>Notes</b>			

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## Checklist # 8

# Laundry

Larger apartments will usually have an internal laundry, while smaller apartments might offer a shared or communal one. In addition, some of the most compact apartments might incorporate laundry appliances into the kitchen. This checklist has you covered for basic considerations in many laundry spaces.

If the apartment has an internal laundry, make sure that it is large enough for a washing machine and dryer. It is also a good idea to determine if there's enough space for an indoor clothesline, especially if you don't have a balcony area (or if strata does not permit the display of a clothesline outside).

It's always a good idea to take a measuring tape with you to help you get precise dimensions. Check how many power points you currently use for your laundry appliances to give you an idea of how many you or your tenant might need.

<b>Is there an internal laundry?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
- Size (sq. meters)		
- Separate room	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
- Flooring type		
<b>Is there outside access from laundry?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Is there a shared laundry?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>If internal, is there enough room for:</b>		
- A washing machine?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
- A dryer?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
- Hanging clothes to dry?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Are there sufficient power points?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Notes</b>		



## Checklist # 9

**Garage and/or car space**

Does the apartment come with a car space, or do you need to park on the street? Much like Checklist #3, the areas outside the apartment must be considered and a series of simple yes/no answers can guide you in future conversations with the real estate agent.

If you only need one car space, parking might be a minor consideration. However, if you have several cars in your household, you'll want to check whether you need a permit from the local council to park on the street.

If parking space is scarce, find out the rules for visitor permits on your street. Familiarising yourself with these items will help you assess whether the property supports conveniences like parking for your visitors or those of your potential tenants.

<b>Garage</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Number of spaces</b>		
<b>Remote access</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Secure parking / lock up</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Driveway parking</b> - Number of spaces	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Street parking</b> - Number of spaces	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
- Permit required	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
- Visitor permits	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Notes</b>		





## Other things to check

During the inspection process, don't overlook the following general items. These can factor into your negotiation price and prepare you for the scope of repair or renovation the apartment may need.



### Water damage

Look for signs of dampness, such as warping, sagging, or buckling, on walls, carpeting, and other flooring. Water damage can be costly to address.



### Light switches

Test the light switches, and also test for looseness or poor installations.



### Water pressure and hot water system

Test the water pressure in bathrooms, kitchens, and laundries. Does the hot water come through quickly?



### Doors and windows

Do the doors and windows open easily? Are door handles and window frames in good condition? Take a look at the siding, caulking, and trims.



### Power outlets

Are the power outlets in good condition and do you have enough of them?



### Other considerations

Depending on the age of your apartment or unit, it is always best to consult a professional when it comes to renovations or changes to the building.

# Getting quality advice after your inspection

Once you've put our checklists to the test, you might end up with a shortlist of properties that you like and are considering putting in an offer for. Going back to the listed real estate agent will likely be a great place to ask more qualifying questions. However, getting a second opinion through a property appraisal is always a good idea.

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