Launching Your Home Inspection Career
Real World Advice from Home Inspection Pros
A Free Resource for Prospective Home Inspectors
From Kaplan Home Inspection Training

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INTRODUCTION

So, you're thinking about a career in home inspection. Now what?

Kaplan has developed this eBook as a resource for people who are thinking about taking the first step toward a career in home inspection, but don’t know where to get started.

You likely have questions. But where do you turn for advice? We have enlisted the help of several experienced home inspection professionals to provide real-world advice on what it takes to be successful in the field. We asked our pros what tips they wish they had received before they got into the business. We asked them where they have seen inexperienced inspectors fail. We asked them what skills they believe are essential to success in home inspection. We took all of their advice and combined it in this book to help you decide if a career in home inspection is right for you.

We also encourage you to find an inspector in your area who will serve as a mentor. Shadow that person on the job. Get a feel for the day-to-day operations of a successful home inspection business. Gather all of the information you can before you get started. When you’re ready to take the first step in your career, visit www.kapre.com/home-inspection-courses to enroll in your home inspection course and get started.

We hope you find this resource helpful, and we wish you the best of luck as you embark on your home inspection journey. Good luck!
ABOUT THE EXPERTS

Rick DeBolt
As a Government Program Manager in Virginia, Rick began his career as an ASHI Home Inspector on a part-time basis. He started his own home inspection business after relocating to Denver in 2009. Rick’s love for the residential home building industry began when he was just 13 years old.

Doug Hastings
Doug became a home inspector 26 years ago and is an ASHI certified inspector (ACI). He has inspected over 18,500 homes and commercial buildings. Along with inspecting, 24 years ago, Doug began writing and teaching home inspection classes. He has spent over 2,000 days in the classroom training students the essential business operation and required inspection skills.

Jan Lee
In 2002, Jan expressed an interest in home inspection to his neighbor, an active home inspector and instructor. Based on the neighbor’s suggestion, Jan enrolled in Kaplan’s introductory course and decided to pursue a career in home inspection. Soon after finishing the course, Jan moved to Idaho and began his home inspection business.

Robert H. Leslie
After 40 years, Robert retired from his career in commercial and residential construction and began doing home inspections. He was asked to become a writer and instructor for ProSource (now Kaplan). At 77, Robert is still teaching and consulting home inspectors and contractors, specializing in improved business operation.

Dan Norby
Dan’s career in home inspection has spanned 14 years. He is also a licensed Minnesota contractor, a licensed FHA inspector and consultant, and a certified “Home Maintainer.” In addition to his career in home inspection, Dan is a Kaplan Home Inspection Education instructor.

Ronald Schiling
Ron has worn many hats in fields related to real estate. He comes from a property management background, growing up in a family that owned rental property. But he has also served as a loan officer, DIY advisor, property manager, appraiser, and of course, home inspector. He currently focuses his efforts on property management and home inspection and puts his skills to good use as an instructor.
“Anyone can be a home inspector. The key is a willingness to learn, both before certification, and after you have entered the business.”

- Art Valenzuela

But that doesn’t mean it’s easy. While anyone can be a home inspector, not everyone can. It takes a commitment to learning. In the last 20 years, technology has greatly changed the way residential systems are installed and operated. Codes and building practices are constantly changing. At the pace technology is moving today, we can only imagine the degree to which things will evolve in the next 20 years. The education you get today is meant to be a foundation. It’s up to you to make education a priority in your career, and to constantly build upon that foundation. You’ll only be successful for the long term if you are able to continuously provide a valuable service to your clients.

Take home inspection classes regularly. They are led by experts with years of experience. Listen to their experiences, copy their practices, and learn from their mistakes. You should also become a participating member of a home inspection association. They can be great education sources, and they provide you with a forum to interact with and learn from others in the industry.

Also consider enrolling in a few real estate courses. You will be working with real estate professionals every day. You will be better at your job if you know what real estate agents go through on a daily basis, and it will help you better understand your audience.

“Make sure you have the full support of your family before you start your business.”

- Doug Hastings

A career in home inspection can be incredibly rewarding, both personally and financially. But that doesn’t come without some sacrifice. Make sure your family has a firm understanding of the dedication you plan to make to your new career. You largely have the opportunity to choose your own hours. But the number of hours you work each week, and your flexibility, will greatly impact the gains you see from this career. Much like real estate professionals, home inspectors often work weekends or evenings to accommodate the availability of their clients.

“There will be start-up costs. Do not be underfunded.”

- Doug Hastings

A career in home inspection, like all small businesses, comes with start-up costs. A ladder, flashlights, screwdrivers, electrical diagnostic devices, and water pressure gauge are just a few of the tools you will need to provide an accurate and valuable inspection. You will also need some sort of form, whether paper or electronic, to guide your inspection and communicate your findings clearly with your clients. Insurance is also something you need to consider. And don’t forget about your marketing—business cards, websites, vehicle signage, advertising, and more.
“It’s all about the marketing! I see many home inspectors fail in their business because they lack a proper marketing plan.”

- Dan Norby

So, how do you market a home inspection business? The first, and more important, thing you need to do is make connections with your local real estate community. Agents have direct and first contact with the people who you want as clients. Reach out to local real estate professionals and find out what they expect from a home inspector. More importantly, find out where other home inspectors fail to live up to their expectations. Develop messaging and talking points that speak to your ability to deliver the results realtors are looking for. Flyers, business cards, and brochures can all be useful resources. Once you have your message, it’s time to hit the streets and start making connections.

While it’s important to have a message and get your message into the hands of real estate agents, it’s equally important to deliver on the promises you make. Everything you do as a home inspector is marketing. Make sure you are easily accessible, as well as easy to do business with. The better you deliver, the better your relationships will be. The better your relationships, the more clients you’ll have referred to you. And the more clients you have calling, the less time you’ll need to spend marketing.

Start with a business and marketing plan. Create this before you start your home inspection business and have it critically reviewed by someone with good working knowledge of marketing and business practices.

“Practice your craft. Collaborate with the best craftsmen in your local building industry, and never stop learning.”

- Rick DeBolt

As previously established, there’s a lot of knowledge that can be gained in the classroom. There’s also a lot of value in surrounding yourself with builders and installers with a reputation for quality. There’s something to be said for approaching your career (and life in general) as a student. It’s amazing how much you can learn simply by being open to it and actively seeking opportunities to gain knowledge.

Use the resources you already have to grow your network. If you have a great relationship with a professional plumber, ask him or her to introduce you to others. The best plumbers in town usually know who the best HVAC professionals and electricians are. Take advantage of their knowledge to build your own professional network.
“Networking and developing good relationships with real estate professionals will be critical to your success.”

- Doug Hastings

Home inspection is a business of referrals. Oftentimes, if an individual is working with a particular real estate professional, it’s because they feel they can trust that person. So when clients reach the stage in a transaction where they require the services of a home inspector, who do you think they’re going to ask to refer one?

Getting into the good graces of a real estate professional is only half the battle. You also need to take steps to stay there. The best real estate professionals have a high standard of conduct and service. They expect companies that they refer to conduct themselves similarly. Be respectful of the relationship that they already have with each client, and do your best to simulate that level of service. If real estate professionals believe they can trust you to keep their clients happy, you'll spend more time inspecting houses and less time finding leads.

“Gain the trust of your clients by teaching as you inspect.”

- Rick DeBolt

It's safe to say that most of your clients will not possess the level of knowledge you do about shingles, siding, plumbing, and all of the other systems that make up the homes you are inspecting. But many of them wish they did. Beyond knowing the condition of their home, they want to know what they should be looking for down the road. When you recognize systems that are currently functional, but will likely fail in the future, explain to your clients what to watch for.

Clients will expect that you are able to thoroughly inspect their home and provide an honest evaluation. It's the little things that you do, above and beyond their expectations, that will make you someone they value and refer to their family and friends.

Generally speaking, take a customer-centric approach to your business. If you always place client service at the forefront of your service, you will already be in the mindset to create a positive experience. Constantly approach your work with the thought, “How can I serve the customer better than anyone else?”
“Our job is to make sure a client knows what they’re buying. If you charge into a job with the intention of making yourself look like an expert, the agent will not refer you again.”

- Jan Lee

Remember, the purpose of a home inspection is not to identify as many issues and errors as you possibly can and blow the sale. It’s to provide an honest assessment. Learn to categorize your issues. If something is defective, and doesn’t perform its intended function, that’s certainly one category of issue. If the system is working, but the paint is peeling, there are signs of a past leak, or the storm collar on the flue needs to be caulked, that’s another category of issue.

Expertise is valuable. Ultimately, that’s the reason you were hired. But prospective buyers aren’t looking for someone to tell them not to buy a house they’re interested in. Rather, they’re relying on you to use your knowledge and provide them with information that will help them understand the current condition of the property they are hoping to purchase.

“Remember the phrase unable to view.”

- Dan Norby

One of the biggest mistakes a new home inspector will make is assuming that because they can’t see something, it must be missing. For example, when you open an electrical panel, it may be stuffed with wires that obstruct your view of the ground wires. That doesn’t mean they aren’t there. In this scenario, don’t assume the electrical system is ungrounded. Make it clear to the client that in the given situation, you are unable to view the grounding wires.

“Precise and prompt reporting are just as important as making a thorough inspection.”

- Robert H Leslie

Accuracy, clarity, and timeliness are three traits that make a great home inspection, as well as a positive client experience. The sooner you can provide clients with your report, the better. There is a transaction in process and, oftentimes, it’s hinging on your report. The buyer is eagerly anticipating your assessment of their potential purchase. Both the buyer’s and seller’s agents are awaiting the opportunity to move the sale forward. You are playing a critical role in progressing to the point in the negotiation that everyone is looking forward to...the transaction. Delivering a timely report in a way that the buyer and the agents can clearly understand will go a long way toward creating raving fans on all sides of the transaction.
ABOUT KAPLAN HOME INSPECTION TRAINING

Kaplan Home Inspection training offers the most comprehensive home inspector licensing and certification preparation programs, home inspector professional development, home inspector exam prep, and home inspector continuing education. We offer programs that are nationally accredited and approved by professional home inspection associations such as ASHI, NAHI, and InterNACHI, along with various state licensing bodies. To learn more, visit www.KapRE.com/home-inspection-courses.

Kaplan has the Courses You Need

Kaplan's home inspection training courses are designed to fully lay the foundation for a successful career in the home inspection business. Whether you have an advanced construction or real estate background, or you are completely new to the trade, we have courses designed to prepare you to confidently launch your home inspection career.

Take the First Step Today!

Call 888.323.9235, or visit our website to learn more about the courses offered in your state, and begin your journey in home inspection!

Looking for more Information on the Home Inspection Business?

Find more valuable tips and articles in our online resource center, the Kaplan Career Toolbox.