

*From the Series*  
Deciding on Housing  
MI-221

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BLACKSBURG, VIRGINIA



HOUSEHUNTER'S  
EQUIPMENT

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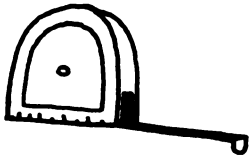
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## HOUSEHUNTER'S EQUIPMENT

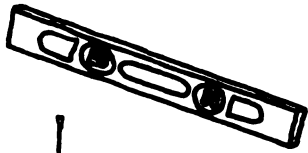
When househunting, it may pay to pretend that you are Detective "Surelock Homes" to assure that you buy only a house and not also many potential repair bills. The serious househunter will want to use the following items to help judge a house:



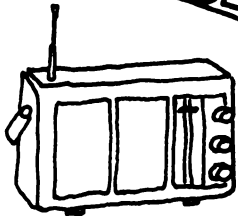
Flashlight: Use it to check crawlspaces, attics and other darkened areas. On a water heater, use it to look inside the door at the bottom where the pilot light is located. Rust spots indicate the heater may soon need to be replaced.



Tape measure: Rooms may look light, airy and large when empty, but not when filled with your furniture. Check the actual room dimensions, then measure your major furniture items to see if they will fit and can be arranged in more than one way.



Marble or level: Use either of these to determine whether or not floors are reasonably level. Also, walk heavily to check for squeaks; if the floor springs, there may be insufficient framing to support heavy items such as waterbeds and pianos.



Transistor radio: Leave the radio blaring in one room to check the sound transmission level in each other room with the doors closed. In an unfurnished house, the noise level will be magnified more than when furnishings and people are in residence to absorb some sound. Also notice any sounds coming in from the street.



Candle: If a lit candle flickers or goes out when held near windows or around doors, weatherstripping and caulking may be necessary to reduce fuel costs. Dust or windowsills may also indicate that wind infiltrates to boost fuel bills.



Cigarette: Test the plumbing by simultaneously running several faucets and flushing the cigarette down the toilet, noting whether the cigarette is taken and the effect on water pressure and speed of toilet tank refill.



Screwdriver: This will remove faceplates from outlets when looking for exterior wall insulation or remove floor heat registers and gently pry up carpet edges around the hole to look for hardwood floors. (One can also look in closets which may not have been carpeted.)



Magnet: Corrodible cast iron pipes found in many older homes can be detected with a magnet. With corrosion, a one-inch diameter pipe may have only a one-half-inch interior diameter, causing the faucet to run "slow" or appear to have inadequate pressure.



Pocket knife or ice pick: If it sinks easily into wooden floor joists, there may be wood rot or termite damage. Call an expert to assess the extent--it may not be beyond correction.

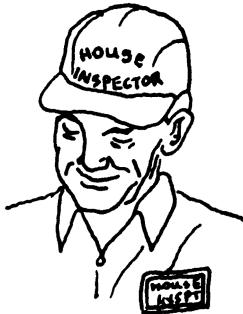


Hammer: If a basement floor sounds hollow when struck, water may have undermined it. Cracks wider than a dime, or bulges also merit further investigation. Footings, foundation walls, and basement floors in good condition assure structural stability and a dry basement.



### Other "tools"

The "detective's" eyes, ears, nose and fingers are also to be used. If you can't afford expensive replacements, turn on all equipment that comes with the house, testing for working order and noise. Open and close all doors and windows. Be alert to odors in refrigerators, dishwashers, and laundry areas. Watch for hazards such as an electrical octopus necessitated by too-few outlets. Don't hesitate to ask questions about operating costs and any past problems.



### Home Inspection Experts

After finding a home you definitely would like to own, you may wish to have it carefully checked by a home inspection consultant or a person experienced in house construction. Since there is no perfect house and homebuying is a very emotional event, a buyer needs to objectively learn about the house's short comings before making an offer. Repair and replacement costs increase the total cost of the house, with a little or a lot of it paid each month. Get estimates on the cost to fix any faults and either request correction or offer accordingly.