



Becoming a home inspector



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SCHOOL OF HOME INSPECTION

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Home inspection is an amazing professional consulting career. The rewards are both financial and meaningful. It is one of those professions where you get to make a positive difference in people's lives every day. We will list some of the highlights and then have a closer look.

THE HIGHLIGHTS

- Don't be chained to a desk.
- No physically challenging work.
- Be a consultant.
- Leverage your knowledge and experience.
- Provide a uniquely valuable service at a critical time in people's lives.
- Help them make great decisions on the most important investment of their life.
- Make \$100,000 a year.
- Be your own boss.
- Set your own hours.
- If you enjoy the nuts and bolts of homes and how things work, home inspection may be right for you.
- If you like people and enjoy helping them, home inspection may be right for you.
- If you like being financially rewarded for your knowledge rather than your labor, home inspection may be right for you.
- If you are comfortable in the role of unbiased expert advisor, home inspection may be right for you.

THE PRE-REQUISITES

Do you need a background in construction to be a successful home inspector? Absolutely not. You can learn the skills of home inspection through a good education program.

You need to be able to speak with homebuyers, sellers and owners, and with real estate professionals.

You need to be able to write at a high school level, although you do not need to be a trained technical writer.

You need to be comfortable with technology such as mobile phones, tablets and personal computers.

You need to be comfortable with the Internet, email and text.

You need to be able to climb a ladder and crawl in crawlspaces.

You need training and experience specific to the profession.

THE OPTIONS

Can you own your own business? Absolutely.

Can you work part time? Of course.

THE OPPORTUNITY

How much do home inspectors make? Average fees are \$400 per inspection. Inspectors can typically perform 2 inspections per day. Averaging one inspection per day for 250 working days a year is 250 inspections. 250 inspections at \$400 per inspection is \$100,000 per year. Fully deployed home inspectors can perform 500 inspections per year.

It will take a while to build your business. You will need a plan.

10 KEY STEPS

1. Education – the cornerstone of success
2. Select your business model
 - a. Start your own practice
 - b. Work for another firm
 - c. Buy a franchise
3. Do your market research
3. Build a marketing plan
4. If you are going to start your own business or buy a franchise, how will you pay – how will you pay the bills while getting started? Here are some options:
 - a. Self-financing
 - b. Outside financing
 - c. Work at inspection part time, and transition to full time as business grows
6. Tools
7. Insurance
8. Vehicle
9. Report writing system
10. Legal and accounting advice, and a bookkeeping system
11. Website and marketing materials

LICENSING

Licensing is required in some areas. Some quick research will tell you the situation in your area. CarsonDunlop.com/training

BROAD KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS REQUIRED

Some people feel that a construction background is important. While we understand that sentiment, the reality is that most construction backgrounds do not prepare you well for home inspection.

We have found that a good education program will give you the knowledge and skills you need, irrespective of your background. Home inspection is different from building, remodeling or being a tradesperson. A home inspector is like a family doctor who needs a good working knowledge over a broad range of human systems. Home inspectors need a good working knowledge over a broad range of house systems. Like family doctors, home inspectors know when to recommend a specialist, whether a heart surgeon or a structural engineer.

A DAY IN THE LIFE

Here is a typical day in the life of a home inspector.

1. Speak to clients or agents about a prospective inspection. (Call center role)
2. Describe your services including your differentiators and quote a fee. (Sales role)
3. Book an inspection (Customer service/administrative role)
4. Send confirmation, receive contract acceptance and payment (Administrative and financial – A good reporting system can do all this for you)
5. Prepare tools and equipment, report writing system, etc. (Pre-inspection routine)
6. Drive to inspection, arriving well before the appointment time. (Drive the neighborhood to understand the house types and ages, and note the topography.)
7. Meet clients, agents and possibly the seller. (Smile and adopt role of trusted advisor)
8. Perform inspection with clients (Look, think, confirm and communicate)
9. Discuss findings (Translate everything into layman's terms. Give clients the information to help make their buying decision. Stay within scope. Don't advise them to buy, renegotiate or walk away.)
10. Write report (Using software tools)
11. Send report to client same day (Last administrative step)
12. Archive report (Good software does this for you.)
13. Perform second inspection, respond to email, phone & text messages, or market your business.

COMMUNICATION

Communication skills are as important as the technical skills.

Can you speak to people simply and clearly? Are you a relationship builder?

Can you listen patiently and attentively, and answer peoples' questions?

Can you take charge without being overbearing?

Can you be fair, honest and unbiased?

Can you admit when you don't know something and get help when needed?

Can you write technical reports? Modern report writing software is so good that you don't need a degree in literature or technical writing. It is easier than you think. It is more about following a system than creating a masterpiece.

THE LEARNING PROCESS

There are great education programs out there to help you understand the technical side of houses from the home inspection perspective. The better programs also help you become a good report writer.

A one or two-week training program should be considered an introduction to the profession. It takes considerably longer to learn a professional consulting practice.

When choosing an education program, you want an education organization that is also active in the home inspection profession. You are looking for competent, comprehensive training delivered in an easy-to-understand manner by successful industry practitioners.

SELF-PACED DISTANCE EDUCATION VS. CLASSROOM TRAINING

Changing careers is a big deal. Look for an education program that allows you to learn on your terms. Distance education means you don't have to travel to go to class. You may want a program that allows you to start at any time, and work at your own pace. Some people have lots of time every week, others have little time. You will need a program that fits your learning style and schedule.

Many adult learners struggle with exams. A good education program gives you lots of practice in a low stress environment. This helps you confidently assess your learning, and prepares you very well for any licensing exams you may take.

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

Getting practical experience in the field can be challenging. Some schools offer field training programs which can be invaluable.

Insight by Carson Dunlop is an app that allows you to accelerate the apprenticeship process, gaining months of in-field experience in hours, through the magic of technology.

In home inspection, competence leads to confidence. A top-notch education program gets you well down the road to mastery.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

There are several national and regional associations. There are many advantages to joining an association including education, networking, credibility, shared experiences, keeping up-to-date with new developments, and a sense of community.

Many home inspectors belong to more than one association. We encourage you to become part of the community. Association membership can be a valuable learning experience as well as a marketing asset, establishing your credibility. Many also offer price benefits on things inspectors need through group-buying.

MORE ON CAREER PATHS

Roughly 75% of home inspectors are sole proprietors. They are independent business people who may or may not have a formal company structure. Other home inspectors may be employees of multi-inspector firms or franchise owners. Each model has its own pros and cons.

Sole proprietors have both the freedom and the responsibility to make all the decisions. Marketing and business development are issues to be considered. It typically takes some time to develop the desired business volume. Many sole proprietors become employers as their business grows, hiring additional inspectors, and building a robust and valuable consulting practice.

Inspectors who are employees do not have the administrative and marketing issues of the sole proprietor, but have less latitude and more defined income opportunities. The simplicity and security may be important factors.

The franchise model is a hybrid, combining business opportunity with the support network. There is typically an upfront cost and an ongoing financial commitment. Franchisees usually have marketing responsibilities combined with a support network. This model works very well for some people.

A WORD ABOUT INSURANCE

You should have insurance for your vehicle and your office contents. You should also consider **professional liability insurance**, also called **errors and omissions insurance**. This covers you for mistakes that may be made during an inspection. The cost is typically \$1500-\$3500 per year, although premiums vary with market conditions, limits and deductibles. **General liability insurance** covers damage or injury that you may cause during an inspection. The cost is typically a few hundred dollars per year.

A MARKETING PLAN

Home inspectors need to differentiate themselves from others in the marketplace. Marketing efforts are often concentrated on the real estate community. Real estate sales professionals are involved in home sales every day. Reaching consumers is difficult, since the market is so large, and very few people are buying a home on any given day.

Home inspectors are in the knowledge and communication business, and this can be an important part of your marketing strategy. Providing valuable information to the real estate community and other allied professions can help establish you as an asset and resource. It is important to maintain your independence and always perform your work with integrity to ensure your long-term success.

A WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Virtually all businesses require a good website. Some education programs and software providers help home inspection businesses get set up with low cost, high performing, home inspection specific websites. Marketing through technology is cost effective and practical, although success is not automatic.

Social media has become an important part of marketing for most businesses. Many home inspectors rely on outside help in this area. Company reviews by consumers have become important.

ANCILLARY SERVICES

Home inspectors can offer many other services related to the home. These include mold, indoor air quality, asbestos, infrared thermography, termite, swimming pools and spas, well and septic systems and sewer video scans, for example. You may perform these services or outsource them, coordinating the work.

TO SUM IT UP

Home inspection offers a rewarding career in a growing professional consulting practice. It is a relatively young service, and there is room for expansion, with only roughly 75% of resale homes currently being inspected. The financial rewards can be significant. There is also a generational shift on the horizon. Many baby-boom home inspectors are retiring, creating a need for new inspectors.

The opportunities are good. The timing is right. To learn more and discuss whether home inspection is right for you, contact one of our career consultants at Carson Dunlop – **866-586-6855** or **training@CarsonDunlop.com**.

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