Home inspector licensing steps checklist

A generic checklist for people who want to work as home inspectors in the United States. Licensing is a state (and sometimes local) decision. Some states do not license inspectors at all. Use this as a prompt to collect answers, then verify every item with the official board.

Start with our licensing pages by state and the licensing overview, then open the board's own site. If a fact on our pages disagrees with the board, the board wins.

1. Confirm whether your state licenses inspectors

- ☐ Identify the official agency (often a home inspector board, a real estate commission, or a department of professional regulation).
- ☐ Confirm whether a state license, registration, or certification is required, optional, or not used.
- ☐ Check whether cities or counties add their own rules on top of the state.
- ☐ If there is no state license, ask whether a private association credential, insurance, or a business license is still expected by clients or local rules.

2. Education and field training

- ☐ List the required pre-licensing hours or courses, if any, and whether the school must be board-approved.
- ☐ Confirm whether a practicum, mentor, or supervised inspections are required, and how they are documented.
- ☐ Keep certificates and transcripts; applications often ask for them later.

3. The exam, or exams

- ☐ Find out whether the state requires the National Home Inspector Examination, a state-written exam, both, or neither.
- ☐ If a national exam is used, review the exam format overview and study from the public outline. InspectExam practice follows that national outline and is not a state-law course.
- ☐ If a state exam is also required, study that board's law, standards of practice and rules from official materials. Do not assume a national practice bank covers a state-only test.
- ☐ Note any waiting period between attempts and any cap on retakes before more education is required.

4. Application, background checks and insurance

- ☐ Download the current application and fee schedule from the board, not from a third-party summary.
- ☐ Check fingerprinting, background-check, and age or legal-presence rules.
- ☐ Ask what insurance the board or your clients expect (often general liability and, in some states, errors and omissions). Get quotes before you name a start date.

- ☐ Confirm whether you need a business registration, a surety bond, or a sponsored license tier (some states use apprentice or associate levels).

5. After you are authorized to work

- ☐ Calendar the renewal date, continuing-education hours, and how the board wants them reported.
- ☐ If you plan to move or work across state lines, ask the new board about reciprocity or endorsement rather than assuming your current license travels automatically.
- ☐ Keep a copy of your license, insurance, and signed pre-inspection agreements with your records.

Preparing for the national exam? Use the 30-day study plan and the pre-exam day checklist.

General information only, not legal advice. Requirements vary and change. Your state authority is the only reliable source.

This InspectExam resource is for exam study only. It is not a substitute for the official exam content outline, candidate handbook, building codes, or any association standard of practice. Always verify current rules with the exam owner, your testing vendor, and your state board. No guarantee of passing.