

What to look for when buying or renting

In the market for a new home? Whether you're buying or renting, it's worth considering how warm and cheap to run a home will be, before you commit to it.

Use this handy checklist to give you an indication if a home you're looking at is likely to be an energy-guzzling icebox or a warm, comfortable, energy efficient haven – the more ticks, the better¹.

Property address: _____

Is the home positioned for the sun?

The direction the house faces, and the size of your windows, makes a big difference. A lot of heat disappears through windows that aren't sized properly for the direction they face, and it's not something that's easily fixed.

House direction and shading – do living areas face roughly North and will they get sun from late morning to afternoon in winter when the sun is lower?

Window size – are East-, West- and South-facing windows relatively small?

Does the home have enough insulation?

Insulation has a big impact on how warm, comfortable and healthy a home is to live in. Ceiling and underfloor insulation are must-haves – remember to budget for upgrades if there's not enough. ENERGYWISE™ has funding for getting insulation up to standard.

Ceiling insulation – is it 120 mm thick and does it cover the whole ceiling?

Underfloor insulation (if applicable) – is there any and, if so, is it in good condition?

Wall insulation – is there any? (if it's not clear and the house is pre-1978, assume there's none)

Glazing – are windows double-glazed so they insulate better?

What type of heating system does the home have?

A good, efficient heating system that's used properly makes a home much easier and affordable to heat properly – it's worth budgeting for one if there isn't one already.

Main living area – is there a good, fixed heating system in the main living area? (for example, a heat pump, a modern wood burner or wood pellet burner, a flued gas system).

Is the home damp?

A damp home can be an unhealthy living environment. Note that a ventilation or dehumidifying system isn't an indicator that a home has no dampness issues – sometimes these just mask the problem.

Musty smells, mould or water stains – is the house free of these on walls, ceilings or under carpets?

Under the house (if applicable) – is the ground dry?

Extractor fans – are they present in kitchens and bathrooms?

What type of hot water system does the home have?

Hot water systems use a lot of energy, and some are more efficient and environmentally friendly than others.

Type of system – will it be relatively low-cost to run? (examples of systems with lower running costs include solar water heating, heat-pump water heating, continuous flow gas)

If it's an electric system – are cylinder and pipes wrapped?

What type of lighting does the home have?

Recessed downlights are common in many homes, but they're inefficient for general lighting and can make your insulation less effective. You can replace them with non-recessed fittings.

Lighting – is all the lighting non-recessed?

For more information, visit www.energywise.govt.nz

¹ If you're serious about buying a home, get it properly inspected by a suitably qualified professional. Ask them to include moisture content measurements to identify any hidden leaks and moisture problems in building materials.