

The S.I.M.P.L.E. First-Viewing Guide

By TallOak Group Ltd

A quick, easy checklist to help you spot hidden issues when viewing a home — and note anything you see so you can research it later or ask us for help estimating repair costs.

Buying a home is exciting, but it's easy to miss things during a first viewing. This guide gives you simple checks you can do **without tools, without touching anything you shouldn't, and without needing technical knowledge**. If you spot anything unusual, make a note or take a photo (with the owner's permission). You can look it up later — or we can help you understand the likely cost to fix it.

S – Smells

Your nose spots problems faster than your eyes.

Look out for:

- Damp or musty smells
- Strong air fresheners (may be hiding something)
- Mouldy smells in cupboards
- Drain smells in bathrooms or kitchens

Unusual smells can indicate moisture, drainage, or plumbing issues, but they are not conclusive on their own.

I – Inside Temperature

Cold rooms can point to heat loss and higher heating costs.

While walking around:

- Notice if some rooms feel **much colder** than others
- Move your hand slowly around **window frames** and **door frames** — feel for cold air or draughts
- Notice whether internal walls feel unusually cold; this may suggest limited insulation or another issue worth investigating
- Stand still for a moment — do you feel a breeze?

Draughts and cold spots may indicate heat loss and higher heating costs, but a professional assessment is needed to identify the cause.

M – Moisture

Moisture problems can lead to significant repair costs, particularly in older homes.

Look for:

- Condensation on windows

- Black spots or mould in corners
- Peeling paint
- Damp patches on ceilings
- Swollen skirting boards
- Mould around window frames

These are all visible signs — no tools needed.

P – Power & Lighting

Quick visual checks can highlight signs that merit further electrical investigation.

Bulbs

- Are they **LED** or old halogens? LED = lower bills.

Light switches

- Old, yellowed, cracked, or loose switches may indicate ageing or damaged accessories, but appearance alone does not confirm the age of the wiring
- Flickering lights can have several causes and should be checked by a competent electrician if the problem persists

Sockets

Do not use socket shape alone to judge the age or condition of the wiring. Some round-pin sockets are used on dedicated lighting circuits, while older round-pin sockets may warrant further investigation. Instead look for:

- Old-looking sockets
- Loose sockets
- Burn marks or heat discolouration

Basic questions to ask

- “Is there a recent Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR)?”
- “Are there Electrical Installation Certificates or Minor Electrical Installation Works Certificates for any recent electrical work?”

You don’t need to touch anything — just look and ask.

L – Leaks

Leaks can be heard as well as seen.

Listen

In bathrooms and kitchens:

- Listen for **continuous trickling** in toilets
- Listen for **hissing** behind taps
- Listen for **dripping** even when everything is off

Look

- Dripping taps
- Stains on ceilings
- Damp under sinks
- Rust marks around radiators
- Soft flooring near baths/showers

Some water issues are visible or audible, but hidden leaks may require inspection by a qualified professional.

E – Equipment (Boiler, Radiators, Solar)

Big future costs hide in the equipment.

Boiler

- Does it look modern or old?
- Any rust, dents, or yellowing plastic?
- Ask permission to take a **photo of the label** (model + serial number)
- Ask: “When was it last serviced?”

Radiators

- Do they have **TRVs** (thermostatic valves)?
- Any **smart radiator valves**?
- Any rust marks or leaks?
- If heating is on: are they warm evenly?

Solar (if present)

- Count the number of panels
- Check they look secure and aligned
- Ask: “Do you have a battery?”
- Ask: “What are your average bills?”

S.I.M.P.L.E. Rhyme

“Smells and cold, moisture and light, Leaks and the kit — check all in sight. Keep it S.I.M.P.L.E. when you first go, Spot the hints the sellers won’t show.”

Short, memorable, and easy to recall during a viewing.

Need help understanding what you found?

TallOak Group Ltd can help you:

- Identify likely repair costs
- Estimate energy-efficiency upgrades
- Understand heating, electrics, and water issues
- Plan improvements before you buy

TallOak Group Ltd

Serving Essex & Greater London

Sales: sales@talloakgroup.com

Support: support@talloakgroup.com

talloakgroup.com

TallOak Group Ltd