

5. Cost to repair

I often get asked “How much does it cost to repair that?” Quite frankly, I don’t know all the time. I am a full-time, professional home inspector, and my Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice prevent me from working on properties that I have inspected, so I might not have all the necessary repair experience concerning how much it costs to fix something that I inspected. I do have a construction/repair background, however, but times change and so do costs & pricing, just look at gas prices for example.

Each home and circumstance is different, and a licensed expert at something surely will discover some additional problems that a generalist and unlicensed home inspector cannot (Ohio has no licensing for home inspectors). And I have yet to have any Client or Realtor call me and say, “Hey, it cost \$248.17 to fix that doohickey.” So I’m not being stubborn or anything like that; it’s simply that I really may not know or do not wish to know. My focus is inspecting, not repairing. However, there are several ways to get good estimates:

First, call three repair specialists for the work you need to have done (e.g., plumber, electrician, etc.) and get an estimate from them. These are three Internet sites where you can go to get quality service by caring professionals: www.doneright.com, www.angieslist.com, and the Better Business Bureau at www.bbb.org. Most licensed professionals charge by the hour, so it truly will be an estimate until they actually do the work. However, once you get three estimates, pretend like you are a judge at the Olympics: Throw out the high and the low and take the middle. That tactic typically (but not always) ensures good materials, good workmanship, and good service without being taken to the cleaners (with no actual clothes involved) by those who would prefer to overcharge you for poor materials, poor workmanship, or poor service.

Second, Your Home Inspection Report provides you with a good list of estimates to repair just about anything in your home. Note, however, that, again, they are only estimates, and you’ll find some estimates that say something like “\$2,500 and up.” Well, your “and up” might come in at \$10,000 when all is said and done, so it’s still better to call around and get some repair estimates for your specific situation and for the area where you will be living. Many Realtors or their offices also maintain lists of professionals who have provided quality service to their agents or Clients at some time in the past.

I also often get asked, “Who should repair that?” Since I do not know the qualifications of other people (seller, you, your Realtor, friends, family, etc.) to do repairs, I recommend that you hire a qualified and/or licensed professional in the appropriate trade. You have to decide for yourself if your qualifications, experience, and knowledge, or that of any other person, would result in the repair being done properly. Keep in mind that some sellers tend to repair things using the quickest and least expensive method, sometimes doing it themselves on a weekend (what I call the “Weekend Warrior”), because they just want to sell the house without investing any more money in it. As quite often happens, that quickest and least expensive method, or an unproven or unapproved method by an unknowing individual, leads to premature failure of the repair. Also keep in mind that while many people outside of the professions might be able to make repairs, unless they are licensed in those professions, they typically cannot provide any warranty or guarantee concerning the work. So it still is best to require the seller to use appropriate professionals who can then provide you with receipts and warranties or guarantees concerning their work.