

A home showing is one of those errands that feels simple until you're standing in a stranger's hallway with questions you didn't write down, a phone battery at 12 percent, and a door key that turns halfway before you realize you've been given the wrong one. The difference between a smooth showing and a frustrating one is usually small: a handful of practical items, a plan for how you'll observe the property, and the confidence to ask for what you need.

Bring the right things, and you'll leave with clearer answers, better comparisons, and fewer second-guessing moments later.

Start with the basics: your “showing kit”

Think of what you bring as both preparation and protection. Preparation helps you notice details that matter. Protection helps you avoid embarrassing delays and keeps you moving even if the showing runs long or you get stuck on a specific room for ten extra minutes.

On my first buyer showing, I brought exactly what I assumed I needed: a notebook and my phone. The agent walked us through the front room, the kitchen, and the primary suite. By the time we reached the basement, my notebook was already full of generic notes like “nice light” and “good layout,” and my phone was overheating in direct sun. I couldn't pull up the listing I'd been trying to reference, and I had no way to record temperatures, odors, or outlet locations. I still remember standing there, realizing that the most important evidence was already slipping away.

Since then, I've treated a showing like a field inspection, just lighter and less technical.

The single most important thing: a way to capture notes quickly

If you take notes, do it consistently. If you don't, you'll rely on memory, and memory is unreliable when you're comparing multiple homes on the same weekend.

For most people, a phone note app or a small notebook works fine. The key is speed and structure. You want to write down what you observed while it's fresh, then label it so you can compare later.

Instead of writing paragraphs like “kitchen feels warm,” use short prompts that you can scan. “Cabinet finish: slightly rough near corner,” “HVAC vent above stove rattles,” “window near sink fogging?” “Sound: traffic noise audible at 8:00 pm style.” You're not writing a report, you're building a usable memory.

A quick note style that actually helps later

You can keep it simple by tagging notes to categories: layout, condition, systems, and practical fit. After a showing, those tags turn into quick summaries you can match to your decision criteria.

Bring your listing references, not just your curiosity

A showing is more productive when you can cross-check what you're seeing against what you were told. You may notice details that raise questions, and you want to verify whether those details are consistent with the listing description.

Bring a digital copy of the listing, disclosures if provided, floor plan, and any property highlights you received before the appointment. Even if the agent talks you through key points, you'll still want to verify specifics like:

- approximate room sizes if available
- the stated square footage and how it relates to ceiling heights
- the location of major updates, if they were listed
- what's been remodeled and what hasn't

You don't need to be combative, you just need to be accurate. Accuracy reduces regret.

Devices that pay off fast: phone, charger, and a flashlight mindset

Your phone is your map, your camera, your calculator, and your note-taking tool. But phones can drain quickly, especially if you're using flash photography, video, or GPS without realizing it.

Bring a charger or battery pack. This sounds obvious, but it's surprisingly easy to forget until you're fumbling for a cable at the curb. If you want an even smoother experience, download the listing photos and floor plan on Wi-Fi before you leave, so you're not relying on a weak cellular signal inside.

Also consider a small flashlight. Many issues hide in plain sight only because lighting is poor. Basements, utility closets, crawl spaces, and behind appliances often look different when you can direct light precisely instead of hoping the room lighting is sufficient.

The flashlight isn't about "gotcha" moments. It's about seeing outlet condition, water staining, and workmanship details without guessing.

Footwear matters more than most buyers expect

You'll likely walk through multiple rooms, possibly stairs, possibly outdoor areas, and occasionally garage or basement spaces. Your shoes should handle transitions without slowing you down.

I've seen people come in sneakers with thin soles and then realize they're standing in a spot where the floor feels uneven or where nails or small debris are likely. You don't need heavy boots, but you do want something with grip and comfort. For showings that involve carpet, I also prefer dark socks or shoes that won't easily show dirt, because someone will eventually ask you to remove footwear or the home may already feel "lived in" in a way that makes you more self-conscious.

If the weather is wet, plan for it. Mud tracked onto entry floors is a fast way to create tension you do not need.

A measuring approach, even if you're not "that" buyer

People assume they need a tape measure, and many do. But you're not required to bring one, and a tape measure can become a distraction if you use it constantly. What's more important is deciding in advance what you need to measure.

If you have specific furniture needs, measuring becomes practical. For example, if you're bringing a sectional and it needs a certain clearance around the doorway, or you're verifying whether a dresser fits in a niche, or you want to confirm whether a hallway is wide enough for stroller clearance, a tape measure can save you from buying based on vibes.

If you don't have a particular measurement need, you can still estimate using room references and photos. But if you do plan to measure, keep it discreet and efficient. Measure when it helps you make a decision, not when it interrupts the flow.

Bring the right questions, and keep them organized

A showing is the best time to ask questions because you can point at what you're seeing. But questions need structure. Otherwise, you'll remember three important things you wanted to ask, and you'll ask them at the end when the agent is already wrapping up.

A good strategy is to group questions into a few themes based on what you'll likely notice:

- condition and maintenance history
- systems and utilities
- updates and workmanship
- neighborhood and daily-life realities

Even if you don't ask all of them, having them in your notes prevents you from forgetting.

If you prefer to speak naturally, you can still keep a "question bank" in your phone. During the showing, you glance at it, then ask as opportunities arise. It keeps you calm.

Consider personal comfort and safety: water, ventilation, and allergies

Many showings involve a property that's been vacant or prepped for presentation. That means air quality and odors can shift quickly. If you're sensitive to fragrances, smoke residue, or strong cleaning products, bring what helps you stay grounded and safe.

A bottle of water is simple, and it helps you pace your evaluation. If you wear contacts, have a plan for eye irritation. If you're allergic to dust, don't force yourself through an entire basement without breaks, even if you feel rushed. You're not being polite by pushing through discomfort.

Safety also matters. If you see loose handrails, uneven steps, exposed nails, or any tripping hazard, don't ignore it just because you want to "look through quickly." Note it, step carefully, and ask about it if it's relevant.

Don't overlook the "paper trail" items

Depending on your situation, you might be an active buyer ready to move quickly, or you might be gathering information before deciding. Either way, bring documents only if they'll help.

If you're using a mortgage pre-approval, have your lender contact information saved. If you're working through a buyer's agent, you might already have a set process, but it still helps to have their number saved in your phone. If you're not sure what happens next after the showing, ask at the time, and write down answers.

Also, if you're viewing a home that has specific access needs, confirm how entry works and bring anything required by the listing agent. Some viewings require scheduled entry, and you do not want to arrive without what you need for check-in.

Two practical checklists that keep you from forgetting everything

Here are two small, high-impact lists. Keep them short, because if a list is too long you'll start skipping parts of it.

Showing day essentials (quick checklist)

- Phone with listing saved (and charger or battery pack)

- Flashlight for closets, basement, utility areas, and under-sink spaces
- Notebook or notes app for fast observations
- Water and comfortable footwear
- Any required access items (key fob, check-in info, or appointment confirmation)

Questions worth bringing (so you actually ask them)

- What's the maintenance timeline for major systems like HVAC, water heater, and roof?
- What updates were done, and do you have permits or receipts?
- Are there known issues with moisture, pests, or noise from outside?
- How old are flooring, windows, and appliances if those details matter to your plan?
- What items are staying with the home, and what's excluded?

Use these as prompts, not a script. If you feel awkward asking the same question twice, you're free to tailor it based on what you see.

Trade-offs: what you might bring versus what you should avoid

It's tempting to bring everything. A full tool kit, an infrared thermometer, a big camera rig, and a notepad the size of a door. For most showings, that's overkill and can make the process feel tense, especially if the seller is present or if the agent is managing multiple parties in close time.

There's also a practical limit: you're moving through the space. If you have bulky gear, you'll bump into furniture, spend time repositioning items, and lose your sense of momentum.

Here's how I think about it:

- If you can answer your question with an observation you can make safely in under a minute, bring a light note and move on.
- If you need a measurement to avoid a wrong decision, bring a tape measure and use it sparingly.
- If you're worried about systems, bring the right question, then let the professional inspection handle the technical parts.

The home inspection will do the heavy lifting. Your showing is for gathering clues and asking smart questions.

Edge cases that change what you should bring

Not every showing is the same. A few situations can make additional items worth considering.

If the home has a basement or crawl space

Lighting becomes critical. A flashlight helps, but also plan how you'll handle quick exposure. If it's dusty, bring a mask if that's part of your routine and comfort level. It's not dramatic, it's just practical. Also consider bringing a phone note prompt for moisture indicators, because you might see signs [real estate investing condado](#) quickly and then forget what you were looking at when you return upstairs.

If there are pets or strong odors

If you already know you're sensitive to pet dander, plan for it. Don't arrive unprepared and then spend half the showing distracted by discomfort. A simple approach is to bring whatever allergy support you use normally. If the

home has a strong cleaning scent, note it and ask what products were used and when.

If you're viewing during intense weather

If it's raining, windy, or extremely hot, your senses will pick up more. Bring water, and bring attention to drainage and ventilation. If it's hot, consider asking how often the home cycles and how it feels in the rooms you care about.

You can't fully test performance in one showing, but you can observe patterns worth investigating later.

How to use what you bring while you're inside

Having items isn't enough. Using them effectively matters.

Start with the entry and the first 30 seconds. Look at entry floor condition, door alignment, and how the air feels. Then move room by room, and capture notes in the same order each time. Consistency makes comparisons easier. I like to keep myself from "re-exploring" rooms repeatedly, because that's how you waste time and dilute your notes.

If you take photos, do it intentionally. Take wider shots to capture layout, then take close-ups of features you'll later want to reference. If you're photographing a stain, also photograph the surrounding area so you can tell where it is later.

Don't feel obligated to document everything. Your goal is to gather enough evidence that you can follow up accurately.

A short lived-experience reminder: your future self will thank you

After enough showings, you'll start to blend homes together. Kitchens look similar, layouts repeat, and certain design choices feel memorable in the moment but fade quickly once you've seen five other living rooms.

One time, I wrote exactly three notes on a showing: "single pane near dining room," "outlet near kitchen island loose," "basement smell stronger after rain." Two days later, I opened my notes and realized I had a clear red flag. The listing didn't highlight it, but the pattern did. I asked follow-up questions, and later inspection confirmed moisture management concerns that needed attention. That single page of notes was what turned "something felt off" into a specific, actionable concern.

You do not need to become an expert. You just need to observe carefully and record enough to ask the right people the right questions.

Final thoughts on packing for a showing

When you decide what to bring to a home showing, focus on three outcomes: capture observations, ask better questions, and move through the space comfortably and safely. A phone and charger, a flashlight mindset, good footwear, quick notes, and the right prompts cover most needs.

If you're unsure what's essential for your exact situation, you can simplify even further: bring your notes method, your listing info, a charger, and a flashlight. Everything else is optional based on what you care about and what you're likely to notice.

A showing should leave you more confident, not more overwhelmed. The [real estate](#) right items help you stay present, ask smarter questions, and remember what matters long after the lights turn off.

Alma Martinez Real Estate 787-367-8507 Lic C21671

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