truhali
PROPERTY CHECKS

FREE CHECKLIST

12 signs your build in Kenya isn't where they say it is

...and how to check without a fight

Most hold-ups on a self-build have ordinary reasons: rain, a late delivery, a fundi called away upcountry. None of these signs means that anyone has done anything wrong. Each one is simply a good moment to ask one more question, kindly, in a way that keeps the relationship and the family intact.

How to use it: each sign comes with a check you can ask for in a normal message, plus words you can borrow. Tick the box once that check is part of your routine.

A typical bungalow, stage by stage

A storeyed house adds a slab after each floor's walls.

1. Foundation
2. DPC
3. Walls to window height
4. Lintel & ring beam
5. Roof structure
6. Roof sheets
7. Plaster
8. Fittings & finishes

1 The photos are always close-ups ☐

You notice: A corner, a stack of blocks, a trench, but never the whole building from the road.

Check it: Ask for the same three wide photos every time: from the gate and both front corners, phone held sideways. Put this month's next to last month's.

> **Try:** "Can you take the same three photos each time? I want to line them up month by month."

2 The photo and the message don't match ☐

You notice: Told "we're at ring beam", but the walls stop below the window tops. Told "roofing has started", but there are no trusses in any photo.

Check it: Look at the photo before the caption and name the stage you see (ladder above). Keep a one-line diary: date, stage told, stage seen.

> **Try:** "Great news! Can you send one wide photo from the road so I can see all of it?"

3 A "new" photo looks like an old one ☐

You notice: Same clouds, same puddle, the wheelbarrow in the same spot as last month.

Check it: Ask for photos as a WhatsApp **Document**, not Photo: that keeps the date each was taken (on a PC: right-click › Properties › Details). Google Lens shows if a picture is already online. Dates can be edited, so it's a clue, not an answer.

> **Try:** "Can you send them as Documents? I want them full size for my folder."

4 There's never a video, or it always cuts ☐

You notice: Only photos. Videos are a few seconds long, start inside or jump between places, and there has been no video call from the site.

Check it: Ask for a short video that opens with a word you chose today, then walks from the gate to the work without stopping. An old video can't contain today's word.

> **Try:** "Can you start the video with 'mango' and walk in from the gate? I like feeling I'm there."

5 No sign of work on a working day ☐

You notice: Weekday photos with no tools out, a dry mixing spot and no fresh mortar. New blockwork stays darker and damp for a day or so.

Check it: Ask for the weekly labour list: roles, days worked, daily rate. It's normal paperwork, and nobody's face needs to be in a photo.

> **Try:** "Who was on site this week, and for how many days? It's for my budget sheet."

6 Signs the site stopped a while ago ☐

You notice: Heavy, flaky rust on the steel sticking out of the columns, grass in the ballast or sand, cement bags gone hard.

Check it: Ask for one wide photo of the heaps and the column tops. Light surface rust is normal; grass in the ballast takes weeks, not days.

> **Try:** "Can you send one wide shot of the heaps and column tops, so I know where we are?"

7 The material counts don't add up ☐

You notice: "2,000 blocks delivered", but the stack plus the walls built don't look like 2,000.

Check it: Ask for a photo of each delivery with its delivery note in the shot. Count a block stack as rows × columns × layers; steel should be listed by size (Y10, Y12…).

> **Try:** "When the delivery comes, can you snap it with the note on top?"

8 Receipts that aren't really receipts ☐

You notice: A handwritten list with no hardware name or phone, a screenshot of a total, or a receipt that never arrives.

Check it: Ask for the hardware's printed receipt or delivery note with its name, phone and date (many now issue KRA eTIMS receipts), and match it to the delivery photo.

> **Try:** "Could the hardware give a printed receipt? I'm keeping everything together."

9 M-Pesa totals don't match the quote ☐

You notice: What you've sent for a stage adds up to more than its quote, or the money goes to a name you don't recognise.

Check it: Keep a one-page ledger: date, amount, the name shown on the payment, what it was for, receipt yes/no. Total it stage by stage against the quote or BQ.

> **Try:** "Who is [name] on this payment? No problem, I just like my records tidy."

10 Urgent money with no breakdown ☐

You notice: "Send 80,000 today, cement goes up tomorrow", with no list. A real price rise survives a one-day check.

Check it: Ask for the hardware's written quote (quantity × unit price, name, phone) and pay its Till or Paybill directly: the M-Pesa message then shows the business name.

> **Try:** "Send me the hardware's quote and Till number. I'll pay them directly so you don't carry cash."

11 Rain, again and again ☐

You notice: The long rains (Mar–May) and short rains (Oct–Dec) really do stop work. The sign is labour money asked for while work is stopped, or rain blamed in a dry week.

Check it: Ask what was done on the dry days, look up that week's weather for the town, and plan slabs for the drier months together.

> **Try:** "What can the team do on dry days? Shall we plan the slab for after the rains?"

12 Every update comes from one person ☐

You notice: Every photo, receipt and update comes through one person, and nobody else has seen the site in months.

Check it: That says nothing bad about them; it's just one view. Photos from someone neutral now and then take pressure off them too: the photos answer questions, not an argument.

> **Try:** "I'm getting some photos taken for my file now and then. Fewer questions for you."

Asking without a fight

Four habits that keep build conversations friendly

- **Make it routine, not a reaction.** "I'm keeping a build diary" is easier to hear than "I don't believe you."
- **Ask, don't conclude.** "Help me understand" opens a conversation. "Why did you lie?" ends one.
- **One question per message, and thank them for good updates.** A voice note often sounds warmer than a text.
- **Keep it private.** Don't post your site, plot details or anyone's photo in a group to ask "is this right?"

Before you send the next building payment, see what's actually there.

On a Saturday I visit your build and send you one PDF within 48 hours: photos with the date and time on each one, a code-word video on arrival and departure, meter readings where they can be reached, and a plain list of what was seen.

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USD 75. The first ten owners pay USD 65 (about KES 8,400): USD 35 when they book, the rest after the report. Truhali is new and small: it's run by Jose Mbugua from Nairobi. Want the next guide? Message and I'll send it.

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