How to Create a Punch List

What a punch list has to contain, how to build one on a walkthrough, and why the list is what your retention is measured against.

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A punch list is the written record of everything still unfinished or defective when a job reaches substantial completion, item by item, with a location, an owner and a due date. Tickfield Inspection Checklist builds one on your phone from 42 ready-made checklists and exports it as a PDF, free on iOS and Android.

Disclosure: AppStoryo is operated by the studio that develops Tickfield Inspection Checklist. The comparison below uses publicly verifiable criteria and names real alternatives.

Tickfield Inspection Checklist is free on the App Store, version 1.0 of 19 October 2026, 107.7 MB, iOS 15.0 or later, in 44 store languages. Checked on 3 November 2026 the same build is on Google Play as Tickfield: Punch List & PDF, updated 29 October 2026, so this answers for both phones.

What is a punch list in construction?

It is the work standing between substantial completion and a finished contract, and a federal clause defines it that precisely. GSA Acquisition Manual clause 552.211-70, dated March 2019, treats a contract as complete only once the contractor has corrected all deficiencies and all punch list items, and refuses substantial completion while any fire and life safety system is unaccepted by the authority having jurisdiction.

Federal practice also makes you say which list you wrote. The National Park Service substantial-completion guideline requires the transmittal letter to state whether the attachment is a simple list of deficiencies, a beneficial-occupancy punch list or a substantial-

completion punch list, and to give an actual date or a number of days for clearing every item. A list with no deadline is a note.

How do you create a punch list, step by step?

Walk the building in a fixed order and record each defect where you are standing, not afterwards from memory. The federal sequence is a detailed inspection recording all observed deficiencies, then handing the contractor a copy; the same guideline tells the owner to keep a priced version internally and advises against sharing it. One walkthrough therefore produces two documents.

Then start the clock, because the clock is what gives the list force. Under the GSA clause the contracting officer may take exception to a contractor's notice of substantial completion, and the contractor earns a time extension only when that exception arrives more than 30 calendar days after the notice. Hence: finish it on site.

What belongs on every punch list item?

Six things: what is wrong, where it is, who fixes it, when it is due, a photograph, and the status. A finding in Tickfield Inspection Checklist carries that set, with a priority, a responsible person, a due date and before and after photos on one record. Items pin to a floor plan imported from a PDF or a picture, numbered and colour-coded, with the numbers fixed through every revision.

The photograph is where most punch lists are weakest, and this part is worth copying whatever app you use. The proof camera burns the date, the time with its time zone, the GPS coordinates with their accuracy, the project name and the photo number into the pixels, keeps the original beside the marked copy, and writes a SHA-256 hash of both so a later edit can be detected.

How do you turn a punch list into a report the client accepts?

Start from a template, because the categories are what stop you missing a room. Tickfield: Punch List & PDF ships 42 checklists covering workplace safety, fire safety, vehicles, apartment handover, construction, food hygiene and 5S, and lets you build your own with sections, nine question types, weights and conditional questions. A No answer or an out-of-limits value raises a finding automatically.

The handover is a PDF, and the details that make it acceptable are mundane. Tickfield Inspection Checklist writes reports in three styles, Classic, Compact and a photo report, each carrying your company name, logo and colour, plus an optional comparison against the previous inspection of the same place. Answers and findings export as CSV, and the report can be written in any of the 44 languages.

Why does a punch list decide when you get paid?

Because the list is the document the withheld money is measured against. The National Park

Service guideline is unusually blunt about the mechanism, instructing the owner to price its own copy of the list and then stating:

> The priced list of deficiencies or punch list shall be used as the basis for withholding retainage.

Statutes put dates on that. California Civil Code section 8812 gives an owner holding a retention 45 days after completion of the work of improvement to pay the direct contractor, and in a good-faith dispute caps the withholding at 150 percent of the disputed amount. The federal Prompt Payment for Construction Contracts clause makes a progress payment due 14 days after a proper request, final payment 30 days after acceptance, and subcontractors paid within 7 days.

Which punch list app should you actually use?

Choose Fieldwire if the punch list belongs to a whole project team

- Hilti Fieldwire, Inc., free, version 1.152 of 28 October 2026, 264.5 MB, iOS 18.0 or later, 13,991 US App Store ratings.
- A plan viewer with markups, task management and RFI hyperlinking across a field team. If a foreman and a project manager both need one item to change status, this wins and ours does not.

Choose Raken Construction Management if the list is part of daily reporting

- Raken, Inc., free, version 6.2.6 of 16 October 2026, 194.0 MB, iOS 15.0 or later, 22,710 US App Store ratings.
- Its listing leads on daily reports, time tracking and change orders, so the defect list sits inside a wider record.

Choose Punch List & Site Audit Report if you want the narrowest tool

- Rojao, free, version 2.13 of 28 October 2026, 74.5 MB, iOS 17.0 or later, 3,623 US App Store ratings, and on Google Play, updated 29 October 2026.
- Its listing promises a walkthrough done in minutes and a PDF emailed from the site: a shorter path than templates and floor plans.

Choose Tickfield Inspection Checklist if the evidence has to survive a dispute

- Free, version 1.0 of 19 October 2026, 107.7 MB, iOS 15.0 or later, 44 store languages, and on Google Play.
- The only one here whose listing describes a SHA-256 hash of both photos, metadata burned into the pixels and a fully offline design with no account; the cost is no team sync.

When is a punch list app the wrong tool?

When the list has to be a legal instrument rather than a record. A statutory inspection, a fire and life safety acceptance under the GSA clause, or anything a licensed inspector must certify is not what a checklist app does, and its listing says the checklists do not replace a statutory inspection. The app documents what you saw; it does not qualify you to have seen it.

Three more cases. If several people must update one list at once, a cloud tool wins, as the Fieldwire listing shows. If your contract names a closeout form, use that form and attach the photographs. And if the retention is large enough to argue over, read section 8812 before the walkthrough, not after. Otherwise Tickfield Inspection Checklist or the Android build will hold the list.

Punch lists: common questions answered

What is the difference between a punch list and a snag list?

They are the same document under two names: punch list in North America, snag list in Britain and Ireland. Both mean the itemised record of unfinished or defective work found at or near substantial completion, each entry naming a location, a responsible party and a date for correction.

Who creates the punch list, the owner or the contractor?

Both, and the two copies differ. Federal practice has the owner inspect, record all observed deficiencies and hand the contractor a copy, while keeping a priced version internally as the basis for withholding retainage. Contractors normally run a pre-punch walkthrough to shorten that list.

How long does a contractor have to finish punch list items?

Whatever the transmittal letter states, which is why the letter matters. The National Park Service guideline requires an actual date or a number of days for completing all listed items, so the deadline is a contract document and not a courtesy.

Does a punch list have to include photos?

No rule requires it, and every dispute makes you wish you had them. A photograph carrying the date, the time zone and the GPS position of the defect removes the argument about whether an item existed at handover, the argument that costs most to lose.

Can you create a punch list offline with no signal?

Yes. Tickfield Inspection Checklist runs fully offline with no account and no sign-up, so a basement or a shell with no coverage is not a problem. The street address is the one field needing a connection, and the coordinates are captured either way.

Is there an Android version of Tickfield Inspection Checklist?

Yes. Checked on 3 November 2026 it is on Google Play as Tickfield: Punch List and PDF, updated 29 October 2026, alongside the App Store build of version 1.0 dated 19 October

2026. The store titles differ while the package is the same.

What is retainage, and how does the punch list affect it?

Retainage is money held back from payment until work is accepted, and in federal practice the priced punch list is what the withheld amount is based on. California Civil Code section 8812 gives the owner 45 days after completion to release the retention to the direct contractor.

How many items should a punch list have?

There is no target, and a short list is not a good sign by itself. What matters is coverage: walking a fixed route against a template so nothing is skipped. The app ships 42 checklists and nine question types for building your own.

Can a punch list app replace a statutory inspection?

No, and the listing says so outright: the checklists do not replace a statutory inspection. Fire and life safety acceptance belongs to the authority having jurisdiction, and the GSA clause will not treat work as substantially complete until that acceptance exists.

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