

Home Maintenance Guide – A 20 Point Checklist

Owning a home is still the American dream, but homeownership takes work. It requires maintenance and care to keep your home looking great, operating efficiently, and ultimately retaining its value.

To properly maintain your home, you should set and follow a regular schedule. There are monthly, seasonal, annual and semi-annual activities and tasks that need to be done to keep your home systems running efficiently and your appliances protected from unneeded wear and tear.

If you are new to homeownership, you may not know or understand everything that needs to be done to maintain your home. If you recently built a new home and are under the impression that everything is new so you don't have to worry about maintenance for a long time, you may be setting yourself up for a significant financial challenge should something go wrong with the construction, appliances, or systems of the home.

Preventive maintenance, with all the time and money it consumes, is far more cost effective than the crisis management approach of waiting until something breaks and then scrambling to have it repaired.

Preventive maintenance can avoid expensive repairs, extend the life expectancy of your appliances, and in some cases, reduce energy consumption.

Many homeowners do not realize that lack of maintenance is not covered by a home warranty policy or homeowner insurance policy. In addition, many will not cover preexisting conditions or failure due to improper equipment installation or modification.

Nearly all basic home repairs will be the financial responsibility of the homeowner.



Your 20 Most Important Home Maintenance Actions

1. Clean dryer vents. Making sure your dryer vents, lines and screens are free of lint is extremely important because build-up in any of these places can cause a fire. Keeping your dryer safe is very simple—just a couple easy steps:

- Clean the lint out of the lint screen after every load of laundry.
- Check outside at the vent to ensure there is no lint blockage.

2. Change HVAC filters once per month. Changing air conditioner and heater filters monthly will save on energy costs, extend the life of your systems and keep the air clean for your family. To easily remember when to change them, try writing the date on the filter.

3. Check batteries in smoke, carbon monoxide and security alarms. These systems are in place to protect the health and safety of you and your family— and after all, what is more important than that? Make sure they are working at all times. Keep extra 9 volt and AA batteries around in case they need to be replaced.

4. Cut back trees and shrubs that are touching the exterior siding and roof. Branches and foliage from trees and shrubs can lift shingles up from your roof or loosen them. In addition, persistent foliage can prevent drying of the siding, leading to mold and moisture problems. Overgrown foliage also has a negative appearance demonstrating poor home management.

5. Clean the condenser coils on your refrigerator. The most important refrigerator maintenance task is to clean the condenser coils at least every 3-6 months (more often if you have pets). When coils are dirty or dusty, your fridge has to work harder, which means higher power bills and shorter life expectancy. Keeping the coils clean can improve your refrigerator's efficiency by up to 30%!

The coils are located either on the back of the unit or underneath it, or behind a grill on the bottom front of the fridge. Use an old cloth or vacuum to clean dust and dirt from the coils.

6. Fix any cracks in your siding. Your siding keeps out the elements, including water and cold drafts. Repair any damaged siding by replacing the damaged pieces or by temporarily sealing with exterior all-weather caulk.

7. Seal driveway cracks. Sealing driveway cracks can extend the life of your driveway by as much as 50%. Seal concrete driveway cracks with flexible concrete fill.

8. Clean your gutters. This is a very simple task and one that goes a long way in maintaining the outside integrity of your home. A few times per year you should climb up on the ladder and get any twigs, leaves, and any other debris out of the gutters to ensure proper water flow. In the winter you should remove any large icicles to avoid damage to the gutters or the outside of the house.

7. Walk around the exterior. Regularly inspect the outside of the house to check for any alarming changes. This will head-off any significant cost or damage that results from ignored issues like cracks in the siding, insect nests, flooding in low-lying areas, damage to outside electrical or plumbing lines, sinking foundation or any other changes observed on the outside of the house.

8. Fill foundation holes and seal cracks. The mortar from older foundations quickly can become eroded, offering pathways for rodents, insects and moisture to enter your basement. These holes and failing areas are easily sealed utilizing a Vinly Cement Patch. This is a basic task that can be done once every 2-4 years to maintain your foundation.

9. Repaint failing paint areas. Stay up on any failing paint areas. In addition to looks, paint adds a weather barrier that protects the wood / insulation behind it. Some areas may require yearly painting / caulking, while other areas might be ok for 5-10 years. Every surface will need a recoating of paint at least every 10 year.

10. Check attic for leaks. Be sure to take a walk through your attic at least once per month to check on the presence of any leaks. If you observe any wet spots or newly discolored areas, investigate right away. Catching a leak early on can help save you thousands of dollars.

11. Clean your oven hood vent screen and vent. Clean the grease screen that protects your hood vent by soaking the screen overnight in degreaser soap. Make sure the vent area is cleaned, with the exterior inspected to remove any blockage.

12. Hire a professional to inspect / clean your heating system a minimum every 3 years. Your heating system is one of the most important parts of your home, so maintaining it should be a top priority. A heating professional will help to keep your system running efficiently, which saves you money. In addition, they can help identify issues early on that can be repaired, preventing large-scale damage and full-system replacement.

13. Review your home evacuation plan. Make sure all household members know what to do and where to go in case of emergency.

14. Check your first aid kit. Make sure all necessary supplies are present and in good working condition, replacing any expired or missing items.

15. Check slope away from your home. The landscaping and soil of your lawn should be sloped away from your home foundation to help water run away from your basement. This is called the grade. You want to add soil wherever the home is sinking down towards your unit.

16. Check for plumbing leaks. Check every faucet and the underneath plumbing. Check your basement pipes.

17. Read your appliance care manuals. These manuals tell you how to clean, maintain, and often repair the appliance. Stay up on this!

18. Drain garden hoses and bring indoors. Water left in garden hoses will freeze and potentially cause the hose to burst. Early November each year, you should disconnect your hoses and bring them indoors after draining them.

19. Replace your flashlight batteries annually. Keep the flashlights in a good place that you will remember, and make sure working batteries are available.

20. Keep things clean. Cleaning may seem like one of those things you can put off until you have time, but it should never be forgotten. Part of the “pride of ownership” is keeping the inside and the outside of your home clean and free of debris and general buildup of dirt, dust and other materials. Letting the place go without cleaning for any extended period of time will lead to rapid wear and tear all over your property.