

Home Maintenance Tips

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Working Hard For You

Home Maintenance Tips

Preventative maintenance is the best way to keep your house in great shape, reduce the risk of unexpected repairs and improve the odds of selling your home at the best possible price, when that time should come. In addition, regular maintenance of your home's systems and appliances will increase their efficiency and lower operating costs, as well as ensure longer equipment life.



Regular Maintenance Checklist



Monthly

- Check that fire extinguisher(s) are fully charged. Re-charge if necessary.
- Test and inspect smoke, heat and gas detectors.
- Examine heating/cooling air filters and replace or clean as necessary. Use your electric bill as a reminder.
- Clean gutters and downspouts. Ensure that downspouts are secure, and that the discharge of the downspouts is appropriate.
- Carefully inspect the condition of shower enclosures. Repair or replace deteriorated grout and caulk.
- Check faucets for drips and the rest of the plumbing for leaks.
- Secure loose toilets, or repair flush mechanisms that become troublesome.

Semi-Annually—Fall and Spring

- Change the batteries in your smoke detector twice a year.
- Drain a gallon or two of water from your hot water heater at least twice a year to extend its life expectancy.
- (Fall) Check chimney for loose or missing mortar. Have chimney professionally cleaned. Make sure damper closes tightly.
- (Fall) Have heating system inspected and serviced. (Spring) Have cooling system inspected and serviced.
- Clean leaves and trash out from under decks and porches. Pull mulch away from foundation walls.
- Trim back tree branches and shrubs to ensure that they are not in contact with the house.
- Inspect driveways, walkways, decks, porches, and landscape components for evidence of deterioration, movement or safety hazards.
- Test the overhead garage door opener, to ensure that the auto-reverse mechanism is responding properly. Clean and lubricate hinges, rollers and tracks on overhead doors.
- Replace or clean exhaust hood filters.
- Clean, inspect and/or service all appliances as per the manufacturer's recommendations.

Annually

- Have your heating and cooling system(s) serviced if inspections and service were not performed in the fall or spring.
- Check water heater to be sure it is secure.
- Clean out dryer exhaust vent system and underneath dryer.
- Inspect, repair and reseal tile grout in bathrooms, kitchens, and any other areas.
- Make sure that you know where the main cut-off valves or switches are for the home's plumbing system, electrical service, and gas service.
- Make a quick inspection of the exterior of the house. Check the foundation for cracking, blocked vents, and leaks. Check caulking around doors and windows.
- Check the roof for leaks.
- Examine the electrical panels, wiring and electrical components for evidence of overheating. Flip the breakers on and off to ensure that they are not sticky.



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Extending the Life of Your Appliances

Follow these guidelines and tips to help extend the life of your home systems and appliances—it could save you the cost of unnecessary repairs or early replacement!



Preventative Maintenance—Guidelines and Tips

General

- Change the batteries in your smoke detectors twice a year—choose family birthdays or holidays as reminders.
- Unplug small electrical appliances, such as toasters, blenders, etc. after using them.
- Inspect appliance hoses and ventilation according to owner's manuals.
- Clean small electrical appliances after each use; unplug and cool before cleaning.
- Use only distilled water in steam irons to avoid mineral buildup.
- Strap the water heater solidly to wall studs to prevent it from movement during an earthquake.

Plumbing

- Repair minor drips and leaks as they occur.
- Avoid flushing anything but toilet paper down the toilet.



Dishwasher

- Load dishwasher properly—and run only when you have a full load.
- Use only dishwasher detergent in recommended amounts.
- Load more fragile items on the top rack of the dishwasher.

Garbage Disposal

- Run a strong flow of cold water through garbage disposal throughout grinding and for at least 30 seconds after turning off grinder.
- To freshen your disposal, occasionally grind a half lemon or lime while running cold water.
- Do not put fibrous foods down the disposal, including celery, corn husks, and potato skins. Never put rice (uncooked or cooked) down the garbage disposal.

Refrigerator/Freezer

- Clean refrigerator compartment regularly, even though it does not require defrosting.
- Wipe up spills in the refrigerator promptly to avoid staining and odors.
- Clean coils with a condenser coil brush
- Once a year slide the refrigerator out and vacuum around and beneath it.
- Defrost freezers about once a year, before frost is 1/2 inch thick on inside walls and clean. Use a plastic or wooden scraper, not a sharp instrument.
- When storing items in the door, place the heaviest items closest to the hinge side; this will reduce stress on the door and inner door panel when it is opened and shut.



Oven

- Clean the interior of your oven regularly.
- If you have a self-cleaning oven, do not use any other method to clean it.



Microwave Oven

- Do not use metal pans or containers with metal trim.
- Clean microwave oven and removable glass shelves regularly; food residue keeps reheating and can cause the glass shelves to break.
- Clean around microwave door to prevent soil buildup which could keep the door from closing tightly.
- Only use mild soap and/or baking soda mixture to clean the interior to avoid damaging the lining.

Cooktop/Range/Hood

- Keep gas burners free of dirt and debris.
- Clean exposed metal of range hoods regularly with sudsy water—do not use abrasive pads or scouring powders, as they may scratch the finish.
- Occasionally clean the metal filter in warm, sudsy water. Charcoal filters should be replaced once a year.
- Never spray cleaners directly onto the control panel. Put some cleaner on a soft, damp rag, and then wipe the surface.



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Your household appliances have an average life expectancy—preventative maintenance may extend this timeframe indefinitely!

Washer/Dryer

- Do not overload washing machine and choose appropriate level for size of load.
- Heavy clothing such as jeans and towels should be spread out over two or more loads to avoid added strain to the machine.
- Do not spill laundry products on exterior of washer or dryer: porcelain can be damaged by the chemicals.
- Do not spray stain removers onto garments on top of washer or dryer: it can corrode painted or plastic parts.
- Clean dryer lint filter before each load.
- Clean out exhaust vent system at least once a year. Be sure to vent dryer outside—never into the house.
- Clean the washer and dryer exterior regularly. Wipe the dryer door opening occasionally. Never clean the dryer drum with flammable solvents.



Heating/Air Conditioning

- Have the heating/cooling systems serviced annually.
- Check the filters on your heating/cooling unit—clean or replace as needed.
- Do not operate an air conditioner unit or furnace on an extension cord! The compressor draws a lot of current and can be damaged if insufficient voltage is continually supplied.



Pools/Spas/Hot Tub

- Keep a proper water level at all times.
- Maintain chemical balance.
- Clean basket strainers regularly.



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Major Appliances and Mechanical Systems	Average Life Expectancy (yrs)
Microwave oven	10
Garbage disposal	10-12
Trash compactor	10
Water heater, gas	11-13
Water heater, electric	13-14
Water heater, tankless (on demand)	20+
Smoke detector	10
Refrigerator, side by side	14
Refrigerator, top mount	14
Refrigerator, bottom mount	17
Refrigerator, single door	19
Refrigerator, compact (dorm type)	5
Washing machine, top load	14
Washing machine, front load	11
Dryer	13
Range, electric	17
Range, gas	19
Dishwasher	10
Cook top	13-20
Air conditioner (room size)	10
Air conditioning compressor	15-20
Forced air furnace, heat pump	15
Baseboard electric heat systems	20
Plumbing, waste piping	75
Hot-water boiler	20-30
Water pump	7-10
Water softener	20
Bathroom fixtures, porcelain and cast iron	50
Fiberglass tub/showers	10-15
Garage door	20-50
Garage door opener	10