

Homeowners' Checklist

for Home Maintenance



DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOODS

Doing preventative maintenance on your home can save you from expensive and serious repairs later. But, it's not always easy to know what to do or why it's important. These checklists and the Homeowners Guide for Easy Home Repair video will guide you through some simple home repair projects that cost under \$20 per project. You'll also find some basic guidelines for hiring a professional when a project is too complex to do it yourself.

How to Use

The following checklists go with the Homeowners Guide for Easy Home Repair video. Each checklist item is covered in more detail on the video. You can easily find the information you are looking for by fast forwarding through the video. Icons and colors on the video titles are the same as these cards.

Note: This information is intended to provide general guidelines only. You should always obtain, read and follow all material, tool and equipment manufacturers' instructions before starting a project.

Preparation & Cleanup Checklists



Exterior Maintenance Checklists

- Roofs & Gutters
- Siding & Windows
- Foundations & Concrete



Interior Maintenance Checklists

- Walls
- Windows
- Miscellaneous



Mechanical Systems Maintenance Checklists

- Plumbing Systems
- Heating & Cooling Systems
- Electrical Systems



Weatherization Checklists

- Caulking & Weather Stripping
- Insulating Attic & Foundation



Landscaping Checklists

- Planting Shrubs & Flowers
- Lawn Care



Hiring a Contractor Checklist

Preparation and Cleanup

Checklist

for Home Maintenance



Preparation Checklist

1. Review video section on project.
2. Get more information from how-to books, in-store brochures, manufacturers' booklets and in-store demonstrations.
3. Review written materials including how-to books, in-store brochures, manufacturers' booklets and instructions from tool and product manufacturers.
4. Make sure you have time to complete the project.
5. Make sure you have all the tools and supplies you need for the project.
6. Look for any safety precautions on the tools and supplies.
7. If you will be disturbing any paint applied before 1978, it could have lead in it. Take precautions:
 - Work wet. Keep the paint wet while you are working to reduce any lead dust.
 - Catch ALL of the paint chips in a tarp.
 - Carefully wrap the chips into the tarp. Dispose of the tarp and chips by placing them in a heavy-duty plastic bag. TIGHTLY seal the bag.
 - If you are working inside, use a wet mop or sponge to clean the surface thoroughly. Do not sweep with a broom or vacuum unless your vacuum has a HEPA filter.
 - More information is available from the National Lead Information Center at 1-800-424-LEAD.
8. If you are working near power wires that go into your house or garage, stay at least an arm's length away.
9. Check for any temperature or weather restrictions on your manufacturers' instructions, then check the weather forecast.

Clean-Up Checklist

1. Pick up tools immediately after you have completed a job, or even if you pause in your work. They can be hazardous to adults, children or pets.
2. Clean all tools that are covered with your project materials, as soon as possible. Some materials are easier to clean after they dry, others should be cleaned while still wet. Check instructions for details.
3. Store any leftover materials according to instructions. Remember, unheated basements, attics and garages can get very hot in the summer and very cold in the winter.
4. Store all of your books, brochures and instructions together in a handy location, such as a file box, shelf, or drawer.

More details on these projects are available in your Homeowners Guide for Easy Home Repair Video.

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Exterior Maintenance

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Roofs & Gutters

1. Recaulk or apply roof cement to failed chimney flashing, where walls meet the roof, or where vents come through the roof.
2. Patch worn valleys with roof cement until area can be replaced.
3. Replace loose mortar, bricks or blocks on the chimney.
4. Clean gutters and repair hangers.
5. Repair or replace defective downspouts and extensions. Place splash blocks where needed.

Siding & Windows

1. Trim tree branches that drag on your roof or siding.
2. Scrape, prime and repaint areas of peeling paint.
3. Renail loose siding and trim.
4. Remove weeds, stumps, trees and grass from around the foundation.
5. Recaulk window and door trim and openings where utility lines enter house.
6. Clean and repair windows and screens. Replace loose window putty and broken glass.

Foundations & Concrete

1. Replace loose mortar.
2. Open foundation vents in the spring and close them in the fall.
3. Build up low spots around the foundation.
4. Repair driveway and sidewalk cracks.
5. Pick up trash and debris.

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Interior Maintenance Checklist

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Walls

1. Fill any holes or cracks in plaster or drywall.
2. Check for any dampness and mildew on walls. Find and fix any leaks in the roof, gutters or pipes that may be the cause of dampness. Treat the mildew, mold, or damp area on the wall by cleaning it, fixing any damage and then sealing it.
3. Apply a fresh coat of paint to any patched walls, or to freshen up the appearance of an entire room.

Windows & Doors

1. Replace any broken glass or torn screens in your windows. Fix any loose window putty.
2. Replace broken window cords.

Miscellaneous

1. Fix squeaky floors.
2. Check smoke detector batteries

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Mechanical Systems Maintenance

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Electrical Systems

1. Check the circuit breakers in your electrical service panel. Rusty or sticky breakers can cause fires. Identify your main electrical cutoff switch.
2. Check all switches, outlets and light fixtures. Look for broken switches or outlets and signs of wear. Check for frayed or cut electrical cords.
3. Contact a licensed electrician or city inspector for a complete evaluation of your system if you have sparks from lights or outlets, continually tripping circuit breakers or blown fuses.

Plumbing Systems

1. Repair plumbing leaks. Leaking pipes waste water and cause damage.
2. Clear slow drains with a rubber plunger or by removing traps.
3. Tighten loose nuts on traps, faucets, and valves on sinks, tubs and toilets.
4. Adjust toilet tanks that continuously run water.
5. Check washer hoses for cracks, stiffness, or rust. Hoses should be replaced every five years.
6. Contact a licensed plumber for any plumbing problems. Get a second opinion for any major repair or replacement work.

Heating & Cooling Systems

1. Maintain furnace:
 - Change furnace filter every three months, or use washable filter and clean often.
 - Tighten any loose duct screws.
 - Tape joints in ductwork where air may be leaking.
 - Repair sagging or rusted heat ducts. Loose ducts could fall from winter heating.
2. Adjust the airflow through your ducts for each season. Two story houses need more hot air going to the first level in the winter, and more cool air going to the second story in the summer.
3. Inspect and clean your air-conditioning unit each spring.
4. Have a licensed heating contractor clean and service your furnace and air conditioner every two years. Get a second opinion for any major repair or replacement work.

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Weatherization

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Caulking & Weather-stripping

1. Check the following joints to see if they are caulked, and if the caulk is still in good shape:
 - Window and door trim
 - Cracked siding
 - Door thresholds
 - Where wood meets masonry
 - Storm windows and doors
 - At utility entrances

Caulk as needed with a silicone caulk.

2. Check windows and doors for weather-stripping, which may be wood, foam, rubber or metal. Weather-stripping should be in good shape and correctly located to provide a barrier. Replace as needed.
3. If air is leaking around around a window, you can install a window insulation kit to keep your room more comfortable. Carefully follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Insulating Attic & Foundation

1. If your attic has little or no insulation, you can increase your house's energy efficiency by adding it. Install insulation by carefully following the manufacturer's instructions. Check with your local gas or electric company for details on how your state weatherization program may be able to help you with installation costs.
2. Your crawlspace should also be insulated and include a vapor barrier, such as plastic sheeting, to block the moisture from coming up from the soil.
3. If your basement doesn't already have insulation around the band joists or floor framing, installing it will save money in energy costs.

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Landscaping

Checklist

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Planting Shrubs & Flowers

1. Prepare the flowerbed:

- Measure the bed to identify the space you need to fill with plants.
- Measure the height and space between any windows, because you don't want plants to cover them.
- Determine if the location is shady or sunny during most of the day. If the area is shady in the morning but sunny in the afternoon, it would be considered part sun and part shade.
- Determine what type of soil is in the bed. Is it sandy, clay, wet or dry? If you aren't sure, you can take a sample of it to the garden center where you are buying the plants.
- Remove weeds and dead plant material.
- Soften the soil by digging in it.
- Add any soil amendments, such as peat moss or compost, to the bed. Blend in well.

2. Carefully select plants by considering a variety of plants and shrubs that look good all summer long:

- Annuals live one year and must be replanted each year. They provide good color all summer long.
- Perennials have roots that survive the winter, so they only have to be planted once and then they will grow again each spring — and usually get larger each year.
- You always want to buy healthy plants. Discounted plants may have diseases or insect damage, and may not live.
- Look for plants that don't have roots showing around the outside of the container.
- Plants and shrubs should be full. There should be no dead spots, wilted leaves or broken branches.
- Check tags or signs at the garden center to find out:
 - How large the plant will grow.
 - How much sun/shade the plant likes.
 - How much water it needs.

Continued on next page...

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3. To plant your new shrubs and flowers:
 - Place the plants on the flowerbed. Arrange them until you are satisfied with their location.
 - Dig a hole for each plant that is as deep as the root ball and twice as wide.
 - Choose the best side of the plant to face the street.
 - Carefully remove the container. Trim any roots showing on the sides or bottom of the root ball.
 - Place the plant in the hole so the top of the rootball is even with the top of the hole.
 - Fill hole with soil and press down lightly.
 - Water thoroughly until the water puddles up around the plant.
 - Water once a day for the first two-weeks. Then water several times a week.
4. Mulch around the plants in your flowerbeds and your trees to keep the moisture in the ground and prevent the weeds from growing. You can mulch with grass clippings, wood mulch, leaves, small stones, compost or straw. A barrier of newspaper between the ground and the mulch helps with weed prevention. Mulch should be 2-4 inches thick leaving a small space around the plant, tree or shrub trunk.

Lawn Care

1. Fertilize with a slow-release type of fertilizer in the fall. Follow the instructions on the bag.
2. Mow your grass:
 - Cut off the top 1/3 of the blade of grass. The grass should be about 2 1/2 inches tall.
 - Mow about once a week when the grass feels dry, or just slightly damp.
 - Let the grass clippings fall back into the lawn for fertilizer.
3. Rake up any grass clumps from the yard and sweep grass clippings from your sidewalk. Put clippings back into your flowerbeds or around your trees to use as mulch.
4. Detail your sidewalks by removing any grass or weeds growing over the edges or in the cracks.
5. Water your lawn in the morning with a lawn sprinkler, about once or twice a week unless it rains. One hour of watering per area will usually be enough, without adding much to your water bill.

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