

Home Maintenance and Repair

Owning a home is a major responsibility. Not only do you have the obligation of paying the mortgage each month, but you also have to maintain your home so that it remains a good investment.

When talking about taking care of your home, most folks lump home maintenance and repair into one category. The truth is, the number of repairs needed can be reduced if regular maintenance is conducted. Regular, preventive maintenance can pay off in peace of mind, utility cost savings, durability, and even resale value.

Home maintenance is a crucial part of homeownership and can require a great deal of time, money, and effort. Regularly inspect your home – inside and outside. Use a checklist to help



you familiarize yourself with the condition of your house and its state of repair. Doing minor, routine maintenance helps to prolong the life of the home and may prevent the need for major repairs. An inspection also helps you plan and save for major improvements. Using a Maintenance Check List can help you identify and schedule what and when inspections need to be done.

There are numerous Home Maintenance Schedule documents on the Internet. Sometimes they are also called Home Maintenance Calendars. Most of them divide the maintenance task according to seasonal needs.

- The University of Illinois Extension posts a “Maintenance Check List” at <http://urbanext.illinois.edu/housing/tables/06.html>.

- Microsoft has an online template titled “Home Maintenance Schedule” at <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/templates/home-maintenance-schedule-TC006090433.aspx>.
- A “Homeowner Recommended Maintenance Schedule” can be found at <http://www.cabuildingstandards.com/images/HOMEOWNER%20RMS.pdf>.

Home maintenance can be expensive and time consuming. However, it can add to the value of your investment when you decide to sell your home in the future. Remember the wise advice of Benjamin Franklin, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” Regular, routine maintenance enhances curb appeal, ensures safety, and prevents neglected upkeep from turning into costly major repairs.

Even though you do regular maintenance, repairs will be needed. You can save a lot of money by doing some of the repair if you have the time, knowledge, and skill needed. Fact sheets on making many of the repairs that you might need to do can be found on your state’s Cooperative Extension website. Many of the home improvement stores have instructional manuals, online guides, or classes for the “do-it-yourselfer.” Even if you are skilled at home repair jobs, there may be some jobs that you’re not able to do or don’t have the right tools to do. The key is to recognize which repairs you are capable of doing. Typically, you may need to hire someone to do extensive plumbing, electrical, or structural repairs.



If you need to hire a contractor to do the repair, make a list of contractors based on

recommendations of friends, neighbors, coworkers, or building supply stores. Request references, and check them out. You might also want to check with your local Better Business Bureau (<http://www.bbb.org>). Once you decide on two or three contractors, get a written estimate from each of them. These estimates will help you know if the amount quoted is reasonable. Ask each contractor what kind of insurance they have. Get your agreement in writing: cost, work to be done, time schedule, guarantees, payment schedule, insurance, permits, etc. Get and keep copies of everything you sign. Never pay in full or sign a completion certificate before the work is finished.

Replacements will also be needed as the house ages. The University of Illinois Extension has posted a table that shows estimates of the average life span for common household appliances (<http://urbanext.illinois.edu/housing/maintenance.html#>). This chart helps homeowners plan ahead for major purchases. The chart lists the average life span for the following appliances according to industry officials:



- Roof – 20-25 years
- Heating system – 25 years
- Refrigerator – 20 years
- Freezer – 20 years
- Clothes dryer – 18 years
- Range/oven – 18 years

- Room air conditioner – 15 years
- Clothes washer – 13 years
- Water heater – 13 years
- Central air conditioner – 12 years
- Dishwasher – 12 years



Most financial experts recommend that you budget to spend 1-3 percent of your home's value for annual repairs and maintenance. For example, if your home is worth \$250,000, you should set aside \$2,500 to \$7,500

for repairs and maintenance. Of course, the amount actually spent on home maintenance and repairs will vary from year to year. Some years, the amount spent will be much less; other years, the amount spent will be more. With this in mind, it is wise to set aside the unspent money so that it can be carried forward to the following year. Generally, the older the home, the more maintenance and repairs it will need.

In summary, a schedule or plan for conducting routine maintenance on your home will help you identify and correct problems before they become serious. A maintenance problem ignored can become a safety problem, as well as a major repair. Preventive maintenance can extend the life of materials and equipment and will be less expensive in the long run than replacement. Your challenge as a homeowner is to find a home maintenance schedule that will work for you. Find a plan that you can add to or revise to meet your needs.

Written by Janie Harris, M.Ed., CRS; AgriLife Extension Housing and Environment Specialist, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Texas A&M System. September 2010.

Maintenance Check List

The frequency of inspection and service given in the chart reflect the minimum amount of time and service your house and household appliances will require. Items may need to be checked more often depending on the number of occupants, types of materials, local conditions, household pets, and other variables.

	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
FOUNDATIONS AND BASEMENT				
Inspect for signs of termite infestation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check grading to assure that water will drain away from the foundation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check basement or crawl space for dampness and/or leakage following wet weather.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DOORS AND WINDOWS				
Check doors, windows & trim for finish failure.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check glazed openings for loose putty.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check for broken glass and damaged screens.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check and lubricate window hardware.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check weatherstripping for damage and tightness of fit.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check caulking at doors, windows, and all other openings and joints between dissimilar materials (i.e. wood-masonry).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
EXTERIOR WALLS				
Check masonry for cracks and loose joints.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check painted surfaces for paint failure.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check siding and trim for damage or decay.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ROOF				
Check for damaged or loose shingles, blistered roofing, etc.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check underside of roof where accessible for water stains or dampness.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check for damaged flashing.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check for damaged gutters, downspouts, hangers, strainers, and rust.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clean gutters and downspouts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sweep debris from flat and low slope roofs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evaluate roof for future replacement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check vents, louvers, and chimney caps and housings for bird nests, etc.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check fascias and soffits for paint failure.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check antenna guy wires and supports.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check masonry chimneys.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

INTERIOR SURFACES

Check all joints in ceramic tile, laminated plastic, and similar surfaces.

Check grouting on tubs, showers, and sinks.

FLOORS

Check for wear and damage, particularly where one material meets another.

Evaluate for replacement or refinishing.

ELECTRICAL SYSTEM

Check condition of lamp cords, extension cords, and plugs - replace at first sign of wear or damage.

Check exposed and overhead wiring for damage and missing insulation. Replace or repair as needed.

If fuses blow or breakers trip frequently, call an electrician to locate the cause and make repairs.

If you feel a slight shock or tingling from touching any appliance, disconnect it and make repairs.

Test Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters.

HEATING AND COOLING SYSTEM

Clean or change any air filters.

Clean dirt and dust from around furnaces.

Have heating and cooling system checked by a qualified service person.

Remove window air conditions for winter.

Service humidifier and/or dehumidifier.

PLUMBING SYSTEM

Check flush valves, faucets, hose bibs, and supply and drainage piping, including those in basement and/or crawl space.

Check septic tank.

Check water heater.

GROUNDS AND YARD

Drain outside water lines and hoses.

Clean area wells, window wells and storm drains.

Check driveways and sidewalks for cracks, yard for settlement and soil erosion.

Check safety and reversing mechanism on electric garage door operators; adjust if needed.

	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
Check all joints in ceramic tile, laminated plastic, and similar surfaces.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check grouting on tubs, showers, and sinks.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check for wear and damage, particularly where one material meets another.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evaluate for replacement or refinishing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check condition of lamp cords, extension cords, and plugs - replace at first sign of wear or damage.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check exposed and overhead wiring for damage and missing insulation. Replace or repair as needed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If fuses blow or breakers trip frequently, call an electrician to locate the cause and make repairs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If you feel a slight shock or tingling from touching any appliance, disconnect it and make repairs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Test Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clean or change any air filters.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Clean dirt and dust from around furnaces.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have heating and cooling system checked by a qualified service person.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Remove window air conditions for winter.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Service humidifier and/or dehumidifier.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check flush valves, faucets, hose bibs, and supply and drainage piping, including those in basement and/or crawl space.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check septic tank.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Check water heater.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drain outside water lines and hoses.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clean area wells, window wells and storm drains.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Check driveways and sidewalks for cracks, yard for settlement and soil erosion.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check safety and reversing mechanism on electric garage door operators; adjust if needed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>