

Home Maintenance Boot Camp

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We can all agree that buying a home is big financial commitment. However, you don't want to forget about the time and labor that goes into maintaining a house. Just like your car, regular maintenance keeps you from spending unnecessary money at the repair shop. This same principle applies to your home.

Home maintenance can be intimidating—especially for new homeowners—when you see the list of all the things you have to keep up with continuing to grow. But if you break it down, you'll see that you can do most of the work yourself with little to no experience. (Thank you YouTube!)

To help get you started, I've broken down the time of year and how often you need to perform these tasks. Save or post this where you can refer to it monthly, or better yet, add these action items to your calendar and take advantage of the reminders to keep executing on schedule.

Monthly

- **Clean the kitchen sink disposal**—After a while you'll probably start to notice it not smelling too great. If you have vinegar, put some in an ice tray and make vinegar ice cubes, then drop them in the disposal. Not only will it get cleaned, but this hack will also sharpen the blades. This is what I do for my own disposal.
- **Inspect your HVAC**—While the experts say you should change your HVAC filters every month, small families with no pets or allergies can get away with changing it less frequently, every 2-3 months. When checking each month, see if the filter is dirty and needs changing. If not, leave it and check again next month.
- **Check fire extinguishers**—This is pretty straight forward, doesn't take much of your time and could make you a Hero! Make sure the extinguisher is in an area that's easily accessible and that it has the right amount of pressure, and that there is not visible wear and tear.

Quarterly

- **Test smoke detectors/carbon monoxide detectors**—This is something that should only take you a few minutes. All you need to do is press the "test" button and see if the alarm sounds. If it does, you're good to go. If not, you need new batteries. If it doesn't work after new batteries, check for corrosion on the battery terminal. Ideally, smoke detectors should inter-operate (one sounds, they all sound) and be hardwired into the home.
- **Test garage door auto-reverse**—Often overlooked, but very important to home safety. To test your garage door's auto reverse, place a broom or a 2x4 on the ground where the garage door would normally close. The door should stop and go back up. All garage doors are required by law to have this feature. You can never be too safe, especially if you have kids and pets running around.
- **Run water in unused places**—This applies to the guest bathrooms you hardly use. It's a good idea to run the sink and shower every now and then so you don't have grime build up or a P-Trap go dry and allow smelly sewer gasses back into the home.

Biannually

- **Replace smoke detector batteries**—Even if your detectors aren't giving you that annoying low battery beeping noise, you can never be too careful when it comes to your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Make it a point to change them out when you're deep cleaning your house.
- **Deep clean your house**—This is probably my least favorite, but it's something I keep doing at least twice a year. Take a weekend, or a Saturday, and clean every single corner of your house. Not only will it make your house look better, but it will also eliminate dust and help with any unwanted allergies.
- **Vacuum refrigerator coils**—Your refrigerator can account for 15 percent of your home's power, so you want it to run as efficiently as possible. With anything, your coils will get dirty over time causing your fridge not to run as well. Doing this can actually save you money and it doesn't take very long to do.



Annually (By seasons)

While you'll be performing different maintenance tasks throughout the year, there are some things that you'll want to keep in mind for specific times of the year. Below I've broken them down for you by seasons.

Spring

- **Check the exterior**—I'm talking about paint, siding, brick, and any other surface that might get chipped or damaged. This is a great time to give it a once over and make repairs as needed. Don't forget to also give your foundation a check while you're at it.
- **Clean your gutters**—your gutters have probably collected leaves, grime, and sediment from the recent fall and winter weather. It's a good idea to clean these out so your gutters won't overflow and get clogged with the spring showers. Water overflow can damage your soffits.
- **Fix landscaping blemishes**—Spring is the season of new life. Getting rid of leaves, dead shrubs and flowers will allow you to plant new and allow your seasonal flowers to bloom without anything getting in their way. Cut any shrubs or bushes away from the home and keep vines from climbing on your home or fences.
- **Inspect your trees**—If you didn't trim your trees in the fall now is a good time to do so. You don't want your trees to interfere with power lines or have branches that fall and damage your property. Keep tree branches trimmed away from the roof, gutters and siding – branches can cause extra wear on these surfaces and encourage critters to climb on your house. It's not a bad idea to have them professionally trimmed periodically.
- **Clean your garage**—This is something that should be a spring ritual. It's not glamorous but it's important and helps keep your garage functional and in good shape. Plus, you don't want to do it during the heat of the summer.

Summer

- **Check your grout**—This will help your tile have a longer life and overall look better.
- **Inspect exhaust vents to exterior of your home**—When you are drying your clothes, check to see if the exhaust is coming out. If it's not, make sure the dryer hose is clear and unblocked. Clear dryer ducts will keep your dryer working efficiently.
- **Repair deck**—Summer is the time you will enjoy your deck, so you want to make sure it looks its best after going through winter. While it will need a good power wash, go ahead and check for loose boards and consider re-staining. Clear stains last approximately 2-5 years.
- **Take care of any insect issues**—Before bugs become a problem, make sure your window screens are repaired, keep cobwebs clear, and always have your doors fully closed.

Fall

- **Get ready for winter**—In Texas we never really get snow, but that doesn't mean you can't be ready just in case. Pick up some sidewalk salt, shovels, and other winter gear you think you might need.
- **Have your chimney cleaned**—If you have one, it's a good idea to have this done once a year before you begin using it in the winter.
- **Flush outdoor hoses**—Before storing your hoses, make sure to all water out so they won't get damaged if they freeze. Talk to your landscape company about winter watering of your yard and foundation and stick to a schedule with your sprinkler system.
- **Check pavement for cracks**—Before that first freeze, make sure any cracks are re-sealed so they don't expand and become big—and expensive—problems down the road.

Winter

- **Check handles, knobs, shelves, etc.**—Since it'll be cold, winter is the perfect time to do some maintenance on the inside of your house. If you've noticed any drawer knobs, handles, or shelves that have come loose, go ahead and tighten them down.
- **Clean your basement (if you have one)**—Another neglected room of the house. Take a day to go organize and give your basement a good inspection for dust, mold, or anything else you might want to get rid of.
- **Inspect and repair your shower fixtures**—This will help get rid of any sediment build up in faucet aerators and shower heads and can help with your water pressure.
- **Get rid of ice**—Icicles may look cool, but they can get heavy and cause damage to your home, cables, and sometimes people. When you see them, it's a good idea to knock them down. Watch for ice on sidewalks and driveways that can be hazardous and get rid of it.

Whew...I know that was a lot, but it will help keep your house in the best shape possible. If you have any home maintenance tips, let us know!



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As an avid musician and adventurer, you can usually find him playing guitar or camping with his Scouting family. Sometimes both at the same time.

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