

Beginner's Guide to Seasonal Home Maintenance

Inspection tips for spring, summer, winter, and fall
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There's nothing like home ownership to remind me that I'm a grown-up. When things start to leak, crack, or make funny noises, it's my job as a fine upstanding adult to figure out how to fix them or at least who to call. But part of responsible home ownership is checking on things *before* they go *kerflooey*.

So in the spirit of being more responsible, here's a beginner's guide to seasonal maintenance for your home. Of course, there are many other things you can (and should) check on, but this list will get you started. See the resources at the end of this article for more information, including how-to instructions.

Hiring a Home Inspector

One side note: if you'd like a professional to give your home a thorough once over, consider hiring a home inspector. Home inspections aren't just appropriate when you're buying a new house. Also consider having one done every five years or before a renovation. Some states license home inspectors, but not all do. The American Society of Home Inspectors (<http://www.ashi.org>) is a national licensing body that can connect you with licensed inspectors in your area.

The cost of a home inspection typically ranges from about \$350 to \$850, depending on your geographic location and the size of the house. A thorough inspection will take at least two hours, and the inspector should give you a written report, preferably with digital photos, at the end of it. For now, here's the checklist to get you started.

Winter

1. Vacuum out air registers to remove dust and debris
2. Clean your refrigerator coils. (Refer to your fridge's manual or manufacturer's website to find out how.)
3. Check and flush out the water heater to remove sediment that may have built up in it.
4. Check the caulking around showers and bathtubs and replace it if it's cracked or peeling.
5. Check your home's crawlspace for water damage, animals, or other foreign matter.
6. Replace flashlight batteries.

7. Schedule a service call to have your air conditioning checked before the first hot day of spring or summer.

8. Change furnace filters (Do this at least every three months.).

9. Test carbon monoxide and smoke detectors to make sure they're working correctly. Replace the batteries or detectors if necessary. (You should do this every three months, as well.)

Spring

1. Vacuum the lint from the hose of your clothes dryer.

2. Clean windows and repair any ripped screens. If a screen has a large hole in it, it's time to replace it.

3. Check gutters for clogs. Clean out any debris and make sure gutters and downspouts are secure (You can hire someone to do this if you'd rather not get up on the ladder yourself.).

4. Check the ground around the foundation of your house and re-grade it if necessary. (The ground around the foundation should slope away from the house.).

5. If you have a sump pump, test it to make sure it's working properly. There are several ways to do this, including taking off the lid and pouring in water to see if the pump kicks on.

6. If you have an attic fan, make sure it's working properly before the heat of summer arrives.

7. Test any GFCI outlets: plug in a lamp, hit the test button and then the reset button to see if it turns the light off and then on again (GFCI stands for Ground

Fault Circuit

Interrupter. These types of outlets are designed to protect you from severe or fatal electric shocks. They're often found in the kitchen and bathroom, or any place near a water source.).

8. Check for cracks in asphalt or concrete driveways and walkways. Repair or reseal them before winter, when water can freeze and expand in the cracks, creating more damage.

9. Check trees around the house to make sure they're not threatening wires or power lines. If they are, call a tree service to safely trim back branches.

10. Check the roof. If you find holes, crumbling, blistering or rotting roofing, repair or replace it?? (Again, this may be a job for an expert.).

11. Change furnace filters.

12. Test carbon monoxide and smoke detectors and replace batteries or devices if necessary.

Summer

1. Clean and care for decks, patios, or porches. Look for peeling paint, sagging roofs, and damaged stairs. Make sure the supports are not broken, weakened, or rotted out.

2. Clean or power-wash your home's siding.

3. Check your home's crawlspace for water damage, animals, or other foreign matter.

4. Test and lubricate garage doors. This is also a good time to clean out all that clutter (</-p1017qxid%7C04251148.html>) that seems to accumulate in garages.

5. Remove showerheads and clean them to remove any sediment buildup.

6. Check your dishwasher. Look for any signs of leaks under or around it. Check to see that the washer arm isn't stuck by opening the dishwasher and spinning and lifting the washer arm. Make sure the drain hose arcs up to prevent backwash from the drain into the dishwasher.

7. Schedule a service call to have your furnace checked before the first cold day of fall or winter.

8. Clean your refrigerator coils. Refer to your fridge's manual or manufacturer's website to find out how.

9. Replace flashlight batteries.

10. Change furnace filters.

11. Test carbon monoxide and smoke detectors and replace batteries or devices if necessary.

Fall

1. Vacuum the lint from the hose of your clothes dryer.

2. Check windows and seals for leaks. Reseal them if necessary.

3. Shut off all hose bibs, which are the outside water faucets or connections for garden hoses.
4. Clean out the gutters, especially if you live in an area where leaves could clog them (Consider hiring a professional to do this if you don't own a safe ladder or are afraid of heights.).
5. Check the soffit for stains, which can be a sign of a leak (The soffit, also known as the eaves, is the overhanging lower edge of the roof).
6. Put your garden and yard "to bed" for the winter. This means cleaning up overgrown vegetation and everything else. Don't forget to bring in or cover up outdoor furniture, grills, and fire pits.
7. If you have an indoor fireplace, make sure it's ready for use in the winter. This is probably the time to call in a professional.
8. Make sure ceiling fans are secured to the ceiling and haven't come loose during the summer.
9. Change furnace filters.
10. Test carbon monoxide and smoke detectors and replace batteries or devices if necessary.

Resources for more information: The ABCs of Clutter
(<http://www.care.com/housekeeping-a04251148-the-abcs-of-clutterconquering-the-real-clutter-culprits.html>)

Seasonal Home Maintenance checklists and videos from DIY Network
Virtual Home Inspection from ASHI
(http://www.ashi.org/customers/vhi_tour.asp)
Home Maintenance for Dummies
(<http://www.amazon.com/gp/redirect.html?ie=UTF8&location=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.amazon.com%2FHome-Maintenance-Dummies-James-Carey%2Fdp%2F0764552155%3Fie%3DUTF8%26s%3Dbooks%26qid%3D1232385798%26sr%3D8-1&>tag=carecom-20&linkCode=ur2&camp=1789&creative=9325>)

The Home Owner's Manual
(<http://www.amazon.com/gp/redirect.html?ie=UTF8&location=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.amazon.com%2FHome-Owners-Manual-Instructions->

Troubleshooting%2Fdp%2F1594741034%3Fie%3DUTF8%26s%3Dbooks%26
qid%3D1232385916%26sr%3D1-tag=carecom-
20&linkCode=ur2&camp=1789&creative=9325)

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