



A simple home maintenance checklist





Maintenance is an important part of homeownership. Routine checks can not only help you potentially avoid future headaches, but regular maintenance and repairs also offer the opportunity for minor upgrades that can increase the value of your home.



Spring home maintenance checklist



Spring cleaning goes beyond decluttering your closet. Follow these home maintenance tips to keep your home spick and span.

EXTERIOR MAINTENANCE TASKS

- ✓ **Inspect the roofing.** Icicles and snow from the winter months can damage shingles, leading to leaks that can prove costly. It's wise to have a roofing professional inspect your roof each spring.
- ✓ **Check the gutters.** Ice buildup can cause gutters to loosen. Under these conditions, they won't drain properly and can damage your foundation. If you notice debris in your gutter, flush it out. If your gutters are sagging, they need to be replaced.
- ✓ **Check any exterior faucets.** Check faucets on the exterior of your home, as they may have frozen and become damaged from winter storms. If you notice any cracks, your pipes are vulnerable to freezing. Any cracks should be filled in to prevent them from bursting.
- ✓ **Inspect decks.** If you notice wood on your decks showing its age, apply a fresh coat of sealant or stain, and ensure nails aren't protruding to avoid an accident.

YARD MAINTENANCE TASKS

- ✔ **Clean the yard.** After the winter months, ensure your yard is free of debris. Pick up fallen branches, rake any leaves and throw away any debris that may have blown into your yard.
- ✔ **Prepare fountains.** Make sure to clean your fountains for springtime. Before feeding the water, remove anything not meant for the fountain. You may also need to clean the fountain itself, as it may have collected dirt.
- ✔ **Clean out the garden beds.** Prepare your garden for seasonal flowers, herbs or vegetables. Clean the beds by removing any dead plants from last season, then add new, fertilized soil.

GARAGE MAINTENANCE TASKS

- ✔ **Check the garage door.** Look at and listen to the garage door when in use. If you notice strange sounds or movement that isn't smooth, it's an indication that your garage door isn't functioning properly. Are the pulleys and cables on both sides symmetrical? If not, the garage door may need to be rebalanced. If you notice squeaky sounds, your garage door may need to be lubricated.
- ✔ **Inspect metal springs.** Check to see if any metal springs are corroded, as friction can wear down springs.
- ✔ **Lubricate the springs.** Use quality lubricant on your springs. Using a lubricant made from silicon is best for use on metal springs.

BASEMENT MAINTENANCE TASKS

- ✔ **Check the foundation for cracking.** It's a good idea to check your foundation yearly. Smaller cracks in your foundation allow water and moisture to collect. In comparison, larger cracks can prove costly to repair if they aren't addressed promptly. If you notice cracks, contact an experienced professional, as DIY isn't advisable for issues with your foundation.
- ✔ **Test doors and windows.** Check doors and windows for signs of wear. Do windows and doors stay open without you holding them? Do doors stay closed? If you notice cracks and sticking windows and doors, it's an indication of humidity or that settling has occurred. The faster you address the settling, the less significant and costly repairs will likely be.

- ✔ **Inspect for leaks.** Check the basement for leaks during thaws. If you notice a leak, find out where it's coming from. In some cases, adding a gutter extension for water to dump further from the house might be the solution. Other times, leaking could come from hydrostatic pressure pushing water from below the ground. If this is the case, you'll need to ensure footing drains aren't clogged. If they are, flush them out with a garden hose or call a plumber for help.

BATHROOM MAINTENANCE TASKS

- ✔ **Inspect for deterioration.** Check all the sinks, showers and bath caulking. For a damaged sink, clean it and then sand down the damaged area. Afterward, apply a porcelain filler/repair compound. Once the application has dried, sand it lightly. Lastly, add porcelain touch-up paint. If you notice your shower or solid-surface bathtub is damaged, use a Dremel rotary tool and cut a "V" where the damage is located. Then, clean the area with acetone and wipe it down. Mix together 2% hardener for up to two minutes and apply the solution with a flathead screwdriver.
- ✔ **Dust baseboards.** Over time, baseboards accumulate dust. Use a microfiber cloth to remove the dust and then use a commercial wood cleaner if you have wooden baseboards to restore the shine.
- ✔ **Check the septic tank.** Have a professional come and inspect and pump your septic tank.

KITCHEN MAINTENANCE TASKS

- ✔ **Clean the refrigerator and freezer.** Throw out expired food and clean and wipe down the interior so the appliances are fresh for the upcoming seasons.
- ✔ **Empty the drip trays.** Drip trays are located at the front or back of the fridge or freezer. To clean the drip tray, check your manual to see where the drip tray is located. If the drip tray is located at the back of the appliance, disconnect the water and power supply, then access the back panel. Unscrew the back panel (if the drip tray is located at the back) or pop off the kick panel (if the drip tray is located at the front). Clean the drip tray, wipe it with a bleach solution (a quarter cup of bleach and two and a quarter cups of water) and remove any buildup or mold.
- ✔ **Clean the backsplash.** Regularly wiping down your backsplash and cleaning up after big splatters is helpful, but degreasing is essential and often overlooked. Use commercial grease cleansers or soapy water and use a toothbrush to scrub the grout. If you have particularly stubborn stains, use equal parts water and baking soda when cleaning.

OTHER INTERIOR MAINTENANCE TASKS

- ✓ **Polish wood furniture.** Keep your wood furniture spick and span by polishing it every spring. One popular method is to use a quarter cup of olive oil mixed it with a quarter cup of white vinegar. The vinegar cleans while the oil nourishes the wood.
- ✓ **Replace batteries.** Replace batteries in carbon monoxide detectors and smoke detectors.
- ✓ **Service the air conditioner.** Get a professional to service your air conditioning system so that it's ready for the summer.

OTHER HOME APPLIANCE MAINTENANCE TASKS

- ✓ **Clean dryer vent.** You might notice clothes aren't drying, or the outside is getting hot. Lint-clogged dryer ducts are a fire hazard. To prevent this, disconnect the wall duct and vacuum lint from the dryer vent. Clean up any lint that may have fallen behind the dryer before reconnecting it to the wall duct.
- ✓ **Inspect the chimney.** After the winter months, it's important to check your chimney for damage. Inspect the fireplace for cracks, loosening joints and debris. A professional chimney sweep can also help inspect and clean your fireplace.



Summer home maintenance checklist



Summer home maintenance tasks should never be forgotten. Read on for a list of important reminders to keep your home in shape.

EXTERIOR MAINTENANCE TASKS

- ✓ **Maintain wood fences.** Remove any bushes or vines touching the fence and apply wood preservatives to seal the wood. You can use water-repellent preservatives and sealants, exterior stains or semi-transparent stains.
- ✓ **Check for air leakage.** Sometimes, finding obvious gaps and sealing them is simple. Other times, it might require a closer inspection. Look for spots in which air can leak out. Common places include door and window frames, weather stripping around doors and vents and fans. New weather stripping and caulking can prevent air leakage.
- ✓ **Inspect outdoor play equipment.** Check for any loose bolts or signs of damage.

YARD MAINTENANCE TASKS

- ✓ **Care for trees and shrubs.** Prune the trees and shrubs in your front and backyard. Be sure to weed the garden as well!
- ✓ **Inspect the sprinkler system.** Mowing the lawn can cause sprinklers to deteriorate. Start by evaluating the controls to ensure the operating times and days are enough for the summer heat. Then, locate each sprinkler head to see if they're damaged and verify that all valves are free of corrosion.

GARAGE MAINTENANCE TASKS

- ✓ **Test the auto-reverse feature.** Automatic garage doors have a safety feature that ensures the door will reverse if it detects someone under the door. It's important to make sure this is working properly to avoid an accident.
- ✓ **Inspect the weatherstripping.** Rubber weather-stripping ensures that water, dust, dirt and cold can't creep into your garage. Inspect the stripping at least twice a year to ensure the weatherstripping in your garage is up to par.

BASEMENT MAINTENANCE TASKS

- ✓ **Inspect for leaks.** To inspect for leaks, examine the basement walls for signs of damage. Even small cracks can let in moisture. If you notice a suspicious crack or two, tape a small square of foil over the spot. Then, leave the foil on for a few days. Once you remove the foil, it should be obvious if there is water leakage.
- ✓ **Clean window wells.** Egress windows and window wells are meant to keep you and your family safe by providing an emergency exit in the basement. If your egress window is covered in debris, it can impact your ability to exit if needed. Make sure the window well is free of debris.
- ✓ **Schedule a sump pump inspection.** Sump pumps prevent ground and rainwater from accumulating in your basement. Sump pumps are essential for preventing mold in the basement. Depending on your sump pump, it might need to be cleaned monthly, quarterly or annually. Even with regular maintenance, sump pumps should be examined by a professional once a year.

BATHROOM MAINTENANCE TASKS

- ✔ **Inspect the toilet for leaks.** To test and identify toilet leaks, drop a few drops of food coloring into the tank. Wait 25 minutes. If the color spreads to the toilet bowl, there is a leak. Sometimes, cleaning sediment buildup around the flapper will stop the leak.
- ✔ **Replace showerheads and faucets.** If needed, replace the showerheads or faucets in your bathrooms. It's recommended to replace showerheads every eight months, although keeping them clean should help prevent having to replace them earlier. When faucets are leaking or have rust, it's time to replace them. Have a professional replace your faucet.
- ✔ **Clean the shower curtain and liner.** Buildup or mold can develop on your shower curtain and liner. Wash the curtain and liner in a washing machine with towels. It's important to add towels to the cycle to scrub the liner for a better clean. Once you have everything in the washer, add a regular amount of detergent and a half cup of baking soda. Wash in warm water and then add a half cup of distilled white vinegar to the rinse cycle. Take out the plastic liner and let the fabric curtain run through the spin cycle.

KITCHEN MAINTENANCE TASKS

- ✔ **Check for sink leaks.** Check for leaks by looking below the kitchen cabinet. If you find drops of water, there's a leak. Another sign of a kitchen sink leak is corrosion. To see where the leak is coming from, remove everything from the area, dry it with a rag and investigate. For larger leaks, it might be very obvious where the leak source is, while smaller ones might be harder to identify. If this initial process doesn't help, run the garbage disposal while the water drains from the sink. Monitor the pipes while doing so and you should find the source.
- ✔ **Clean coils.** Remove any debris in the coils of your freezer and refrigerator. Start by gently pulling the fridge or freezer away from the wall and unplugging it. Locate the coils, which are located at the back or bottom, and begin vacuuming. Use a small brush (makeup or paintbrush) to sweep away stubborn dirt and vacuum once more.
- ✔ **Clean the exhaust fan.** Make sure to clean the kitchen exhaust fan filter to avoid buildup. To clean it, remove the filter and put it in a sink or bucket of boiling water with a mixture of baking soda and dish soap.

OTHER INTERIOR MAINTENANCE TASKS

- ✓ **Clean grout.** Clean the tile grout throughout your home. To start, fill a bucket with seven cups of warm water, a half cup of baking soda, a quarter cup of vinegar and one-third cup of ammonia. Pour the mixture into a spray bottle and use a small brush or toothbrush to scrub the grout.
- ✓ **Seal grout.** After cleaning the tile grout, make sure to seal it so that your hard work lasts. To apply a grout sealer, determine whether you need a penetrating grout sealer or a membrane-forming grout sealer. A penetrating grout sealer is best for damp areas. In contrast, a membrane-forming grout sealer is ideal for kitchen floors, backsplashes and unglazed tiles. Once you have the grout sealer, you can roll, paint or spray it on the grout.
- ✓ **Clean light fixtures.** Over time, light fixtures can become dusty, worsening allergies. Prevent dust from building up by using a duster.

OTHER HOME APPLIANCE MAINTENANCE TASKS

- ✓ **Flush the hot water heater.** At least once a year, flush your hot water heater to make sure it's clear of debris and sediment. First, shut off the gas and electricity. Let the hot water faucet run on full blast for about 10 minutes, reducing the water temperature in the tank. Next, shut off the cold water valve and attach a garden hose to the drain valve. Then, open the hot water faucet and water heater drain valve, letting the tank drain until sediment clogs the valve. You'll notice when this occurs, as the water flow will be reduced. Shut off the hot water faucet and water drain valve. You will then need to disconnect the temperature-pressure release valve and attach the shop vacuum hose to clean out the debris.
- ✓ **Deodorize the dishwasher.** Clean the drain filter by removing it and putting it in warm soapy water. Then, spray the holes on the arm and remove debris with a toothpick. Next, clean the inside of the dishwasher with hot, soapy water. Then, run the empty dishwasher with one cup of white or apple cider vinegar and one cup of baking soda.



Fall home maintenance checklist



Depending on where you live, fall might be the perfect time to check off some home maintenance tasks. In many places, fall is dry and temperatures are moderate, allowing you to check off outdoor home improvement projects from your home maintenance checklist.

EXTERIOR MAINTENANCE TASKS

- ✓ **Inspect downspouts.** Make sure water runs properly through downspouts. Downspouts run vertically around your home, connecting to a hole in the gutter channel. The downspouts should be turned away from the foundation and the water should be diverted at least five feet from your home's foundation.
- ✓ **Check the gutters.** Often clogged by leaves during the windy season, gutters can become misaligned. It's a good idea to ensure your gutters aren't clogged before the cold or rainy season begins.
- ✓ **Touch up exterior paint.** Fix any patches or dirty spots on your siding and trim with exterior paint.

YARD MAINTENANCE TASKS

- ✓ **Maintain the lawn.** Aerate the lawn and rake fallen leaves. Once you've cleaned debris from your lawn, it's time to feed it. Fertilizing your lawn helps rebuild grassroots that may have been damaged in the summer.
- ✓ **Fix cracks.** Patch up and mend any cracks and gaps in your walkway and/or driveway. Before you patch cracks, pressure-wash the concrete, then apply the fast-set crack filler.
- ✓ **Mow the lawn shorter.** In the late fall, cut the lawn one to two inches shorter than normal. Continue this until your lawn stops growing for the winter.

GARAGE MAINTENANCE TASKS

- ✓ **Inspect the paint.** Check for and repair any rust damage. Wood doors might be warped or have water damage. If this is the case, remove chipped paint, sand the door and repaint.
- ✓ **Test door balance.** When a garage door isn't balanced correctly, it's harder for the door to open. This will cause the garage door opener's life to be short-lived. To test the balance of the garage door, pull the release handle of the automatic opener. Then, lift the door to about halfway open manually. If properly balanced, your door should stay in place. If the garage door isn't balanced, contact a professional to make the repair.
- ✓ **Service the lawnmower.** You should have your lawnmower serviced before the winter. This will ensure your lawnmower works for upcoming seasons.

BASEMENT MAINTENANCE TASKS

- ✓ **Check pipes.** Before the winter months, it's important to make sure the pipes in your basement are properly insulated. If they aren't, the pipes can develop condensation. Uninsulated pipes allow cold air to enter your home and can increase your heating bill.
- ✓ **Inspect for moisture buildup.** Basements are prone to becoming musty and moldy. It's wise to ensure there's no moisture buildup in your basement. Tape a 12-inch-by-12-inch piece of plastic wrap to different areas of your basement wall and leave it on for a few days. Check beneath the plastic wrap intermittently to see if there's moisture at different times of the day.

- ✓ **Check for signs of pests.** Look for signs of rodents, bats, roaches, termites or other pests. If you notice any openings, seal them immediately to prevent bugs and rodents from moving in. Then, call a professional exterminator to treat the space.

BATHROOM MAINTENANCE TASKS

- ✓ **Clean out drawers and cabinets.** Remove all drawer and cabinet contents. Then, wipe down every drawer and make a note of deterioration and/or evidence of bugs.
- ✓ **Clean faucets.** As with anything involving water, faucets can get moldy. Have a bathtub faucet you rarely use? Even if you seldom use the bathtub faucet, clean it regularly to avoid mold.
- ✓ **Clean behind the toilet.** During your weekly cleanings, you may forget to thoroughly clean behind the toilet. Make sure to vacuum, mop and clean the part of the toilet closest to the wall.

KITCHEN MAINTENANCE TASKS

- ✓ **Clean the garbage disposal.** Cut a lemon into small pieces, drop the pieces into the drain, then run the garbage disposal. Lemon eliminates odor while also removing particles that can clog your disposal.
- ✓ **Scrub the drain splash guard.** After you've cleaned the garbage disposal, clean its splash guard with a toothbrush and soap.
- ✓ **Inspect the fire extinguisher.** Ensure your kitchen has a working fire extinguisher and that every member of the household knows its location. Check that the tamper seal and locking pin are in good condition. Then, look for any physical damage, corrosion or leakage before marking the date you checked it on the fire extinguisher's tag.

OTHER INTERIOR MAINTENANCE TASKS

- ✓ **Get the fireplace inspected.** Have a professional come out and inspect your fireplace before the winter months. Chimneys and fireplaces should be inspected annually to ensure safety.

- ✔ **Clean fireplace glass.** Often neglected, it's important to clean the fireplace glass before it gets heavily used in winter. Use a microfiber cloth and glass cleaner for the best results.
- ✔ **Test energy.** A professional energy audit is a great investment. Air that your HVAC system pumps into your home can leak through gaps and cracks. You should also check doors and windows for cracks. Simply look at doors and windows and see if small bits of daylight are seeping in where it shouldn't before repairing the cracks.

OTHER HOME APPLIANCE MAINTENANCE TASKS

- ✔ **Have your HVAC system inspected.** Have your HVAC system professionally inspected. It's important to schedule the inspection before you'll need heating.
- ✔ **Test detectors.** During the winter months, you're at an increased risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. Before the winter months start, test the smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in every room.
- ✔ **Change the refrigerator water filter.** Locate the old water filter and remove it from the fridge. Most modern fridges will let you know when the filter needs replacing.



Winter home maintenance checklist



As a homeowner, the winter months require you to stay extra vigilant and address any problems caused by harsh conditions. When temperatures drop, pipes can freeze and cause roofing damage. Checking off a few tasks from your home maintenance checklist before the winter storms roll in can help you prepare your home and family for the winter blitz.

EXTERIOR MAINTENANCE TASKS

- ✔ **Cover the HVAC.** If you live in a place that gets very cold during the winter, cover your air conditioning unit. It's important to cover the unit to protect your A/C from pine needles, leaves, animal nests and buildup. Excessive snow and ice can damage A/C coils, leading to failure.
- ✔ **Inspect the electrical service drop.** When branches or large trees fall, it's important to check that the line coming from your home to the power pole is clear. If you see any debris on the line, call your electrical company to remove the debris safely.
- ✔ **Cover patio furniture.** Before winter storms, cover outdoor furniture to preserve it for the warmer months.

YARD MAINTENANCE TASKS

- ✓ **Check the lawn.** Dirty water is a flood risk and harbors bacteria. If you notice water pooling, check your drains for clogs. Ensuring gutters are clear, mud isn't blocking drainage and clearing a space for water to drain efficiently should help.
- ✓ **Check faucet covers.** Check the covers on the outside faucets are secure and that they (the faucets) haven't iced up. Pipe sleeves and added insulation can help prevent pipes from freezing. When faucets and pipes freeze, they can burst.
- ✓ **Check trees.** Before a large storm comes, make sure the trees still look healthy. Healthy trees show evidence of new growth and have strong bark and healthy leaves. Wilting trees that have holes, cracks or fungus growth are unhealthy. If trees look like they've seen better days, it's wise to trim back branches before snowfall.

GARAGE MAINTENANCE TASKS

- ✓ **Check the weatherstripping.** You should check the garage weatherstripping to make sure ice, water and cold air aren't seeping into your garage.
- ✓ **Inspect cables and pulleys.** Ensure the lift cables and pulleys attached to the bottom roller brackets of the garage door are functioning properly. Providing connection from the springs to the door, cables and pulleys ensure the door is lowered safely. Since they have high tension and can be dangerous, it's advised to have a professional inspect the garage door's cables and pulleys.
- ✓ **Manage gas cans.** While you're not using gas to run your lawnmower, take advantage of the time to empty and clean gas cans. Before you clean them, ensure they're completely empty of gas. Then, add degreaser or dish detergent and fill them halfway with hot water. Close the lid and shake the can before dumping the solution and rinsing it out until the water is clear. Let the can dry in a well-ventilated area until it's completely dry.

BATHROOM MAINTENANCE TASKS

- ✓ **Maintain the exhaust fan.** Make sure to vacuum the bathroom exhaust fan grill during the winter. Exhaust fans eliminate bathroom odor, remove airborne contaminants and reduce moisture. Bathroom exhaust fans have a big job!

- ✔ **Change the water softener filter.** Homeowners with hard water might opt for a softening system, removing magnesium and calcium to prevent faucet decay. Filters should be changed periodically. To change the filter, turn off the water supply to the filter and turn off the valve. Place a bucket beneath the filter to catch water spills. Then, click the button to open the filter's housing. Turn the filter's housing clockwise and pour the water from the housing into the bucket. Last, place the new filter in, turn the housing counterclockwise and turn the valve and water supply back on.

KITCHEN MAINTENANCE TASKS

- ✔ **Maintain coils.** Check the refrigerator and freezer coils for debris. If they are dirty, vacuum the coils. Coils should be cleaned about every six months.

OTHER INTERIOR MAINTENANCE TASKS

- ✔ **Check for exposed electrical wires.** Look for exposed, damaged or frayed electrical cords or wires. If you see exposed electrical cords, contact an electrician.
- ✔ **Inspect the attic.** During the winter months, animals may try to burrow into your attic. Check for pests that may have settled in for the winter months.
- ✔ **Reverse fans.** During the winter, reverse the motor so that the fan turns in a clockwise direction. By reversing the motion of the ceiling fan, you create a gentle draft that pushes warm air from the ceiling into your living space.

OTHER HOME APPLIANCE MAINTENANCE TASKS

- ✔ **Clean the stovetop.** During the holiday season, you might be making stovetop potpourri, cooking soup or baking holiday treats like cookies, pies and babka. However delicious the creations are, they can make a mess. Make sure to give your stovetop some love and clean it with vinegar.
- ✔ **Fix rusty dishwasher racks.** Avoid rust stains on your dishes by recoating and covering rust spots. All in all, the process typically takes less than an hour of your time. Just remove the dishwasher rack and clean off the rust. Clip off rusted tips with a cutoff wheel and rotary tool and then re-tip the tines.



Inspect washing machine hoses. All washing machines come with three hoses, which gives them three opportunities to break unexpectedly. Avoid an unexpected hose break by checking the hoses. Simply start a short wash and watch each hose. During this time, you may notice a leak. If you do, turn off the machine and seal off the water supply. Then, remove the hose and search for the source of the leak. Sometimes, taping the leak will help, while other times, you might need to replace the hose.

Protect your home year-round with Cinch

As a homeowner, you have a lot on your plate. Maintaining your home can be overwhelming if you don't know where to start. We hope our home maintenance checklist gives you peace of mind.

At Cinch Home Services, we know that when major appliances and built-in systems break down, it can be a stressful experience that costs you both time and money. That's why we offer affordable home service plans. See how Cinch can help protect your budget and home year-round.