Habitat for Humanity

“Home Maintenance Class”

After attending this class, participants will have an understanding of some basic home repair projects and learn preventative maintenance procedures that will allow them to correct the immediate problem, reduce unnecessary financial costs, and create a safe home environment.

SAFETY CHECKS

Smoke Alarms:
One of the most important fire safety devices for the home is the smoke alarm. Smoke alarms should be tested at least once a month. All smoke alarms have a test button that you push to check out the entire alarm. Smoke alarms need no maintenance other than changing batteries (in those that have batteries) and an occasional vacuuming of dust or cobwebs.

Ground-Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) Outlets:
You’ll find them around potentially wet areas in bathrooms, kitchens, and for outdoor receptacles. Make sure the device trips and resets correctly. You should test them once a month.

Security Alarms:
Basic home security systems, or burglar alarms, are typically wired to a central control panel in the home that will activate when windows or doors are opened while the system is armed. These alarms should be tested at least once a month.

Drain Hoses:
Inspect the drain hoses attached to your clothes washer, the dishwasher, and the icemaker. If you see any cracks or drips, replace the hose so you don’t come home to a flood one day.

Clothes Dryer Vent:
Pull the dryer out from the wall, disconnect the vent pipe, and vacuum lint out of the pipe and the place where it connects to the machine. Also, wipe lint off your exterior dryer vent so the flap opens and closes easily. (You’ll need to go outside for that, but it’s quick.) Remember that vents clogged with old dryer lint are a leading cause of house fires.

Exhaust Filter for the Kitchen Stove:
By washing it to remove grease, you’ll increase the efficiency of your exhaust vent; plus, if a kitchen stovetop fire breaks out, this will help keep the flames from spreading.

Electrical Cords:
Make sure extension cords are properly rated for their intended use, indoor or outdoor, and meet or exceed the power needs of the appliance or tool being used. Do not place power cords and extension cords in high traffic areas or under carpets, rugs or furniture, and never nail or staple them to the wall or baseboard. Never remove the ground pin (the third prong) to make a three-prong plug fit a two-prong outlet. Replace any cords that are brittle, cracked, or have damage.
SIMPLE QUICK FIXES

Changing Light Bulbs:
Check the wattage on the used bulb and replace it with a bulb of the same wattage. Make sure the power is turned off. Allow the bulb to cool before touching it. The old bulb needs to be disposed of safely as the glass is fragile and very sharp. Use the packaging from the new bulb to wrap the old one for safe disposal.

Replacing Air Filters:
Air filters work with your furnace or air conditioner, cycling clean, purified air through your home every time you turn on the unit. Home air conditioner air filters reduce dust, which, if left unfiltered, can shorten the life span of your heating and cooling unit. Check your filters at least monthly and change them when they get dirty.

Squeaky Door Hinges:
Eliminate squeaks by squirting a puff of powdered graphite alongside the pin where the hinge turns.

Creaky Floor Boards:
Dust a little talcum powder into the seam where floorboards meet. The talcum powder acts as a lubricant to quiet boards that rub against each other.

Loose Handles or Hinges on Furniture, Cabinets and Doors:
You can probably fix these with a few quick turns of a screwdriver. But if a screw just spins in place, try making the hole fit the screw better by stuffing in a toothpick coated with glue, or switching to a larger screw.

Electrical Outlet Covers:
Electrical outlet covers usually have only two screws securing them to the electrical wall outlet. To remove the outlet cover, turn off the electricity to that particular outlet and simply remove the screws holding it to the wall. Then replace with your new electrical outlet cover and firmly screw on, being careful not to tighten too much as you can crack the new cover.

How to Clean Moldy Grout:
The easiest way to keep your grout clean is to clean it often. Here is a homemade grout cleaner recipe: (¼ cup bleach and ¾ cup baking soda). Wearing gloves, slowly mix together the bleach and baking soda in a small container until a paste mixture forms. Apply the paste mixture with an old toothbrush and scrub the moldy grout. Let the paste mixture remain on the moldy grout for ten minutes, then wipe it clean with a rag and hot water. (Fill a bucket with hot water and use a rag to wipe away the past mixture from the grout, constantly rinsing out the wet rag). After the area is completely dry, the grout will look very clean.

Once a Year Must do Maintenance:
> Vacuum the refrigerator coils underneath the refrigerator to remove dust.
> Vacuum the clothes dryer's exhaust duct to remove lint buildup.
> Clean leaves and debris from the condenser of a central air conditioner seasonally.
> Inspect window and door caulkling and weather stripping and replace if needed.
How to Unclog a Sink Drain:
If just one sink is clogged and you're not having trouble with other slow draining sinks or toilets, then the problem is probably local with drain lines related to this sink drain and not with the main sewer drainage line in your home.

There are two basic types of plungers, the cup plunger and the flange plunger. For working in sinks, lavatories and tubs you want to use the cup plunger. The flange plunger is specially shaped for toilet use. Also, for sanitary reasons you don't want to mix the two.

1.) If this is a bathroom sink, seal the sink overflow outlet found at the top of the sink bowl. Use a piece of duct tape to cover the sink overflow hole. For best results, also duct tape the bath tub overflow if there is one in the room with the clogged sink.

2.) If a kitchen sink or similar, remove the basket strainer. If a lavatory sink, remove the drain stopper from the sink. Try lifting it out or turning and lifting.

3.) Fill the sink halfway with water.

4.) Place the cup plunger over the drain hole and make sure it has a good seal against the sink surface.

5.) Using quick, sharp plunges, attempt to clear the obstruction with the plunger and check for drainage.

6.) Once cleared, remove the tape covering the overflow outlet and replace the drain stopper or sink basket.

![Image showing the use of duct tape and plunger to unclog a sink](Image)
How to Fix a Leaky Faucet:
A dripping faucet is the most common plumbing problem as well as one of the easiest to repair.

Before you start:
• Turn off the water under the sink.
• Close the sink drain and cover it with a rag to catch dropped parts.
• Tape the jaws of your wrench with a layer of duct tape to avoid scratching the fixture.
• Establish a place to lay out parts in order of removal.
• Use distilled white vinegar and a soft scouring pad to remove mineral deposits on faucet parts.

Most leaky compression faucets need new stem washers.

1.) Pry off the decorative cap on the handle, remove the handle screw, and pull off the handle.

2.) Use a crescent wrench to unscrew and remove the retaining nut.

3.) After unscrewing the stem, remove and replace the stem washer held in place by a brass screw and replace any O-rings.

4.) Coat the washers and O-rings with nontoxic, heat-proof plumber's grease. (Note: O-rings range in size from 3/8 to 5/8 in., so it's crucial to exactly match the size on your faucet.)

5.) Reassemble the faucet, tighten the retaining nut, and replace the handle.
How to Fix and Repair a Running Toilet:

If your toilet keeps running, you’re losing a substantial amount of water daily from this single source. Not only is this wasteful, but a leaking toilet will also contribute to a higher water bill. You’ll first need to identify the cause of the running toilet. Make sure the toilet seat is down and lift the cover off the back of the toilet.

1.) Make sure there is plenty of slack in the chain from the toilet flush lever to the flapper. Too little and the flush lever may be holding the toilet flapper away from the seal. Too much and the chain could be tucked up underneath the flapper seal, letting water continuously leak from your toilet. Adjust the chain as appropriate for your situation if needed.

2.) Your running toilet may be caused by a flapper, or stopper, that is not sealing well. To test the toilet flapper, reach your hand down into the bowl and push down on the flapper and listen. If the toilet leak has stopped, you can rest assured that all you need is a new flapper. If that didn’t fix the leak, then you need to move on to the float mechanism.

3.) Your float may be black and round or you may have a guide arm type float. Lift up on the float and listen again. Did the water stop leaking? If it did, your flush assembly could be bad or the float may be waterlogged. Before doing anything else, try bending the float where the rod pushes the float lower into the water. This may stop the water from leaking until you can buy a new flush assembly. If none of the above solutions has repaired your running toilet problem, you may need to replace the toilet flush assembly.
Basic Flooring Care

It’s important that you take care of the flooring in your home to prolong its life and protect your family’s health. Below are some basic care suggestions to get you started.

Basic Care for Carpet

- **Remove your shoes** when you arrive home, but leave your socks on. Bare feet leave behind natural oils that attract dirt.
- **Vacuum every day**, especially in high traffic areas such as entryways. At a minimum, all carpet should be vacuumed twice a week.
- **Use a vacuum cleaner equipped with HEPA filters.** Change the filters often.
- **Change the vacuum bag** (or empty the vacuum receptacle) **when it is half full**.
- **Change your home’s air filter every 30 days** to help your system remove dust and allergens before they settle into your carpet.
- Protect carpet by placing **area rugs** that can be easily laundered in high traffic areas.
- If you will be moving furniture frequently on your carpet (such as a rolling desk chair), place it on a plastic chair mat to protect your carpet.
- **Reduce your carpet’s exposure to direct sunlight.** Sunlight can discolor your carpet.

Cleaning Spills on Carpet

- **Clean up spills immediately.**
- **Blot** the spill. Don’t rub or scrub aggressively.
- Use carpet cleaners or stain extractors according to manufacturer instructions. Beware of strong stain removers as they may discolor your carpet.
- **Dry** the spot with a hairdryer.
- **Vacuum** it to remove any residue.

Professional vs. Self-Cleaning Carpet

It is recommended that you **deep clean your carpet every 12 to 18 months**. While renting a self-cleaning machine from a local grocery store can be economical, a professional cleaning will be more effective than self-cleaning. You may make mistakes cleaning the carpet yourself, or the machine may malfunction. Professional cleaners will remove more dust, mold, bacteria, mildew and other pollutants than self-cleaning systems. When choosing a professional carpet cleaning company:

- Make sure they have insurance and some Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification (IICRC). You may contact the IICRC online or at 1-800-835-4624 for information and accredited vendors in your area.
- Get recommendations from friends and family, research companies online, get multiple quotes and check with the Better Business Bureau.
- You should expect to pay between 50 cents and $1 per square foot.
Basic Care for Hard Surface Flooring

- **Remove your shoes** when you arrive home, but leave your socks on. Bare feet leave behind natural oils that attract dirt.
- **Vacuum or sweep every day**, especially in high traffic areas such as entryways. It is ok to vacuum hard surface flooring.
- **Change your home’s air filter every 30 days** to help your system remove dust and allergens.
- Protect flooring by placing **non-slip area rugs** that can be easily laundered in high traffic areas. You can purchase non-slip pads to place under area rugs.
- **Do NOT wet mop your hard surface flooring!** Instead, use a **damp** rag or mop. Your hard surface flooring is secured to your concrete with glue. Too much water on your floor will loosen the glue and cause your flooring to separate, peel or warp.
- **Waxing your hard surface flooring is NOT recommended.** Simply cleaning your floors with a damp cloth or mop should make it shine like new!

Cleaning Spills on Hard Surface Flooring

- **Clean up spills immediately** with a clean, dry rag. Again, it’s important that you do not leave wet spots on your hard surface flooring as that can damage the glue that secures it.
The following checklist was developed for the Healthy Homes Training Center and Network as a tool for healthy home maintenance. A healthy home is one that is constructed, maintained, and rehabilitated in a manner that is conducive to good occupant health.

To maintain a healthy home, occupants should keep it dry, clean, well-ventilated, free from contaminants, pest-free, safe and well-maintained. Good home maintenance can act to reduce allergens, prevent illness, and reduce injury from accidents. This checklist provides basic guidelines; items may need to be checked more often depending on local conditions and manufacturer suggestions.

Developed for the National Healthy Homes Training Center by Terry Brennan and Ellen Tohn, technical advisors to the National Center for Healthy Housing.

### Healthy Homes Maintenance Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yard &amp; Exterior</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Annual</th>
<th>As Needed</th>
<th>Pro Needed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water drains away from house</td>
<td>☑</td>
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<tr>
<td>No trip, fall, choking, sharp edge hazards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fence around pool intact</td>
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<tr>
<td>Check for signs of rodents, bats, roaches, termites</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drain outdoor faucets and hoses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clean window wells and check drainage</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Clean gutters and downspouts</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exterior Roof, Walls, Windows</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Annual</th>
<th>As Needed</th>
<th>Pro Needed</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shingles in good condition</td>
<td>☑</td>
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<tr>
<td>Check chimney, valley, plumbing vent, skylight flashing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Make sure gutters discharge water away from building</td>
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<td>Check attic vents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Check attic for signs of roof leaks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Check for icicles and ice dams</td>
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<td>winter</td>
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<td>Look for peeling paint</td>
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<td>Look for signs of leaks where deck attaches to house</td>
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<tr>
<td>Check below window &amp; door that flashing intact</td>
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<tr>
<td>Repair broken, cracked glass</td>
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<tr>
<td>Look for signs of leaks at window and door sills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clean dryer vent</td>
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<td>Check exhaust ducts are clear</td>
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### Basement & Crawlspace

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Annual</th>
<th>As Needed</th>
<th>Pro Needed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No wet surfaces, puddles</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>☑</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sump pump and check valve working</td>
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<tr>
<td>Floor drain working</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vacuum basement surfaces</td>
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<tr>
<td>Check for signs of rodents, bats, roaches, termites</td>
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Maintenance Checklist continued on next page
### Interior Walls, Ceilings, Windows, Doors

- Check for signs of water damage
- Check operation of windows and doors
- Lubricate and repair windows and doors

### Appliances

- Clean kitchen range hood screens
- Clean dryer vents and screens
- Clean exhaust fan outlets and screens
- Clean outdoor air intakes and screens
- Clean air conditioning coils, drain pans
- Clean dehumidifier coils, check operation
- Clean and tune furnaces, boilers, hot water heaters
- Clean and tune ovens and ranges

### Plumbing, Fixtures and Appliances

- Check washer hoses-connections
- Check dishwasher hoses for leaks
- Check toilet supply/shut-off valve
- Clean & check refrigerator drip-pan-icemaker connections
- Check shower-tub surrounds for signs of damage
- Check traps and drains under sinks, tubs, showers for leaks
- Check hot water heater for leaks
- Check boiler for leaks
- Check water main/meter or well pump for leaks or sweating
- Check water main/meter or well pump for leaks or sweating
- Clean septic tank (2 yrs)
- Check drain and supply time for leaks
- Check bath and kitchen fans operation

### Electrical Equipment

- Check for damaged cords
- Test ground fault interrupters
- Test outlets for proper hot, neutral and ground (once)
- Check smoke and CO alarms

### Garage

- Ensure storage of fuel cans
- Proper operation of garage door safety shut-off
- Check for signs of water damage
- Check for signs of rodents, bats, roaches, termites

### HVAC Equipment - Replace filters

- Warm air furnace (merv 8)
- Air conditioner (central air merv 8)
- Dehumidifier
- Outdoor air to return to heat recovery ventilation

### Attic

- Check for signs of rodents, bats, roaches, termites
- Check for water damage
- Ensure insulation in place
- Check that fans still exhaust to outdoors (check ductwork connections)
Home Maintenance Schedule and Checklist
From www.lowes.com

Like a car, your home needs regular maintenance and occasional tune-ups to stay in tip-top shape. Fortunately, you can complete most of the following tasks yourself by following this season-by-season schedule of indoor and outdoor maintenance.

**Spring Home Maintenance**
In spring, focus on freshening up your home and protecting your property against the season's strong winds and rains.

**Outdoor Tasks:**
- Clean gutters and downspouts. Learn how to maintain your gutters.
- Inspect roof and chimney for cracks and damage.
- Touch up peeling or damaged paint. Watch our video for ideas on troubleshooting exterior paint problems.
- Wash all windows, inside and out.
- Install screens on windows and doors.
- Clean outdoor furniture and air out cushions.
- Service your lawn mower.
- Fertilize your lawn.

**Indoor Tasks:**
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors when you set clocks forward.
- If your basement has a sump pump, test it by dumping a large bucket of water into the basin of the sump pump. This should activate the sump pump. If it does not switch on or if it's not pumping water, it may need to be serviced by a professional. Also, check for and remove any debris and make sure there are no leaks.
- Wash and change seasonal bedding.
- Dust blinds and vacuum curtains throughout your house.
- Clean kitchen and bathroom cabinets and throw away outdated food, medicine and cosmetics.

**Summer Home Maintenance**
In summer, complete the following projects to keep your yard lush and your home cool.

**Outdoor Tasks:**
- Walk around your home's exterior and slide open crawl space vents at the foundation.
- Prune trees and shrubs. Check out our tips on pruning trees and shrubs.
- Remove lint from dryer exhaust vent with a long, flexible brush.
- Uncover central air conditioner and install window air conditioners.

**Indoor Tasks:**
- Change or clean heating, ventilating and air conditioning filters. Consult manufacturer instructions for your furnace to determine whether you need to change filters more frequently. Learn more about choosing a filter. Get information on cleaning or replacing your HVAC filters.
- Clean kitchen appliances inside and out, including refrigerator coils.
- Maintain clean drains by adding a half-cup of baking soda followed by a half-cup of white vinegar. After 10 minutes, flush with boiling water.
- Drain or flush water heater.
Fall Home Maintenance

In fall, prepare your home and yard for cooler temperatures, falling leaves and more hours spent indoors.

Outdoor Tasks:
- Clean gutters and downspouts. Get information on maintaining your gutters.
- Inspect roof and chimney for cracks and damage.
- Rake leaves and shred to use as mulch or dispose of them based on local guidelines.
- Close or install storm windows.
- Remove hoses from spigots and drain and store indoors, coiled and flat.
- Store outdoor furniture and cushions.
- Test snow blower and have it professionally serviced if necessary.
- Rake Leaves

Indoor Tasks:
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors when you set clocks back in the fall. See our carbon monoxide detector buying guide. Learn more about detecting and preventing carbon monoxide.
- Check windows and doors for weather-tightness and install weather stripping where it’s needed. Check out our tips on weather stripping windows and doors.
- Have furnace professionally inspected.
- If needed, set traps for rodents.
- Dust blinds and vacuum curtains throughout your house.
- Clean kitchen and bathroom cabinets and throw away outdated food, medicine and cosmetics

Winter Home Maintenance

In winter, enjoy energy-efficient warmth and the fruits of your home-maintenance labors. Use this time of the year to thoroughly clean and care for your home’s interior while taking a few precautionary measures on the outside.

Outdoor Tasks:
- Walk around your home’s exterior and check the crawl space vents located at the foundation. Close any that are open.
- Protect your central air conditioning unit with a cover, and remove and store window air conditioners.
- Clean and store garden tools.
- Move snow shovels and snow blowers to a convenient spot.

Indoor Tasks:
- Change or clean furnace filters. Consult manufacturer instructions for your furnace to determine how frequently the filters should be replaced. See our tips on choosing a home air filter and information on cleaning and replacing HVAC filters.
- Clean kitchen appliances inside and out, including refrigerator coils.
- Maintain clean drains by adding one-half-cup baking soda followed by one-half-cup white vinegar. After 10 minutes, flush with boiling water.