

Monthly Home Checklist edited for Texas Better Homes and Gardens

Inspecting your home and completing monthly home improvement projects will keep your maintenance schedule on track and easier to manage. Follow this comprehensive home maintenance checklist each month to help save time and money:

- Clean the furnace filter to remove dust build-ups, make it easier to regulate your home's temperature, and ultimately [decrease energy bills](#).
- Check the water softener and replenish salt if necessary.
- [Clean faucet aerators and showerheads](#) to remove mineral deposits.
- Test smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectors, fire extinguishers, and all ground-fault circuit interrupters.
- Inspect electrical cords for wear.
- Vacuum heat registers and heat vents.
- Check that indoor and outdoor air vents are not blocked.
- [Clean the garbage disposal](#) by grinding ice cubes, then flushing with hot water and baking soda.

Fall Home Maintenance Checklist

In many regions, fall is the perfect season to tackle general home maintenance projects because the weather is generally dry and temperatures are moderate. Before you start your seasonal home maintenance checklist, examine both the interior and exterior of your home. Most of these tasks can be accomplished without the help of a professional, but it's always better to be safe and call for assistance if a project is beyond your abilities. Here are our [seasonal home improvement recommendations for fall](#):

- [Rake leaves](#) and aerate the lawn.
- Inspect tub and sink drains for debris; unclog if necessary.
- Have the heating system inspected by a professional. Schedule an inspection in late summer or early fall before the heating season begins.
- [Check the](#) fireplace for damage or hazards and clean fireplace flues.
- Seal cracks and gaps in windows and doors with caulk or weather stripping; replace if necessary.
- Touch up exterior siding and [trim with paint](#).

- Inspect roofing for missing, loose, or damaged shingles and leaks.
- [Power-wash windows and siding.](#)
- [Remove leaves and debris from gutters](#) and downspouts
- Have your fireplace professionally inspected.
- Tune-up major home appliances before the holidays.
- Repair or replace siding.
- Replace the batteries in smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Install a smoke detector on every floor of your home.
- Clean the carpets.
- Clean window and door screens.
- Vacuum lint from the dryer vent.
- Inspect exterior door hardware; fix squeaky handles and loose locks.
- Check for frayed cords and wires.
- Drain and store hoses, and drain in-ground sprinkler systems before a freeze only.
- Wrap insulation around outdoor faucets and [pipes in unheated garages.](#)
- Check the water heater for leaks.

Winter Home Maintenance Checklist

Winter weather can be harsh on your home. The below-freezing temperatures can cause a number of problems, including frozen pipes and roof damage.

- Inspect the roof, gutters, and downspouts for damage after storms.
- Vacuum bathroom exhaust fan grill.
- [Vacuum refrigerator and freezer coils](#) and empty and clean drip trays.
- [Clean drains in sinks](#), tubs, showers, and dishwashers.

Spring Home Maintenance Checklist

Once the trees begin to bud, it's time to prepare your home for spring. On top of your [regular spring cleaning](#), you'll also want to consider these general upkeep tips. Use our spring home maintenance checklist to make sure everything in your home from the basement to the roof is in tip-top shape:

- Inspect roofing for missing, loose, or damaged shingles and leaks.
- [Change the air-conditioner filter.](#)
- Clean window and door screens.

- [Polish wood furniture](#) and dust light fixtures.
- [Refinish the deck.](#)
- Power-wash windows and siding.
- [Remove leaves and debris from gutters](#) and downspouts.
- Replace the batteries in smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.
- Have a professional inspect and pump the septic tank.
- Inspect sink, shower, and bath caulking for deterioration.
- Vacuum lint from the dryer vent.
- Repair or replace caulking and weather stripping around windows, doors, and mechanicals.
- Remove the insulation from outdoor faucets and check sprinkler heads.
- Have air-conditioning system serviced.
- Drain or flush the water heater.
- [Fertilize your lawn.](#)

Summer Home Maintenance Checklist

When the sun is out and warm weather is finally here to stay, the last thing you should worry about is home maintenance. Use our quick summer home maintenance guide to get the hard work out of the way at the beginning of the season. Don't worry if the weather is already heating up; most of these tasks are indoors:

- Oil garage-door opener and chain, garage door, and all door hinges.
- Remove lint from inside and outside washer hoses and dryer vents.
- Clean kitchen exhaust fan filter.
- [Clean refrigerator and freezer coils](#) and empty and clean drip trays.
- Check the dishwasher for leaks.
- Check around kitchen and bathroom cabinets and around toilets for leaks.
- Replace interior and exterior faucet and showerhead washers if needed.
- [Prune trees and shrubs.](#)

15 Simple Energy-Saving Strategies to Lower Your Electric Bill

By [Kaylei Fear](#) Better Homes and Gardens

Published on July 5, 2022

Energy-efficient home upgrades are not only environmentally responsible, but they can also save you a lot of money over time. Even small updates, such as swapping old lightbulbs for LED versions, can make a huge difference. And while large-scale changes like replacing windows or adding insulation help reduce energy consumption in the long run, a lot of [energy-saving updates](#) can be accomplished in a day or less. Another reason to consider? Many of the energy-efficient renovations you can make to your home [qualify for tax credits](#). Below, see some of the top [home improvements](#) for reducing energy consumption and saving on your utility bill.

1. Buy Energy-Efficient Appliances

Major appliances are your home's [third-biggest energy hog](#), behind heating, cooling, and water heating. Replace outdated appliances with efficient new models. In the long run, replacing old appliances will help your bills and the environment. [Energy Star-qualified models](#) have a range of efficiencies, so compare models and go with the most efficient.

2. Use Occupancy Sensors

Turn off the lights when you leave a room. If that's difficult for you or your kids to remember, buy lights with occupancy sensors that automatically turn off when there hasn't been any movement for a period of time. [Consider dimmer switches](#) that let you reduce lighting when you don't need it and have occupancy sensors. Dimmers can easily replace a regular switch and keep a low profile.

3. Unplug Your Electronics

Leaving gadgets and charger cords plugged in when not in use can [account for as much as 10% of a home's energy use](#). Simply unplugging what's not being used can make a big difference on your energy bills. Instead, plug

devices into a power strip that you can switch off when not in use. Remember to unplug what you can when you leave your home as well.

4. Use Cold Water for Laundry

[Do your laundry](#) in cold water. Many of today's detergents and fabric softeners are much more efficient and don't necessarily need hot water. [Using cold water](#) means you won't have to waste energy to start up the water heater.

In the summer months, line-dry your laundry instead of using a dryer. Reducing your use of a dryer can [save up to \\$100 a year](#) in operating costs. Plus, line-drying is easier on your clothes, so you save what you would otherwise spend on wear and tear.

5. Program Your Thermostat

[Install a programmable thermostat](#) to reduce energy consumption without having to adjust your lifestyle. This allows you to set times for the air-conditioner or furnace to run and won't waste energy on an empty house. Estimates vary, but you can [save about 10% on your energy bill with a smart thermostat](#).

6. Turn Down the Temperature

Lower the temperature on your water heater. Most water heaters are set much too high at 140 degrees Fahrenheit. Save energy by turning your water heater down to 120-110 degrees. Don't worry, the water will still be comfortable.

7. Change Your Lightbulbs

Replace incandescent bulbs with light-emitting diode (LED) versions. According to Energy.gov, [LED lightbulbs use up to 90% less energy](#) and last up to 25 times longer than traditional incandescent bulbs. While more expensive than traditional bulbs upfront, LED lightbulbs save money over time thanks to their long lifespan.

8. Fill Gaps

Small gaps around windows, doors, and other areas of the house add up. In fact, the [EPA estimates that homeowners can save an average of 15%](#) on heating and cooling costs (or an average of 11% on total energy costs) by air sealing their homes and adding insulation in attics, floors over crawl spaces, and basements. Seal gaps and cracks with caulk or weather stripping to keep the cold air out in the winter and the hot air out in the summer.

9. Schedule a Tune-Up

Dirt can build up over time, causing your HVAC system to perform poorly. If ignored, this can lead to higher energy costs and potentially higher repair costs. Have a licensed professional check your system annually. If your furnace or boiler is more than 15 years old, and your heat pump or air conditioner is more than 12 years old, consider replacing it with a new energy-efficient model.

10. Replace Filters

Check your HVAC filter each month and [wash or replace it at least every three months](#). A dirty filter increases your energy bill and shortens the life of your heating and cooling systems.

11. Fix Air Leaks

There are probably more air leaks around your home than you think. In addition to caulking and adding [weather stripping around windows](#), close the fireplace damper when it's not being used to keep cold air out in the winter and hot air out in the summer. Also, check your dryer vent cap to make sure it closes tightly.

12. Fix Water Leaks

Check for leaky fixtures and appliances, and inspect the pipes under each sink. You should also inspect your washing machine hose and the floor around your water heater for potential leaks. These could be wasting energy and draining your wallet. Also, test toilets for leaks. Replacing the flapper will usually fix that problem.

13. Upgrade Windows

If your home has single-pane windows, they could be wasting up to 25% of your energy costs. [Replacing single-pane windows](#) with high-performance double-pane Energy Star-rated windows reduces this energy loss. Look for windows labeled low-emissivity (low-E) or spectrally selective. They have a coating that reduces thermal heat transfer.

14. Add Insulation

Most homes are under-insulated, which means heating and cooling systems are forced to work overtime to keep a home comfortable. Add fiberglass insulation to your attic floor and house walls and [save up to 20%](#) on heating and cooling costs.

15. Utilize the Sun

On cool days, take advantage of the sun's warmth by opening south-facing window blinds and shades; close them at night. On hot days, block out the sun's warmth by closing these [window treatments](#).