

Guide to Home Maintenance on a Budget:

Essential Tips for Every
Homeowner



Abstract

Maintaining a home can be costly, but it doesn't have to break the bank. Our "Guide to Home Maintenance on a Budget: Essential Tips for Every Homeowner" provides practical strategies to keep your home in top shape without overspending. Learn how to prioritize tasks, tackle DIY repairs, find affordable maintenance supplies, and identify when to hire professionals.

Additionally, discover energy-efficient upgrades and preventative measures that can save you money in the long run. This guide is your go-to resource for maintaining your home efficiently and economically.

Introduction

Home maintenance is a crucial aspect of homeownership, but it doesn't have to be expensive. Our "Guide to Home Maintenance on a Budget: Essential Tips for Every Homeowner" is designed to help you keep your home in excellent condition without straining your finances. This comprehensive guide offers practical advice on prioritizing maintenance tasks, undertaking cost-effective DIY repairs, sourcing affordable yet reliable maintenance supplies, and knowing when to call in the professionals.

We also explore energy-efficient upgrades and preventative measures that can help you save money over time. Whether you're a new homeowner or looking to cut down on maintenance costs, this guide provides valuable insights to help you maintain your home efficiently and economically.

1. Why Does Home Maintenance Matters?

As a homeowner, other than just making sure the equipment in your house looks good, home maintenance holds incredible importance. It will usually involve things like making minor repairs to equipment around the house, looking for leaks and cracks in walls and roofs, flooring and wall paints.

Most people won't hesitate to insist that home maintenance is important. However, they will often fail to give you reasons why they think that is.

Here are five quick reasons why home maintenance is important.

It saves you money in the long-term

Aging and inefficient equipment use up a lot more money and resources than new ones. An air filter that's not undergone any maintenance in a while, for instance, is going to use up more energy than one that's recently had the filters cleaned.

Likewise, old pipes are better off replaced before they burst and start leaking water, leading to higher replacement costs.

For every dollar spent on preventive maintenance, you are going to save a lot more worth of damages and repairs. Simple problems are always better dealt with at the moment of their emergence.



It increases the value of your home

Aside from home upgrades and renovations, one of the most effective ways of increasing the value of your home is to maintain it properly. An easy way to think of this is considering you were to put up your house for sale tomorrow.

If none of the house has been properly maintained in a while, you'd have a lot of dents in your home inspection report. The cost of fixing these issues would otherwise be bundled on the customer, leading to them asking for discounted rates. This way, properly maintaining your home helps to increase its value.

It protects your house from secondary damage

Secondary damage is the kind of damage that happens as a result of previous damages that have happened in the house before.

For instance, when flowing water bursts out of a pipe and damages the hardwood floors below. If the water gets into electrical outlets and messes up with the wiring in the house, or the roof collapses because of weakened trusses.

Obviously, this is going to cost a lot more to repair or replace rather than paying a professional to fix preemptively. Contacting professionals like APES plumbing and HVAC is a great choice to detect leaks and other sewage and plumbing issues.

Home maintenance improves the living experience

Living in a house with a quiet air filter or furnace that doesn't spew dust every other second is a vastly better experience than the other side of the coin. Regularly maintaining your home makes life easier as you won't have to deal with the excessive noise of a creaky door, unlubricated machine parts or cleaning up after a leaky roof.

Additionally, it helps you have more confidence in the integrity of every part of your house. Naturally enough, then, you'll feel a lot more secure and comfortable living in it.

It helps to keep away pests

The direct proportionality between the number of bugs in a house and how poorly maintained the said house is something that needs no explanation.

Bugs flying through the neighborhood and finding a crack in your wall, for instance, are going to decide they have found their new home. Ants and wasps deciding to settle in your attic and termites eating up wooden trusses all over your house will be a huge problem if you don't keep your home maintained.

2. What are Some Cost-Effective DIY Repairs and Upkeep Tasks that Homeowners Can Do Themselves?

Owning a home can be a dream come true, but the world of home ownership is more than just relaxing weekends on the deck and intimate evenings in front of the fireplace. It requires a commitment to keeping your private oasis safe and running smoothly. Making occasional repairs is part of the bargain, and even if you aren't a dedicated do-it-yourselfer (DIY), there are a few around-the-house fixes you should become familiar with.

Few things will sour a homeowner's disposition faster than a stopped up toilet or runaway faucet drip, and that's just bathroom and kitchen stuff.

Roll up your sleeves and take a few minutes to master five home repairs that you can do yourself without dangerous tools or complicated instructions. Even though spending a few hours regularly on DIY home maintenance and repairs may never become your hobby of choice, knowing how to perform a few simple fixes will keep your costs down and help get the work done on your schedule instead of your contractor's.

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5: Prepping Your Paint Jobs Like a Pro

Whether you want to paint a whole room or just need to cover a nail hole, nothing helps to maintain or improve the appearance of a room like paint. You haven't owned a home very long if you don't have paint splattered work clothes in your closet and a couple of paintbrushes in your basement or garage.



Sprucing up your rooms with paint is one of the best ways to show your home to advantage, but before you start collecting color swatches, there are some things to keep in mind. Painting, when it's done well, can increase the value of your home and add style and flair to your space. When the job isn't done well, and it's easy to see roller marks, spatters, and sloppy trim paint, it's almost as bad as leaving cracked and peeling paint on the walls.

You'll achieve the best results when you prepare for the job. Where painting is concerned, prep is king. Good preparation takes time, but it also makes the actual painting easier.

Start by removing any fixtures or hardware that might get in the way of your project. Loosen up fixtures and remove curtain rods, switch-plates and door hinges. Yes, it does take time, but it isn't extra time. If you leave things in place that will create obstacles for your paintbrush or roller, you will be wasting time trying to cover or paint around them later. You'll take more time, and the end result won't look as professional as if you'd cleared everything away to start with.

After you have an unobstructed shot at the walls, clean them with a damp sponge or a dry cloth. Grease, dust and grime buildup will keep paint from making a good bond on your walls, and

could cause streaks. Give the room a once over, and be on the lookout for nail holes, gouges and other imperfections that need to be filled with spackle and rough spots that could use some sanding. Little repairs like this, especially in older homes, can make a big difference in the appearance of the final paint job. Once you've cleaned the walls and done a few minor fix-ups, apply primer to any sanded areas. If you've sanded large areas, you might consider using a paint that has primer incorporated into it and eliminate the need to prime the walls as a separate step.

Now you're ready to mask any molding, built-ins and baseboards with painter's tape and start laying down drop cloths. After that, painting your room will be easy.

On the next page, we'll knock a little sense into your favorite interactive room divider, the door. Disposing of Paint

If you have leftover paint that's in good condition, you don't have to pitch it. Instead, why not try donating or recycling it. The folks at Earth911.com can put you in touch with organizations in your area that will find creative uses for your extra paint [source: Earth911].

4: Dealing with Doors

Don't leave your guests out in the cold because your door won't open.

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You have doors all over your home, and even though they look innocent and simple, doors need occasional maintenance and repair. From squeaks to sticking, door problems are usually minor but can be a nuisance.

Wooden interior doors aren't exposed to the elements, but they're still subject to seasonal climate changes. In humid weather, wooden doors can swell if there isn't enough room to accommodate expansion between the door and the frame. Inspect the door to make sure there aren't any loose hinge screws or deteriorated hinges that could be causing the problem. Tighten loose screws by first placing a door wedge on the latch end of the door to balance the weight. If the screws look OK but the door meets resistance when it closes, make a note of the tight spots. If a door starts sticking only during humid months or during the rainy season, it may need to be planed. Before you take this step, though, consider the fact that in a few months the problem may go away by itself.

To plane the door, you'll need a special carpenter's plane. A plane will scrape a small layer of wood off the door's edge the way a cheese plane removes a narrow slice from a block of cheese. Draw a line along the door at the spot where it's hitting the jamb or lintel. If the tight spot is located at the top of the door or on the handle end, you can plane the door without taking it off its hinges. Just be careful to make an angle cut first in order to avoid splintering the wood or veneer. If the tight spot is on the hinge end or bottom of the door, tap out the hinge pins with a hammer and screwdriver and set the door on its side to plane it. Since planing the hinge end may result in having to reset the hinges, make this step a last resort option.

Sticking or binding doors can sometimes cause squeaks because they put extra pressure on the hinges. Hinges can also get noisy when they begin to oxidize. If your door hinges announce

anyone entering or leaving the room, you might be able to silence them with a little lubricant. First, cover the area under the door with a cloth and then apply penetrating oil to the hinges. Be sparing at first. After applying a few drops, open and close the door to work lubricant into the moving parts of the hinge. Give it a couple of minutes, and try opening and closing the door one more time. If there's still a squeak, apply a few more drops and go through the process again. If oiling the hinges doesn't solve the problem, try cleaning the hinge pins. First, place a shim under the door for support and remove the hinge pins one at a time. Scour them with steel wool, and clean the pinholes with a small circular wire brush.

Let's proceed to the next page, where we'll talk about working with caulk.

3: Applying Caulk



Caulk is the bead of rubbery stuff between your tub, shower or sink and the wall, or between your toilet's outer rim and the floor. It creates a seal that protects floors and walls from moisture. It also glues itself in place, which makes applying it an easy one step process. Over time, caulk can discolor or deteriorate, leaving your home vulnerable to water damage and mold growth. The hardest part of installing caulk is removing the residue left by the old stuff. Without completely eliminating the old caulk, the new bead won't stick, so good preparation is important. In the old days, you had to remove caulk with a razor scraper, and it took a while to get it all up. Now, there are a number of products on the market that will soften old caulk and make it easier to remove. Treated caulk residue comes up easily with a putty knife. After the old caulk is gone, clean the area with paint thinner and let it dry completely. Now you're ready to move on to the installation process.

Using a caulking gun or standard tube of caulk takes a little practice. It's a bit like trying to draw a straight line using a tube of toothpaste. You have some choices here, though. Caulk is inexpensive, so you can buy extra and practice on a piece of plywood first. Be sure to cut the cone-shaped tip of the caulk cap on an angle and at a diameter that's large enough to accommodate the widest gap in your project.

If you don't have much confidence in your ability to lay down a smooth, even bead of caulk, there are caulk strips on the market that you simply unroll and press into place. They take the artistry out of the process but are a pretty foolproof solution if you want to do the job in a hurry and have a standard installation.

On the next page, we'll take a look at the challenges of fixing a leaking faucet.

The Cost of Home Maintenance

According to financial expert Eric Tyson, homeowners should set aside one percent of their home's value for annual maintenance and repairs [source: Tyson].

2: Repairing a Faucet Washer

Besides being annoying, leaky faucets can do some damage.

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Fixing a leaky faucet is one of the most common household repairs. It sounds like an insignificant problem, but all those drips add up. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) the average home wastes about 11,000 gallons (42 kiloliters) of water every year with assorted leaks and drips. Aside from that being enough of the wet stuff to fill a swimming pool, it's also wasted cash you could be using for better things [source: EPA].

If you want to stop a leaky faucet without expert intervention, the process can be pretty simple, depending on the type of faucet you have. Start by shutting off the water to the faucet. There's usually a shutoff valve somewhere nearby. If not, you can always temporarily shut off the water to the entire house and turn it back on again later. The house shut-off is often in a basement or laundry room.

Compression-type faucets are pretty common, so we'll address replacing washers on that faucet style. If you don't know what type of faucet you have, try to get the name of the manufacturer off the faucet itself. It may be somewhere on the handle or main faucet housing. Many manufacturers have Websites where you can identify your faucet and get information about replacement parts and comparable models.

You can complete a compression-type faucet washer replacement by following these steps:

- Unscrew the faucet handle and remove it. The screw may be hiding under a decorative metal or plastic cap, or at the back of the handle. For aesthetic reasons, the screw is probably concealed, but it's there, so keep looking.
- Remove the packing nut. You'll need pliers for this, and it may put up some resistance.
- Unscrew the valve stem and remove it from the housing.

- Take out the screw that holds the washer in place. If the washer's been in there a long time, you may need penetrating oil to loosen the screw.
- Remove the washer and examine it. If it hasn't deteriorated too much, you can use it as a template to help you locate a replacement. If the washer fell apart when you removed it, you may have to check the valve-body to get a better idea of the size washer you're looking for. Check the valve seat at the bottom of the valve body to determine whether the washer fits into a space with straight or angled walls, too. If you've identified your faucet make and model, you'll be able to find the right washer using that information and may even be able to locate a washer made specifically for your model by the manufacturer.
- Source a replacement washer at your home improvement retailer or plumbing supplier. Your retailer will also have generic washer kits that include dozens of washers in different shapes and sizes. Having a kit on hand may help with your next plumbing project.
- Once you've located a new washer, reverse the steps you took to remove the old one to complete the installation.

Deteriorated washers account for most faucet leaks, but in a small percentage of cases, the washer won't completely eliminate the leak because another part of the faucet may be worn. In most instances, addressing a leak by changing out the washer is the most logical place to start diagnosing the problem.

1: Unplugging a Clogged Toilet



Nobody likes it, but sometime or another, every homeowner is faced with a toilet that backs up. Consider it a rite of passage. Toilet problems are stressful because there's usually some urgency involved.

The first order of business is not to panic. Instead, become a detective and determine whether or not any foreign object may have ended up in the toilet bowl by accident. Households with young children are very prone to toilets that play host to all manner of toys. If this is the case, you may be able to put on some sturdy gloves and just fish the object out. You can also try waiting for the water in the toilet to drop to a normal level and then pour a bucket of water into the bowl. The added pressure will often dislodge blockages and send them on their way. If that doesn't work, use a plunger to clear the toilet. Flanged plungers are best for toilet clogs because they make a better seal and increase the amount of pressure you send down into the discharge siphon tube. Accordion style plungers are effective, too. Just make sure that the suction cup is completely covered with water before you start plunging. Add water to the bowl if you have to.

Another choice for clearing clogs is to dislodge them using a plumbing snake, or closet auger, a length of coiled metal that you can thread from the toilet bowl down through the serpentine piping of the toilet to free anything trapped there. Snakes are relatively inexpensive options that are available at your home improvement outlet.

If these options don't work, most plumbing supply stores carry compressed air or carbon dioxide cartridge delivery tools that will provide stronger pressure than a standard plunger to clear clogs. They're more expensive than plungers, but are a lot less costly than hiring a plumber. As a last resort, you can uninstall the toilet, upend it and get at the clog that way. There's definitely a gross out factor involved here, but it might be better than a large plumbing bill. Actually, most toilets are relatively easy to disconnect. After you've unbolted the tank from the bowl, the bowl is typically attached to the floor with hold down bolts and sits on a wax collar. Once the bolts have been removed and you've removed the caulk around the base, it isn't hard to get the toilet off the collar and onto a plastic tarp for easy access.

Cushion the area under the tarp with an old blanket to avoid cracking the toilet when you set it down, and cover the drain opening to keep gas from escaping into the room. You'll also want to replace the wax collar before reinstalling the toilet. Toilet removal isn't complicated, but toilets are heavy, so make sure you have a helper.

3. What Are The Household Maintenance Activities to Perform Regularly?

Whether your home is small and simple or expansive and high-tech, you'll need to routinely maintain it. Regular home maintenance is a key part of homeownership, ensuring that your home is in excellent shape year-round. Think of home maintenance as investment protection. Not only will it keep you and your family comfortable, but it will also prevent your home's value from declining.

Some home maintenance tasks are very DIY-friendly—things like cleaning your siding and testing your smoke detector. Leave the more complex tasks to a professional. As the seasons change, routinely check off the items on this list.

Fall

1. Check and Clean Heating Systems



Hire a professional to inspect your heating system before the cold weather arrives. They will test the furnace and thermostat to make sure the system is working, change air filters and test radiators as needed.

If you have a fireplace, clean it thoroughly and consider hiring a chimney sweep. A dirty chimney can cause house fires.

2. Test Smoke, Carbon Monoxide Detectors

Come winter, you'll probably be using your furnace regularly. If it isn't working properly, a furnace can spew out harmful chemicals, like carbon monoxide, and cause fires. Keep your family safe by regularly testing your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and replacing old batteries. It's also a good idea to check that your fire extinguisher works.

3. Seal Windows and Doors

Keeping your home warm in the winter is a necessity. It's nearly impossible to do that with cracks in your windows and doors allowing frigid air to seep inside. Take time in the fall to either seal cracks yourself or hire a professional to do it for you.

4. Drain Sprinkler Systems and Outdoor Water Features

Draining your sprinkler systems and other outdoor water sources, like ponds and fountains, will prevent them from freezing over in the winter. Because water expands when frozen, it can cause dangerous explosions and destroy equipment if left unchecked.

5. Clean Gutters

Falling leaves and other debris can build up in your gutters. When it rains, that debris blocks water from flowing down and away from your house, allowing it to pool on your roof which could damage it and lead to leaks. Clean your gutters regularly to prevent this problem.

Winter

6. Clean Dryer Exhaust Duct

Ideally, you should do this more than once a year. Lint buildup in your clothes dryer exhaust duct can prevent your dryer from drying clothes efficiently and even cause house fires. If your duct is accessible, you may be able to clean it yourself without hiring a pro. Make sure to vacuum every nook and cranny.

7. Vacuum Refrigerator Coils

The condenser coils on the back or bottom of your refrigerator push heat out to keep the inside of the fridge cool. Vacuum them at least once a year to get rid of dust and debris, which will keep the appliance running smoothly.

8. Clean Interior Spaces

Instead of using the cold weather as an excuse to be lazy, use it as an opportunity to complete indoor home maintenance tasks. Deep clean interior spaces, including the garage, basement and bathrooms. While you're at it, check for leaks.

Spring

9. Check Roof for Damage

It's especially important to assess damage to your roof if you live in an area that experiences harsh winter weather. Climb up on a ladder if you can and inspect the roof for any dents or holes. Remove any debris, like branches, while you're up there and consider trimming trees back if they're too close to the house.

If you notice any sagging spots in your roof, or other visible roof damage, call a roofer to repair it as soon as possible to prevent permanent damage. And if you do need to repair or replace your roof, spring and summer are the best seasons to get it done.

10. Hire a Pro to Inspect HVAC System

Your air conditioning system is sure to get a workout once warm summer temperatures arrive. Make sure it's in good working order by hiring an HVAC professional to inspect it, change filters, and make necessary repairs. That way, you'll be prepared for whatever the summer brings.

11. Make Driveway Repairs

Like your roof, your driveway takes a beating when hit with winter storms. A windblown tree branch can do significant damage to any surface with enough power.

In the spring, take the time to inspect your driveway for damage (cracks, potholes, unevenness) and repair it. Your driveway will get heavy use in the summer, so repairing it now will prevent future trips and falls.

Summer

12. Flush Hot Water Heater



Flush your hot water heater annually to remove sediment buildup in the tank. This will keep your water heater running efficiently, prevent leaks, and extend the life of the appliance. Maintaining your water heater regularly prevents costly water heater repairs or replacements in the future.

13. Seal Decks

Before winter rolls around, seal your deck or patio. Sealing it protects the structure from harsh winter weather. Do this once a year if you live in a wet climate. If it's dry where you live, you can get away with doing it once every three years.

14. Repair and Paint Siding

Your home's exterior can take a beating throughout the year. To ensure your siding lasts as long as possible while still looking as good as new, inspect it annually and address the damage.

Repair cracks, holes and warping in your siding and add a fresh coat of paint every year or two.

15. Clean Carpets

The best time to clean your carpets is at the end of the summer. You and your family members have probably tracked in dirt and allergens all season long, so give your floors a refresh by vacuuming, steaming, and shampooing the carpets. Don't forget your rugs, either. If you can't clean them yourself, take them to a professional who can.

4. Essential Tips for Every Homeowner

Few things are more exciting than leaping from being a renter to being a first-time homeowner. Getting swept up in all the excitement is a wonderful feeling, but some first-time homeowners lose their heads and make mistakes that can jeopardize everything they've worked so hard to earn.

Following a series of practical steps early in the homeowning experience can save new owners time, money, and effort later down the road.

Don't Overspend to Personalize

You've just handed over a large portion of your life savings for a down payment, closing costs, and moving expenses. Money is tight for most first-time homeowners. Not only are their savings depleted, but their monthly expenses are also often higher as well, thanks to the new costs that come with homeownership, such as water and trash bills and extra insurance.

Everyone wants to personalize a new home and upgrade what may have been temporary apartment furniture for something nicer, but don't go on a massive spending spree to improve everything all at once. Just as crucial as getting your first home is staying in it, and as nice as solid maple kitchen cabinets might be, they aren't worth jeopardizing your new status as a homeowner.

Give yourself time to adjust to homeownership's expenses and rebuild your savings—the cabinets will still be waiting for you when you can more comfortably afford them.

Don't Ignore Important Maintenance

One of the new expenses that accompany homeownership is making repairs. There's no landlord to call if your roof is leaking or your toilet is clogged. To look at the positive side, there's also no rent increase notice taped to your door on a random Friday afternoon.

While you should exercise restraint in purchasing the nonessentials, you shouldn't neglect any problem that puts you in danger or could worsen over time. Delay can turn a relatively small problem into a much larger and costlier one. One way to protect yourself against potential maintenance issues is to have a potential home inspected before buying it.

Hire Qualified Contractors

Don't try to save money by making improvements and repairs you aren't qualified to make. This may seem to contradict the first point slightly, but it doesn't. Your home is both the place where you live and an investment. It deserves the same level of care and attention you would give to anything else you value highly.



There's nothing wrong with painting the walls yourself, but if there's no wiring for an electric opener in your garage, don't cut a hole in the wall and start playing with copper wiring. Hiring professionals to do work you don't know how to do is the best way to keep your home in top condition and avoid injuring—or even killing—yourself. Also, be sure to check with the local building authority and pull any necessary permits to complete the work.

Get Help With Your Tax Return

Even if you hate the thought of spending money on an accountant when you usually do your tax returns yourself, it can pay off. And even if you are feeling broke from buying that house, don't scrimp on tax preparation. Hiring an accountant to ensure you complete your return correctly and maximize your refund is a good idea. Homeownership significantly changes most people's tax situations and the deductions they are eligible to claim.

Just getting your taxes done by a professional for one year can give you a template to use in future years if you want to continue doing your taxes yourself.

Keep Receipts for Improvements

When you sell your home, you can use these costs to increase your home's basis, which can help you maximize your tax-free earnings on your home's sale. In 2008, you could have earned

up to \$250,000 tax-free from the sale of your home if it was your primary residence and you had lived there for at least two of five years before you sold it.

This deduction assumes that you owned the home alone—if you owned it jointly with a spouse, you could each have gotten the \$250,000 exemption.¹

Let's say you purchased your home for \$150,000 and were able to sell it for \$450,000. You've also made \$20,000 in home improvements over the years you've lived in the home. If you haven't saved your receipts, your basis in the house, or the amount you originally paid for your investment, it is \$150,000. You take your \$250,000 exemption on the proceeds and are left with \$50,000 of taxable income on the sale of your home.

However, if you saved all \$20,000 of your receipts, your basis would be \$170,000, and you would only pay taxes on \$30,000. That's a considerable saving. In this case, it would be \$5,000 if your marginal tax rate is 25%.

Repairs vs. Improvements

Unfortunately, not all home expenses are treated equally to determine your home's basis. The IRS considers repairs to be part and parcel of homeownership, which preserves the home's original value but does not enhance its value.

This may not always seem true. For example, if you bought a foreclosure and had to fix a lot of broken stuff, the home is worth more after you fix those items, but the IRS doesn't care—you did get a discount on the purchase price because of those unmade repairs, after all. It's only improvements, like replacing the roof or adding central air conditioning, which will help decrease your future tax bill when you sell your home.

For gray areas (like remodeling your bathroom because you had to bust open the wall to repair some old, failed plumbing), consult IRS Publication 530 or your accountant. And on a non-tax-related note, don't trick yourself into thinking it's OK to spend money on something because it's a necessary "repair" when in truth, it's a fun improvement. That isn't good for your finances.

Get Properly Insured

Your mortgage lender requires you not only to purchase homeowners insurance but also to purchase enough to fully replace the property in the event of a total loss. But that's not the only insurance coverage you need as a homeowner.

If you share your home with anyone who relies on your income to pay the mortgage, you'll need life insurance with that person named as a beneficiary so that they won't lose the house if you die unexpectedly.

Similarly, you'll want to have disability-income insurance to replace your income if you become so disabled that you can't work.

Also, once you own a home, you have more to lose in the event of a lawsuit, so you'll want to make sure you have excellent car insurance coverage. If you are self-employed as a sole proprietor, you may want to consider forming a corporation, which will give you significant legal protection of your assets.

You may also want to purchase an umbrella policy that picks up where your other policies leave off. If you are found at fault in a car accident with a judgment of \$1 million against you and your car insurance only covers the first \$250,000, an umbrella policy can pick up the rest of the slack. These policies are usually issued in units of \$1 million.

The Bottom Line

With the great freedom of owning your own home comes significant responsibilities. It would help if you managed your finances well enough to keep the house and maintain the home's condition well enough to protect your investment and keep your family safe. Don't let the excitement of being a new homeowner lead you to bad decisions or oversights that jeopardize your financial or physical security.

5. How Can You Create a Seasonal Maintenance Checklist to Stay Organized and on Top of Tasks?

Keeping up with household chores is a never-ending process. It can be exhausting to spruce up every nook and cranny of a home.



However, with a streamlined process, you can tackle accumulated dust, stained carpets, dirty floors, greasy cooktops and germ-laden bathrooms. That's why professional end of lease cleaners in Sydney pay attention to a proven cleaning process to manage different tasks without any chaos. They clean according to the standard checklist and help you get the full bond back without any rental dispute.

Today, you will learn about the seven essential steps in a cleaning process to help achieve a spotless home like a pro. Make sure you have stock up on all the necessary supplies to fight stubborn stains, mould and grime.

Let's Get Started!

De-Cluttering And Organising

It is always good to begin the process by de-cluttering your rooms. Get rid of household items you no longer need. This includes old clothing, furniture pieces, books, magazines, empty bottles, jars, expired products, etc.

According to professional end of lease cleaners in Sydney, a clutter-free and organised home reduces the amount of accumulated dust and debris. It can also help maintain a dust-free and spacious abode. Here are some quick de-cluttering and organising tips:

- Take one room or closet at a time
- De-clutter and organise your kitchen pantry once every two months
- Toss expired and empty bottles from bathroom cabinets
- Sort household items into different categories: Keep, Donate or Toss
- Donate pre-loved household items to the local charity
- Dispose of chemicals and waste
- Opt for creative storage options, such as wall-mounted racks, ottomans and beds with built-in drawers, to keep you organised

Getting rid of clutter can save you a lot of cleaning time and make the job easy.

Dusting And Vacuuming Surfaces

The second step of the house cleaning process is dusting hard surfaces. There is no denying that dust particles, debris, pet hair, pollen and other allergens settle on hard surfaces and pollute the indoor air quality.

This can lead to various health concerns, including eye irritation, headaches, respiratory diseases, nose and throat infection, dizziness and fatigue. It can even trigger asthma or chronic allergic symptoms if you don't remove indoor air pollutants from your home. That's why professionals start the budget end of lease cleaning Sydney process by dusting and vacuuming surfaces.

If you promote a healthy home, wipe down the surfaces using a proper tool using a microfiber cloth or duster. It can trap the tiniest dust, pollen and pet hair from all surfaces. When it comes to dusting blinds, floor coverings and tight spaces, use a vacuum machine with a HEPA filter. It can trap 99.9 per cent of dust particles and pet dander. According to professionals, start with the highest surfaces, such as:

- Air filters
- Ceiling fans: Use a pillowcase to remove dust
- Walls and light fixtures: Remove cobwebs and insect marks
- Windows: Sills, tracks and vacuum blinds
- Shelves and cabinets
- Door Tracks
- Furniture
- Carpets
- Baseboards

Tackling Stains: Mild To Stubborn



The next step is to eliminate visible stains, built-up grease, grime, soap scum, mineral deposits and other stains. Ensure you understand the science of cleaning and learn the duo of solvents and scrubbing techniques.

It is good to avoid using store-bought or traditional cleaners as they contain hazardous chemicals, such as ammonia, sodium hydroxide, TSP and other Volatile Organic Compounds that can pollute the ecosystem and cause various health problems. Instead, use eco-friendly solvents that are super easy to prepare. These can tackle stained surfaces, including countertops, windows, kitchen appliances, painted walls, grout lines, bathroom fixtures and much more. You can use:

- White Vinegar as an all-purpose cleaner to remove stains
- Baking soda: It works wonders in removing greasy and oily stains
- Hydrogen peroxide: Kills mould, mildew and other stains
- Castile Soap: It can help you remove water stains and grime
- Magic erasers: To remove scuff marks from walls

Tip: Use a rubber squeegee to remove excess water and achieve streak-free windows.

Deep Clean Kitchen And Bathrooms

The kitchen and bathrooms are breeding grounds for lethal germs and bacteria in your home. Make sure you pay special attention to these areas when scrubbing stains, mould and grime. Take a step forward and focus on the following tasks:

Kitchen Cleaning:

- Clean microwave, oven and BBQ inside and out
- Remove stains from countertops and stovetops
- Unclog drains
- Remove gunk from sink and faucets

Bathroom Cleaning:

- Remove soap scum from shower recess, glass doors, walls and bathtub
- Clean the toilet bowl
- Scrub the sink and faucet
- Wipe down counters

You can also hire professionals for a detailed spring cleaning Sydney to maintain a shiny abode.

Clean Carpets And Rugs

Believe it or not! Delicate floor coverings are often overlooked during the house cleaning process. Apart from vacuuming, make sure you treat spills and splatters proactively. Instead of scrubbing or rubbing stains, spray white vinegar solution and blot the area with a clean cloth. Repeat and sprinkle baking soda to freshen up your carpets and rugs. Steam cleaning is also one of the best techniques to keep your floor coverings clean and shiny all year round.

Sweep And Mop Floors

In this step, sweep and mop your hardwood floors. If you have already vacuumed, tackle spills or mop the floor using a microfiber mop and warm, soapy water. Avoid using excess water as it can damage the floorings. You can also spot clean using Vinegar.

Read on the tips to get paint off hardwood floors without causing any damage.

Disinfect High-Touch Areas



After removing stains, focus on disinfecting high-touch areas to keep germs and bacteria at bay and maintain hygiene at home. This is the last step when sprucing up your home. Use rubbing alcohol as a natural disinfectant to spruce up the following spots:

- Doorknobs
- Light switches
- Appliances knobs and handles
- Bed frames
- Pet bowls
- Kid toys
- Electronic devices and remote controls
- Toilet handles
- Faucets
- Kitchen sponges
- Sinks

However, if you are at the end of your lease, book experts for a meticulous end of lease cleaning Sydney and save your energy. They will do all the back-break chores to help secure full bond money.

Wrapping Up

Maintaining a regular house cleaning schedule becomes easy with this guide. You can follow these steps and clean your home in an organised manner. This will help provide a healthy and hygienic home environment for your family.

Bottom Line

Maintaining your home on a budget is entirely possible with the right approach and strategies. By prioritizing tasks, embracing DIY repairs, sourcing affordable supplies, and knowing when to hire professionals, you can keep your home in excellent condition without overspending. Additionally, implementing energy-efficient upgrades and regular preventative measures will save you money in the long run.

Use this guide as your go-to resource for practical and economical home maintenance, ensuring your home remains a comfortable and well-maintained space for years to come.

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