

32 Super Easy Home Maintenance Tips That Will Save You BIG Money

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There's no doubt about it, being a homeowner is a big job.

If you've rented in the past — or owned a [home with an HOA](#) — you probably didn't realize how much maintenance you *weren't* doing on your home. At our apartment complex, the maintenance crew took care of the yard work, regularly cleaned the gutters, pressure-washed the buildings, turned our outdoor faucets on and off with the season, replaced A/C filters, tuned up our HVAC system, and more.

Now, we're stuck with all these jobs [because we're homeowners](#). If you're like us, you can't afford (or don't want to mess with) outsourcing every home maintenance task you need to get done. Luckily, basic home maintenance tasks don't cost much money or time. And you can save money by staying on top of tasks like these.



According to [*Get Rich Slowly*'s JD Roth](#), every \$1 spent on home maintenance could help you avoid up to \$100 of repairs down the road. JD's home inspector says that in many cases, homeowners could have avoided thousands of dollars' worth of damage with only \$10 and a few minutes.

Related: [6 Unexpected Expenses Every Homeowner Should Know About](#)

So, if you're ready to start some relatively easy home maintenance this weekend, pick one or more of these money saving home maintenance tips, and get to it.

Save Energy to Save Money

Saving energy is one of the best ways to save money over the life of your home.

The first step is to conduct an energy audit. A home energy audit helps you figure out where you're losing the most energy, so you can tackle high-priority problems first.

Many local utility companies offer a free or cheap home energy auditing service, so be sure to look into that option. If you can't get a free audit, try the [Residential Energy](#)

[Services Network](#) for information on how to find a certified home energy auditor near you.

Another option is to do the home energy audit yourself. The U.S. Department of Energy offers helpful information on [DIY home energy audits](#). This is a really good place to begin. Energy.gov also has a great [infographic on home energy audits](#), which includes information on how much you might save by having your home audited or doing an audit yourself.

Finally, watch [this video](#) for a step-by-step guide to a home energy audit. Once you've completed your audit, continue with some of these money-saving maintenance tips.

Heat and Cool More Efficiently

The [Department of Energy](#) notes that about 54 percent of the typical homeowner's utilities bills are heating and cooling costs. If you can save on heating and cooling your home, you can trim a lot of money off your overall utility payments.

Resource: [20 Inexpensive Ways to Lower Utility Bills](#)

Luckily, there are many simple ways to save on heating and cooling:

1. Install a Programmable Thermostat

Programmable thermostats have been around for years, but they're getting more high-tech every day. You could install a basic programmable thermostat, which is helpful if you remember to set it and stick to the program as much as possible.

If you'd like something a bit more high-tech, check out the [Nest learning thermostat](#), which learns your living patterns and programs itself. Other, [more affordable thermostats](#) have similar learning mechanisms. Plus, many of today's programmable thermostats can be controlled wirelessly and remotely, through smartphone and tablet apps.

You probably don't need to hire someone to install your programmable thermostat. Just take proper precautions, as you'll be working with electrical wiring, and watch [this video](#) for help.

2. Install Ceiling Fans

Another basic way to save on heating and cooling is to install ceiling fans, especially on the upper floors of your home where heat tends to gather at the ceiling. Energy-efficient ceiling fans can move air to help you feel cooler in the summer. They can also push much-needed heat down to the floor in the cold winter months.

As long as you use an energy-efficient ceiling fan (look for Energy Star ratings) and change your thermostat settings to reflect the use of your ceiling fans, i.e., set the air conditioner up a few degrees because the fan will help you feel cooler, ceiling fans can save you money.

Installing a ceiling fan is a more complicated DIY project, but it's doable if you have a little experience with electrical work. Again, take proper precautions and be sure you understand each step of the process thoroughly. If you aren't confident, hire an electrician to install your fans.

[This video](#) walks you through the steps to wire and install a ceiling fan where a light (or older ceiling fan) used to be.

3. Reverse Ceiling Fans

If you've ever looked closely at a ceiling fan, you've seen that the blades are tilted. This means that when rotating in one direction, a ceiling fan will pull air up. When rotating in the other direction, the fan will push air down.

Each setting is appropriate at different times and temperatures, and ceiling fans are typically easy to reverse. [This video](#) shows you how to reverse your ceiling fans.

Insulation is Everything

When it comes to saving money on heating and cooling, insulation is everything. Lack of insulation — whether in the attic, in your walls, or around windows, doors, and other inside-to-outside openings — means you're throwing away money every time you turn on the air conditioner or furnace.

In fact, [according to Energy.gov](#), the average home has enough tiny, uninsulated openings to add up to about a 2-foot-square hole. That's the same as leaving a mid-sized window open.

Luckily, sealing gaps that lead to air leakage isn't difficult. Here are some projects to tackle on your own:

4. Apply Weather Stripping

Doors and windows typically come with what's known as weather stripping. These are lengths of rubber or metal that seal gaps, while still allowing the window or door to open and shut properly.

However, lower-end windows and doors may not come with weather stripping all the way around. Plus, weather stripping wears out. So, even if your doors and windows are sufficiently weather stripped, this is something you'll have to redo regularly.

Weather stripping isn't just for doors and windows. You can also use it in other drafty areas, too, such as around air conditioners and inside-to-outside gaps.

[This video](#) outlines the different types of weather stripping and talks about how to install it properly.

5. Add Extra Insulation to Your Windows

If you have single-pane windows, which are less energy efficient, this is even *more* important. However, clear window insulation can be helpful even if you have super-efficient, triple-pane windows.

Take the time to do this project right, and you'll be able to see out of your windows perfectly while also weatherizing them. [This video](#) talks you through how to use a winter window insulation kit, which you can pick up at many superstores and nearly all hardware stores.

Another good — but much more expensive — option for insulating windows year-round is to use cellular shades, which make windows more energy efficient. Cellular shades look nice and come with blackout or light-filtering options.

6. Caulk Windows and Doors

Sometimes, you may want or need to use caulk, rather than weather stripping, to insulate around windows and doors. Caulk is very inexpensive and can be used indoors and outdoors to seal cracks between the door or window and its frame, or between the frame and the existing wall.

When you're shopping for caulk, be sure you get the right kind. Hardware stores will carry many types, so look for the caulk that's best for your application. In this example, window and door caulk is what you'll want. It's made to allow for the expansion and contraction of your home during weather variations.

Caulk also comes in a variety of colors, and you can paint most types of caulk to match the surrounding trim. Or you can just buy clear caulk.

[This video](#) shows you how to load a caulk gun (which you'll also need to buy, if you don't have one), as well as how to caulk around doors, windows, and other small gaps.

7. Use Expanding Foam Filler

Expanding foam filler, such as [Great Stuff Foam](#), is great for filling larger gaps. In [this video](#), the user needs to fill a gap behind a dishwasher. But if you install new windows and doors, or notice gaps of about one-half inch or larger around light fixtures, pipes, HVAC ducts and other areas, expanding foam filler is a great insulation option.

Foam filler isn't hard to use, but it can be messy, and it'll probably expand more than you think it will. Great Stuff Foam, which is the easiest-to-find brand in chain hardware stores, makes specific products for blocking fire hazards, insulating windows and doors, filling gaps and cracks, and more.

If you're insulating around doors and windows, use their softer window and door foam, which allows for expansion and contraction with the seasons. In fact, unless you're dealing with really, really large gaps, I'd recommend only using the window and door foam, which expands a bit less and is easier to control.

8. Seal HVAC Ducts

According to the [Department of Energy](#), the typical home loses about 20 percent of the air moving through HVAC ducts due to holes, poor connections, and lack of insulation.

Most ducts are made from sheet metal, which is easy to insulate and long-lasting, but which can also leak easily. If you have traditional ducts, sealing them can make a huge difference in your overall heating and cooling costs. [Here's a video on how.](#)

9. Insulate Your Water Heater and Pipes

Water heaters can lose quite a bit of heat. You can tell if your water heater needs insulation by simply touching it. If it feels warm on the outside, you could probably afford to insulate it.

Insulating a water heater is simple. You can buy a [pre-cut fiberglass insulation jacket](#) for your water heater for about \$20. You can also buy foam insulators for hot water pipes on the cheap.

[This video](#) talks about lowering your hot water heater's thermostat, insulating your water heater, and insulating your hot water pipes.

10. Add Insulation

While filling gaps and cracks is a form of insulation, you may also want to add insulation to your attic, walls, crawl space, or HVAC system.

This is one area where having a professional home inspection or energy audit can be helpful. Unless you know about these things, it's difficult to ascertain whether or not your home is properly insulated.

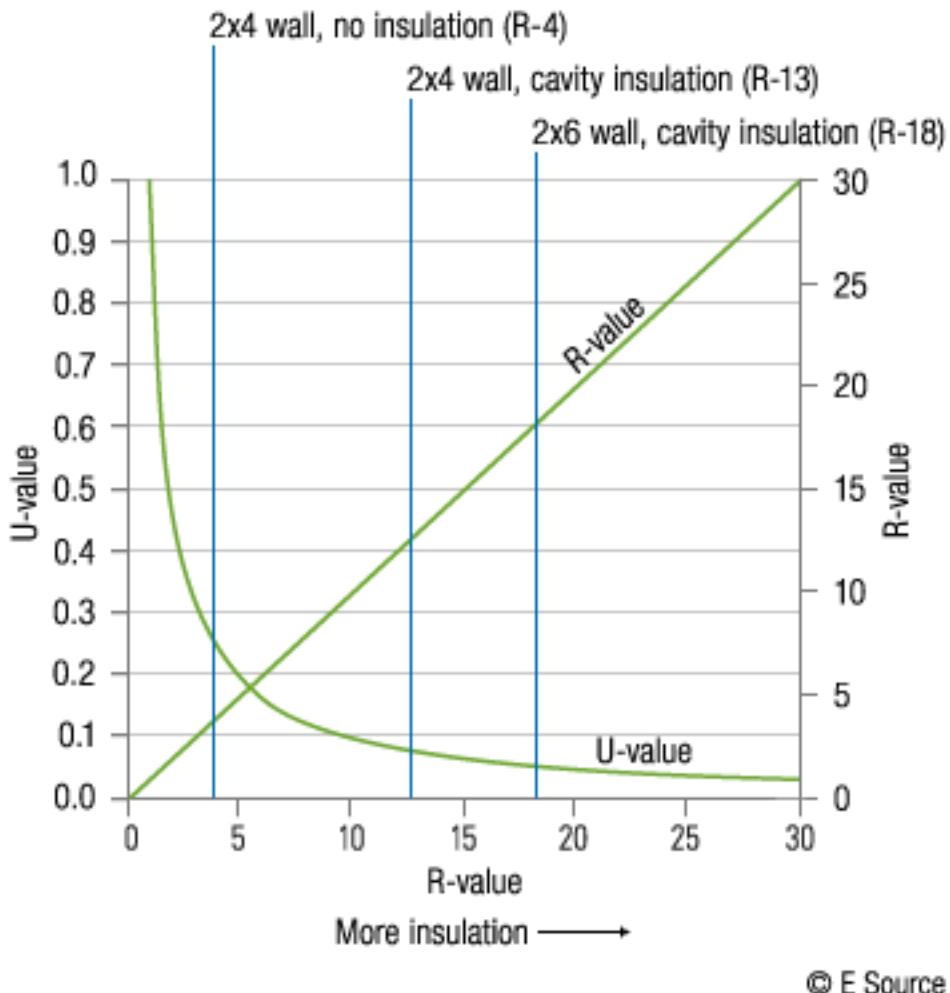
Chances are that if you have an old home, you don't have enough insulation unless someone has retrofitted it. In my home, which was built sometime around 1900, we found not a stitch of insulation in the walls when we tore out the lathe and plaster. The attic, though, was properly insulated well after the home was built.

When it comes to insulation, you'll need to learn about R-value. R-value is the insulation's level of resistance to heat flow. The goal of insulation is to slow the transfer of heat from inside the home to outside and vice versa.

Learn More: [15 Cool Ways to Save On Electricity](#)

The higher the R-value, the better the insulation. However, that doesn't mean that you need to buy the highest R-value on the market.

As this table from [Madison Gas and Electric](#) shows the law of diminishing returns applies. An R-value of 10 is significantly more efficient than an R-value of 5, but the higher the R-value gets, the less difference you'll notice.



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Stuffing too much insulation into a space is one of the worst things you can do. Most insulation works *with* the air in your walls or attic. By keeping the air in a space still, insulation prevents heat transfer.

Therefore, stuffing in so much insulation that there's no air left will actually *decrease* the effectiveness of the insulation. That's why batt insulation, for instance, comes in standard widths equal to the typical width between wall studs. When installing batt insulation in a wall, you should be able to just barely stuff a length of insulation between the studs.

While it's best to leave some insulation jobs to the pros, you can do some yourself, especially with the help of these videos. Here's what you need to know about installing different types of insulation in your attic, walls, crawl space, and HVAC ducts:

- [Install loose fill insulation in the attic](#)
- [Install batt insulation in the attic](#)
- [Blow foam insulation into existing walls](#)
- [Seal and insulate your crawl space](#)
- [Add or replace HVAC insulation](#)

Well-Maintained Appliances Save Energy

Keeping your appliances well-maintained helps them function better, which saves energy. Major appliances, such as your furnace, air conditioner, and washer/dryer should be serviced regularly by a professional.

Related: [How to Make the Most of Warranties on Appliances](#)

Sure, you may not enjoy paying for these annual or semi-annual visits, but you'll save money in the long run if you keep the appliances running at their peak efficiency. Plus, regular maintenance from a professional can catch small problems before they become expensive ones.

Besides having your appliances serviced regularly, you can do much of the maintenance by yourself. Here's how:

11. Regularly Change HVAC Filters

The filters for your heating and cooling systems should be changed once every month or two, depending on how much you're running your system. If you're running your furnace all the time in the dead of winter, or your A/C throughout the hottest summer months, you may want to change your filters every two weeks.

At minimum, make it a habit to change your filters every time you get an electricity or gas bill. That's a good reminder that will get you in the habit of regularly changing those out.

Clean filters make it easier for your HVAC system to circulate air, which makes the whole system more efficient. Plus, they're a super-cheap option for keeping your home as efficient as possible.

[Here's how](#) you change filters in your HVAC system.

12. Clean Fridge Coils

Even an Energy Star-rated fridge can be an energy-sucker if it's not maintained properly. Most fridges these days have refrigerant coils on the back. The coolant in these coils is what keeps your fridge cold, by pulling warmth out of the fridge. (But let's not get into [the physics](#) here!)

Keeping the fridge coils clean helps heat and cold exchange more efficiently. Plus, those dust bunnies that tend to collect around the fridge coils are just gross. So, add [this task](#) to your semi-annual fall and spring cleaning list. It takes five minutes and can save you lots of money.

Related: [10 Ways to Spring Clean Your Finances](#)

13. Replace Fridge Door Seals

Here's a trick to try: Grab a dollar bill and close your fridge door on it. With the fridge firmly closed, try to pull the dollar bill out. If it stays put or is very difficult to get out, you're good. But if it slides out easily, your money is slipping right out of your fridge in the form of energy lost.

The door seals — or gaskets — on fridges break down over time, usually well before the fridge reaches the end of its useful life. To replace the fridge seal, simply order the right gasket for your fridge. (You can find the fridge's model number on the back or inside the door).

Then, follow [these instructions](#) to replace the gasket in your fridge door.

14. Flush and Clean Your Hot Water Heater

Regardless of how clean your water is, it has sediment in it. And that sediment over time settles at the bottom of your water heater, causing expensive problems down the road. You can avoid some of these issues if you flush and clean your water heater annually.

Flushing and cleaning a water heater is similar, regardless of whether you have a gas or electric heater. The following video talks specifically about draining and cleaning a gas water heater. The only difference with an electric heater is that you'll need to unplug it or cut off the electricity to the heater at your electrical box.

You'll want to be careful here, because you'll be dealing with very hot water.
Watch [this video](#) to learn how to clean out your water heater.

15. Clean Your Dryer Vent

Have you ever noticed how it takes your clothes longer to dry if you forget to clean out the lint trap? Then imagine the effect that built-up lint in the dryer vent can have.

Cleaning your dryer vent isn't difficult, and it should be on your regular home maintenance list. According to the Consumer Energy Center, clothes dryers are typically the second highest energy using appliances, next to the fridge. So, you want to keep your dryer working as efficiently as possible.

[This video](#) talks about cleaning your dryer vents thoroughly to boost your dryer's efficiency. Other ways to save on drying your clothes include line drying for all or part of the drying time and putting your dryer in a heated part of your home. (In a cold area of the house, the dryer will have to work harder to dry clothes!)

16. Clean Your Air Conditioner

Whether you have central air or use window-mounted units, keeping the A/C clean helps it stay efficient. Plus, cleaning your air conditioner isn't really that difficult.

Often, your annual maintenance visit will include some basic cleaning of your A/C unit. But you may still want to clean the unit regularly, especially in the spring before you turn it on. And remember, you can help your A/C unit stay as efficient as possible by keeping bushes and debris well away from the air conditioner condenser coils.

These videos show you how to clean both a [central air conditioner unit](#) and a [window unit](#).

17. Drain and Clean Humidifier

If you have central heating, you likely have a built-in humidifier, which will help your home be more comfortable during winter. Humidifiers are a great addition to your home, but they can also cause serious air quality problems if they aren't maintained properly.

In summer, you should turn off your humidifier because the air is already more humid than in winter. When you turn off your humidifier, you'll want to drain and clean it to keep mold and mildew from forming. Once you drain and clean your humidifier, you can also change the evaporation pad, which needs to be done annually.

[This video](#) tells you how to turn off your humidifier, how to change the evaporation pad, and how to clean and maintain your humidifier.

Saving Water Helps, Too

Saving energy isn't the only way to save money. Even if you don't pay much for water in your municipality, you'll do the environment a favor when you perform these basic water-saving home maintenance tasks.

Resource: [31 Greatest Money Rules of Thumb to Follow](#)

18. Check Your Toilet for Leaks

Some toilet leaks are obvious, because water is actually leaking onto the floor. But sometimes, your toilet can leak from the tank into the toilet, which wastes water over time.

Checking the toilet for leaks is easy, and fixing those leaks is simple. [This video](#) shows how to check your toilet for leaks using nothing but food coloring. If your toilet is leaking, you may need to call a plumber to fix the issue.

19. Check and Repair Faucets

Like toilet leaks, faucet leaks can waste lots of water, so check for them regularly. You'll likely notice leaky faucets in often-used areas of your home. However, you should still make it a habit to regularly check faucets in less-used areas, like guest bathrooms.

Again, it's likely you can fix the leak in your faucet on your own, if you have a bit of basic know-how. If you have questions about fixing your faucet, plumbing supply centers and the plumbing sections of hardware stores can be a good place to get answers.

[This video](#) details how to fix different a leaky faucet.

Note: If you install new faucets or have someone else install them, be sure to keep your manufacturer's instructions. They can be helpful in fixing broken parts.

20. Check and Repair Washing Machine Lines

One oft-missed area where leaks can occur is in washing machine lines. Supply lines can leak if you don't tighten them regularly. And because your washing machine supply lines are probably hidden, it's easy to miss these leaks. This not only wastes water, but may help mold and mildew to grow around and behind the washer.

Make a habit of starting a load of laundry and watching the supply lines for leaks at least once a month. If you see leaks, follow the advice on [this video](#) to repair the supply line.

21. Clean Your Washing Machine

Cleaning your washing machine is a bit more important if you have a front-loading machine. However, it can be a good thing to do even if you have a top-loading machine.

Front-loading machines have a tendency to gather water in the door seal, which is exposed to water throughout the wash cycle. If you don't regularly clean the seal, mold and mildew can grow. Once it's there, it can be difficult to eradicate. In fact, I know someone who had to completely replace their front-loading machine because it became too mildewy to repair. Regularly cleaning your washing machine can help it be as efficient as possible and can also mean replacing your machine less often.

Note: With a front-loading machine, leave the machine open to dry after each load and wipe down the inside of the machine and the seal every couple of loads.

Here's [how to clean a top-loading machine](#). And here's [how to clean a front-loading machine](#).

Ward Off Water Damage

Repairing water damage can be quite expensive. And, contrary to popular belief, your [homeowners insurance](#) may not cover water damage. If slow, insidious leaks that you could have repaired damage your home, your insurance company may not cover damages.

This is why it's essential that you regularly inspect your home for potential leaks and places where water damage might become an issue. You can also prevent water damage by keeping your gutters and roof in good repair and by dealing with dampness wherever you find it.

Related: [Would Your Home Be Covered If It Flooded?](#)

22. Inspect and Repair Your Roof

Your roof will need to be replaced every ten to twenty years, depending on what material it's made of. By regularly inspecting your roof, you'll catch the need for repairs — or replacement — before you start having leaks that damage your home.

Inspecting your roof means getting out on it and looking at it firsthand. Even if you aren't an expert, you can learn to notice potential trouble spots and to see if your roof needs to be replaced soon. *Hint:* Asphalt shingles will start to curl at the edges when they need to be replaced.

When you inspect your roof, look for places where the flashing needs to be replaced or where you're developing a hole in the roof. And while you're up there, check to see if your gutters need to be cleaned or repaired.

[This video](#) walks you through inspecting your roof and making common, minor repairs.

23. Clean Gutters and Downspouts

A functional gutter system is essential for keeping water directed well away from your home's foundation. Of course, this means less water in your basement or crawlspace. If your gutters are clogged with debris, the water will run out the sides rather than through the downspouts.

Gutters should be cleaned regularly — at *least* in the fall, if not twice a year. And as you clean your gutters, take the opportunity to ensure that they're properly attached to your house. The roof should lap over the edge of the gutter so that water runs into the gutter rather than between the roof and the gutter.

Heavy snowfall or rain, along with regular wear and tear, can cause gutters to pull away from your home. Gutters can also wear out over time and need to be replaced.

The following videos give you advice on how to take care of the most common gutter-related issues:

- [Clean your gutters](#)
- [Replace old, worn gutters](#)
- [Repair leaking gutters](#)
- [Tighten loose gutters](#)

24. Replace Roof Flashing

Flashing is a strip of metal that keeps water from penetrating the sections where one piece of your roof meets another. If you have a pyramid-style roof with no chimney, your roof may not have lots of flashing. If your roof is more complicated and involves more joints, it should have flashing in all of the joints where water may penetrate.

When you examine your roof, be sure that all the flashing is properly installed and in good repair. If not, you can repair the flashing using tips from [this video](#).

25. Extend Your Downspouts

When you've finished reading this article, head outside and look at your downspouts. Do all of your gutters drain into downspouts? Do those downspouts lead far away from the foundation of your home?

Some downspouts end practically at the foundation, when the whole point of a gutter system is to keep water away from your home's foundation. So, unless you're collecting water in rain barrels to water your garden, you should extend your downspouts so that they direct water away from your home's foundation.

[This video](#) shows you several easy-to-use options for extending your downspouts.

26. Deal With Dampness in the Basement

While your basement isn't the only place you're likely to find dampness, it's the most common place. Sometimes, water seeps in through the foundation, even if you don't have a true leak. Other times, the basement is simply much more humid than the rest of the house.

In the second case, you may need to install a dehumidifier that drains into your basement's sump pump. (You *do* have a sump pump in the basement, don't you?) If your basement is truly leaky, you'll need to take further steps to waterproof your basement. This will help you avoid more problems down the road.

[This video](#) outlines one way to waterproof a basement. It can be quite a complicated project, so you may want to hire a professional, especially if you're planning to finish a damp basement.

27. Make Sure Your A/C Drains Well

Your air conditioner's condenser drain is meant to funnel water out, away from your A/C unit and your home's walls. A clogged air conditioner drain, or one that's not long enough, can cause condensation to back up. The result is wet walls or carpet near your air conditioner. If you're dealing with water, first make sure that the condensation line is directed away from your carpet and walls.

28. Check and Repair Caulk As Needed

We already talked about caulking around windows and doors to prevent air leaks. Well, caulking can also prevent water from seeping into your window and door frames and causing damage.

If you look around your house carefully, you'll notice caulk everywhere. It's especially common around bath tubs, sinks, and other wet areas. In these areas, caulk helps protect from water leakage. For instance, the caulk around the edge of your tub keeps water from seeping between your tub surround and the wall.

Over time, caulk can dry out and crack, so that it no longer protects against water damage. If you notice cracking caulk, scrape out the old stuff and recaulk the area, as needed.

[This video](#) shows you how to recaulk your bathtub, but the principle is the same for other places that might need new caulk.

Stay on Top of Future Maintenance Tasks

Finally, some home maintenance is more about *noticing* problems than it is about actual maintenance. When it comes to things like a cracking foundation, pest infestations, and dry rot, the earlier you catch a problem, the easier and cheaper it will be to fix.

For that reason, you need to be sure that you're regularly examining your home — inside and out, top to bottom — for potential problems. Some of these issues you can fix, while others will require a professional touch. But if you do need a professional, you'll likely pay less if you notice the problem early than if you wait until the situation is dire.

29. Examine the Outside of Your Home

Make a habit of walking around your home, looking for potential problems. Issues are most likely to occur with exposed wood, where rot and insect infestations can set in. But you'll also want to regularly check the foundation of your home for cracks.

You can expect some minor cracking, especially on an older home. But major cracking, especially cracking that's recent, could signal serious problems.

[This three-part video series](#) from Homeowner Series can help you understand what's going on outside your home and what to look for when you do a walk-around.

30. Find and Fix Dry Rot

Common issues to notice when you walk around your home are dry rot, which is most common in wood trim around your home. You can help avoid dry rot by wrapping wood trim in aluminum, though even that doesn't completely protect wood from rot.

[This video](#) talks about how to fix dry rotted pieces of trim.

31. Check For Termite Damage

It's also important that you look for potential termite damage, which you can see from the inside or the outside of your home. Termite damage will weaken wood, causing huge problems for homeowners. If you can catch termites early, you'll have a less-expensive problem on your hands.

[This video](#) shows how to detect termite damage inside your home. [This video](#) shows how to detect termite damage outside the home.

32. Check Gauge on Fire Extinguishers

A fire in your home could be disastrous, but you can reduce the odds of a disaster by placing fire extinguishers in easy-to-reach places throughout your home. But those extinguishers won't do you much good if they don't work.

That's why you should regularly inspect your fire extinguishers to ensure they'll work when you need them most. [Here's how.](#)

How to Make it Work

This is a lot of information to take in, and a lot of maintenance tasks to stay on top of. While some of these suggestions are one-time upgrades or repairs, you should perform some of them regularly.

The truth is, you can perform most of these regular tasks in just a few hours a month. Make yourself a list of the home maintenance tasks that you need to do monthly and semi-annually, and then work through the list a little at a time each weekend.

So, how about you? What other money-saving maintenance tips do you have for our readers? Leave us some more ideas in the comments.

Resource: [101 *Surprising* Homemaking Tips to Make Your Life Easier](#)

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