

30 Basic Home Maintenance Tips to Take Care of the Little Things That Add Up

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At HomeLight, our vision is a world where every real estate transaction is simple, certain, and satisfying. Therefore, we promote strict [editorial integrity](#) in each of our posts.

Feeling guilty about putting off all that routine maintenance for your home? Good, you should... along with the [45% of Americans](#) who don't tend to home repairs right away.

Because [clogged gutters turn into water damage](#). [Chipped paint](#) leads to wood rot. Dirty filters [shorten the lifespan of your furnace](#). And while small problems are simple fixes now, they'll be more complicated (even burst-pipe disastrous) later and could ultimately hurt your resale value.

"It's really just keeping an eye out for the little things, and making sure they don't turn into bigger things," says [Kati Spaniak](#), a [top-selling real estate agent in Northbrook, Illinois](#).

"Those little things can add up to a lot of money, which you may not have right before you put your house on the market."

Turn your guilt into action with these 30 super basic home maintenance tips that make a big difference—preserving up to [10% of your home's value](#) should be all the motivation you need.



Source: ([LittleVisuals/ Pixabay](#))

1. Check to see that the doorbell works—if not, replace it

“I will tell you one of the first things I see a lot in homes is that the doorbell is broken,” Spaniak says. What better way to welcome future buyers than with a doorbell that actually works? It’s a small detail that counts to future buyers.

Use Home Depot’s DIY [guide for how to replace a doorbell](#) to help you safely reach the “Ding Dong!” of success. With actionable step-by-step bullet points, including how to upgrade to a wireless doorbell if you choose, it’s the best doorbell replacement tutorial we could find on the web.

2. Restore power to any dead outlets

Check out the outlets in your home annually. Are they working? If you find some of your power sources are dead, we recommend that you call a [professional electrician](#) to get them fixed. Now's also a good time to check that you have GFCI (Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter) receptacles with those "Test" and "Reset" buttons near any plumbing fixtures. If you don't, it's likely to [come up in the home inspection](#) when you decide to sell your house.

3. Change the direction of your ceiling fans

You should change the rotation of your ceiling fans twice a year to increase energy efficiency, putting less strain on your heating and cooling systems. Running a ceiling fan properly in the winter can help you [save up to 10% on your heating bill](#). When you change the direction of the fan, you change the way the air moves, more effectively heating or cooling a room.

You want your ceiling fan to rotate counterclockwise in the summer, pushing cool air down. On most fans, you can change the rotation using the directional switch on the motor—typically by turning the switch down. To get the clockwise rotation in winter, just [reverse the switch](#).



Source: (ucchie79/ Shutterstock)

4. Clean out exhaust fans to prevent mold

Fans in your home help clean out smells and moisture, but if they can't do their job efficiently, you [run the risk of growing mold in your home](#). Once a year, take the time to remove and clean your [bathroom and kitchen exhaust fans](#). This'll keep the hardware running smoothly, and the moisture out of your home.

5. RegROUT or recaulk your tub, showers, and bathroom fixtures

Whether you have grout or caulk as a filler between your tiles in the bathroom, it will exhibit signs of wear and tear over time. If you notice any crumbling, peeling, or mildew, it's probably time for a touch-up.

"If your grout is moldy, people think you don't take care of your home," says Spaniak.

You can attack [moldy grout or caulk with a bleach solution](#) as a quick fix to tie you over for awhile.

But if you need to replace the grout completely, popular DIY magazine Popular Mechanics has a [step-by-step for regrouting](#) (which includes a handy shopping list).

Got caulk? You should plan on recaulking about [every 5 years](#). It's a simple process—just grab a [tube of caulk](#), [caulk gun](#), and [this handy DIY caulking guide](#).



Source: (Michael Moloney/ Shutterstock)

6. Double check your downspout

Take a look around the perimeter of your home to check for [downspouts](#) that have become detached from your home. If downspouts become detached or faulty, water will not get directed away from the home and can lead to water intrusion or even foundation issues. This is a minor fix that can save you major cash down the road.

7. Remove evidence of water damage

If you've experienced some kind of water damage in your home, you probably fixed it right away, but have you repaired the evidence?

"Anything that looks like it might raise questions, you want to take care of," reasons Spaniak. Make sure you've not only addressed the source of the damage with a professional, but also addressed the stains left behind.

According to home care experts at BobVila.com, you need [more than a simple coat of paint](#) to remove evidence of water damage, and prevent future staining. Use a [stain-blocking primer](#) on ceilings and basement walls, and then you can paint as you typically would.

8. Clear your drains

Tackle any slow drains in your home before they become clogged. It's better to [snake the drain](#) with a wire hanger, or clog remover tool, rather than use drain cleaner, which can be hard on your pipes.

9. Flush out your water heater

Once a year, you'll need to drain your water heater or have a professional plumber come in to do it. Draining your water heater will flush out any minerals or debris in the system, ensuring it runs more efficiently.

If you're feeling up to the task, AllState Insurance, one of the largest publicly held insurance providers in America, has a [step by step guide](#) for draining the water heater yourself.



Source: ([Matthew Henry/ Burst](#))

10. Check your water bill to track water consumption

For many of us, it's hard to detect a leak in our home until the telltale water stain appears on the ceiling. One of the simplest ways to watch for leaks and water consumption is keeping track of your bill. Take a look at your water bill monthly and compare month over month. If the number is higher than average, you might want to explore further with the [help of a professional plumber](#).

11. Gut the gutters

Gutter maintenance should take place at least twice a year, or as the seasons change. Gutters overflowing with debris won't do their job, and can lead to much more costly water damage. Check and clean your gutters every spring and fall, clearing away any muck, sealing any leaks, and replacing damaged gutters as needed.

This [video guide](#) from Lowe's, one of the largest do-it-yourself home retailers in the country, will walk you through your DIY gutter cleaning basics. For two-story homes, hire a local gutter cleaner to come do the job for you. While you're at it, get the deck professionally washed and stained and knock out your spring yard maintenance.

12. Test your sump pump

If your home has a [sump pump](#) in the basement, you should test it twice a year. Sump pumps typically last about 10 years, and with proper maintenance, could work even longer.

Check the water levels of the pump: if it's overflowing, it's probably not doing its job properly. Take time to clean the pump of any debris surrounding it, making sure it can do its job efficiently. Unplug and plug in your sump pump, is its energy source working properly? Nipping any issues with your sump pump in the bud can save you thousands down the line when it comes to water damage and flooding.

For more guidance, U.S. plumbing service Roto-Rooter has a step by step [guide to checking and maintaining your sump pump](#).

13. Maintain your roof

Homeowners dread a roof replacement, but maintaining the one you have can increase its lifespan. Taking care of roof issues will also help the heating and cooling systems of the home operate more efficiently, and prevent leaks in the roof that lead to water damage.

It's recommended to have your [roof professionally inspected by a roofer](#) twice a year.

14. Look for early signs of foundation problems

When the weather warms up, take the time to do a thorough inspection of the exterior foundation of your home. Cracks in the foundation of your home can [reduce its value by as much as 15%](#), and taking care of these issues as you see them will ensure less costly repairs in the future. Large cracks in your foundation [should be inspected and addressed by a structural engineer](#).



Source: (Chuck Wagner/ Shutterstock)

15. Wash your siding

Cleaning your [home's siding twice a year](#) will not only boost its curb appeal, but also prolong its life. Opt to clean siding once in the spring, and again in the fall. Experts suggest renting a power washer and taking the afternoon to get the job done. But [choose your pressure washer and nozzle wisely](#)—too much pressure can lead to damage or even crumbling on the exterior of your home.

16. Touch up exterior paint

Let's face it, when it comes to houses, most of us judge a book by its cover. Touching up the [paint job on the exterior of your home](#) adds curb appeal points, but also keeps moisture and wood rot at bay.

Repainting your entire exterior can [cost upwards of \\$2,000, but also yields a 51% ROI](#) at resale, according to [HomeLight's 2019 Top Agent Insights Survey](#). Not ready for this large undertaking? Small touch-ups can be achieved for [less than \\$100](#).



Source: (Alexander Peskov/ Shutterstock)

17. Fill in driveway cracks

When the weather starts to heat up, take a look at your driveway, patio, or sidewalk for cracks in the concrete. Small cracks start to look unappealing, and [resurfacing cracks](#) the moment you find them means fewer large repairs on outdoor surfaces down the line.

[Deep cracks](#) can also raise eyebrows during a home inspection. If your concrete is cracked beyond what a simple resurfacing can repair, consider [mudjacking, or slabjacking](#). This

process, which injects a grout under your concrete slabs to raise them, typically costs around half as much as putting in a new slab.

18. Clean off your outdoor air conditioning unit

When you're doing yard work in the spring and fall, take a few minutes to clean off your outdoor air conditioner system. Service Champions, a nearly 5-star heating and air conditioning company with over 1,300 Google reviews, has a [great step by step for this task](#), which you can knock out between flipping burgers on the grill.

To summarize the process: gently remove large chunks of debris and muck by hand, use the soft-brush attachment from your vacuum on the fins, and spray off loose debris with the hose. Keeping your unit clean and clear means less wasted energy, and a longer lifespan.

19. Check for signs of critters

It's important to do regular checks around both the interior and exterior of your home to look for signs of pests. Take note of cracks near your home's foundation where furry friends could break in, or roofing issues where you might welcome some unexpected visitors. You can call in a [professional pest inspector](#) to take a look once a year as well. When it comes to detecting animal or pest issues in your home, the earlier and faster you address them, the better.



Source: (Jerry Von Funkhouser/ Unsplash)

20. Trim up the trees

Branches growing too closely to your home or power lines can wreak havoc down the road. Fallen tree branches account for [\\$1 billion in home damage annually](#). If you have trees on your property, bring in a [professional tree trimmer](#) once a year to assess potential issues and trim down trees.

21. Change out your HVAC filters

Changing your air filter can prolong the life of your A/C unit, make the unit work more efficiently, and maintain higher air quality in your home. If you regularly forget to check off this task, try signing up for a subscription service like [FilterEasy](#), which sends you a new filter when it's time to change out the old one.



Source: (David Spates/ Shutterstock)

22. Regularly get your HVAC professionally serviced

Homeowners can't fake a well-maintained HVAC unit. "It's nice to walk into a basement and see the list of every single time the HVAC was serviced because that's when you know, people are doing it because they care for their house, not just because they're trying to sell," says Spaniak.

Spaniak recommends that homeowners get their HVAC and furnace systems checked [by a technician](#) in the fall and spring. Not only will this ensure you're warm in the winter and cool in the summer, but it'll also show future buyers that you've cared for your home.

23. Unclog your disposal

Disposals are a great kitchen tool, but they're a distraction as soon as they clog up and smell. You should clean out your disposal monthly, using The Spruce's [recommended combination](#) of citrus, salt, and baking soda.

24. Clean out refrigerator coils

To keep your favorite cooling appliances running smoothly, add vacuuming out your refrigerator's coils to your bi-annual deep clean. Typically located at the bottom of the fridge, you simply remove the cover and vacuum out dust and debris. Looking for more detail? Worldwide appliance giant General Electric's got your [go-to guide for the task](#).



Source: (Pxhere)

25. Wash your washing machine

It's supposed to clean your clothes, but what should you do when your washing machine starts to smell? If you notice any signs of mold, mildew, or foul odors when you load and unload your laundry, check out Apartment Therapy's in-depth guide to [de-gunking and unfunking the washing machine](#). You can do this as often as every month.

26. Maintain your fire extinguisher

If your fire extinguisher doesn't work in a time of emergency, it's not really worth having. Make a note to check your extinguisher annually. Keep it clean, check for physical damage, and check its pressure. Nationally recognized insurance agency [AllState has an in-depth guide](#) to fire extinguisher maintenance.

27. Remove lint and build up from your dryer vents

Cleaning out your dryer vent (and we don't mean just removing lint from the filter, but cleaning out that vent crevice) not only keeps the appliance running efficiently, increasing longevity, but it also will keep your dryer from sparking a fire.

More than [29,000 homes a year catch on fire from the lint build up in the dryer's vent](#), according to the U.S. Fire Administration, and a clean vent is just another indicator to future home buyers that you've cared for even the smallest details in your home.

[Using a kit, a vacuum cleaner, and some elbow grease](#), you can clean the dryer vent yourself.



Source: (Pegasene/ Shutterstock)

28. Inspect your window and door seals

Once or twice a year, take the time to seriously [inspect the sealing around your windows and doors](#). Small cracks and fissures can lead to an inefficiently heated or cooled home, which in turn can overwork your systems.

29. Do a home energy audit

According to Energy.gov, homeowners waste on average [\\$200-400 of their energy bill](#) annually on drafts and air leaks. Consider doing a [home energy audit](#) annually to see where you're pouring dollars down the drain when it comes to efficiency.

30. Fix scuff marks on interior walls with a little paint

Scuffs and marks on the wall are par for the course in a lived-in home, but touching up wall paint once a year will ensure these marks don't get out of hand. If and when you decide to

sell your home, once of the first things you'll have to take care of is touching up wall paint—so why delay?

Worried about finding the matching shade? Sherwin-Williams has a [how-to guide on matching paint shades](#) for home touch-ups.

An ounce of prevention...

Now you're ready to get to work. Home maintenance can seem like an avalanche of to-dos at first, but remember, you don't have to do this all in a day. Use HomeLight's [home maintenance calendar](#), or create a spreadsheet of tasks to complete [month by month](#). The key is not waiting until there's an issue to do something. A little prevention will go a long way when it comes to home maintenance.

Article Image Source: (Dan Smedley/ Unsplash)



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Emma's work has been featured in Huffington Post, NPR and XOJane. When she's not combing her neighborhood for open houses, she's writing about technology, real estate or data.