

HOME MAINTENANCE QUICK LOOK MANUAL



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Home ownership can be a dream come true, but you have to remember that having the keys to your very own home comes with a lot of responsibility. You are in charge of maintaining the interior and exterior of your home so it looks its best and stays in working order. The **average cost of maintaining a home** in the United States is \$16,000, but this can vary widely depending on the size, **type** and location of the home. The average cost of maintaining a home in Florida (\$16,097) is on par with the national average.

As anyone who lives in Florida knows, heat, humidity and pests are all common concerns. How does this affect home maintenance? What other regular home maintenance tasks should you be doing? What kind of maintenance schedule should you keep if you have a summer home in Florida? Use this helpful checklist of home maintenance tips to keep your Sunshine State abode clean and happy.

Inside

Keeping a clean and up-to-date interior makes for a happy household. Check these tasks off your to-do list whether you live in Florida all year or you only stay for the summer months.



1. Check for Any Leaks

Even a small leak can lead to big problems in your home. Water damage can lead to stains, mold and mildew, as well as potential damage to your walls and flooring. Water damage remediation and restoration can be a costly process, so the sooner you spot any leaks, the better. Common culprits for leaks in the home include the water heater, faucets, sump pump, the attic and the basement. Set a regular schedule for inspecting these areas of the home. For example, make this an end-of-summer maintenance tip for your home.

Visual signs of a leak include water spots or mold and mildew stains on the walls or ceiling. If the leak is affecting the floor, you may notice warping of your wood or tiles. A leak may also be accompanied by an unpleasant odor.

2. Get Your Water Heater Serviced

Water heaters have a life expectancy of about **15 years**. Regularly servicing yours can help ensure it does its job and lasts for as long as possible. In addition to checking the pressure valve for possible leaks, the water tank will need to be drained at least a couple of times per year. Draining the tank helps clear it of any debris. Checking the **anode rod** is another essential part of water heater maintenance. To be safe with repairs call a professional. The last thing you want is a broken water heater when you are trying to bathe, wash dishes and run a load of laundry. No hot water and a household can come to a screeching halt.

3. Ensure All Plumbing Is Working

A home's plumbing is another potential source for leaks. Take the time a few times a year, or right before you leave at the end of the summer, to check for dripping faucets or leaks at the base of any toilets in the house. These leaks can drive up your water bill and cause damage to your home.

A dripping faucet is likely a minor issue with a quick fix, but there are other larger plumbing issues to be aware of as a homeowner. For example, consistently plugged drains may indicate a blockage that requires professional attention. Or, leaky pipes can mean that long-term corrosion is affecting your home's plumbing.

If you have a septic tank, it is critical to have it professionally drained every few years.

4. Check Your Heating and Cooling Systems

Your home's HVAC system is in charge of heating and cooling. You want to know that the air conditioning is going to work in the summer and the heat is going to keep you nice and toasty in the cooler months. Regular maintenance helps to keep your HVAC system in working order and the temperature of your home where you want it. The basics of HVAC upkeep include regularly **changing your air filters**, usually every month or so. You can also engage a professional on an annual basis to inspect your heating and cooling system and ensure it is working correctly.



Cleaning your home's ducts is a less frequent but still important maintenance task. Engaging a professional to clean out the ducts every **one to five years** makes your home more energy efficient.

5. Clean Your Air Vents and Dryer Vent

Cleaning your home's air vents is another end-of-summer home maintenance tip to keep in mind. The dirt, dust and debris that gather in air vents can make your HVAC system less efficient and ultimately drive up the cost of heating and cooling your home. Before leaving your home for the summer, turn off the power source for your HVAC system. Unscrew your vents from the walls and use a vacuum to clear the dust and other allergens that have gathered in the vents.

In addition to air vents, your dryer vent is another important item to check off your cleaning list. If you allow too much lint to build up in this vent, your dryer will become less efficient and potentially a fire risk. You can clean the lint filter after each load of wash you dry. You can also hire a professional to clean inside the lint trap and the dryer duct.

6. Look for Any Possible Entryways for Pests

Keeping pests out is one of the most critical end-of-summer home maintenance tips. In addition to being unpleasant, pests can do severe damage to your home and even be a health hazard. Common Florida pests include rodents, cockroaches, carpenter ants and mosquitos. While you can keep your home free of the food debris that can attract pests, they can still take advantage of even the smallest entryways. While you are indoors, look for any cracks in your doors, baseboards and window frames. If you find any cracks, seal them carefully. Also be sure to check the places you go less often, such as the basement or attic. Any water damage in these areas can also be an invitation for pests to come in and make themselves at home.

7. Double Check Safety Devices



Each year, you should do a thorough check of your home's safety devices. Does your house have a functional fire extinguisher? Are there fresh batteries in the smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors?

Make sure the fire extinguisher is within easy reach. For example, keep it under the sink in the kitchen or hung on the wall in your pantry. In case of emergency, you do not want to be scrambling to find it. When it comes to battery-operated devices, such as smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors, you can likely use a test button easily found on the device. Consider testing the device monthly and replacing batteries at least annually. If you have any other home security devices, such as cameras or alarm systems, check manufacturer recommendations for testing.

If you live in an area of Florida vulnerable to hurricanes, do a yearly check to ensure your home is equipped with safety provisions.

8. Wipe Down All of Your Appliances

Household appliances make day-to-day life easier, but those appliances still need occasional TLC. Before leaving your home for the summer or at the end of the season, set aside time to clean all of your appliances. The biggest area of focus? The kitchen.

Kitchen appliances that need to be wiped down include:



refrigerator. The water and vinegar mix will help eliminate odors, so you can use that to clean inside the fridge too.

- **Refrigerator:** Cleaning the exterior of your fridge is a simple job. Simply take down all of your magnets and anything else hanging on the fridge, then use a clean, damp cloth to wipe it down. A mix of water and vinegar can help cut through any dirt that has accumulated. Cleaning the interior of the fridge is a little trickier. Empty out all the food. Next, remove the drawers and shelves for washing in the sink, and wipe down the inside of the refrigerator. The water and vinegar mix will help eliminate odors, so you can use that to clean inside the fridge too.
- **Dishwasher:** Dishwashers may seem self-cleaning, but you actually need to give this appliance some cleaning of its own. You can wipe down the exterior just as easily as you wipe down the outside of your fridge. For cleaning the inside of the dishwasher, you can put a cup of vinegar on the top rack and run the appliance on its hottest setting. Afterward, remove any soap scum that has come loose.
- **Microwave:** Microwaves can easily become crusted with food debris. You might not even notice how much has gotten stuck to the top of the appliance. You can make cleaning the microwave easier by heating a bowl of water, which will loosen the gunk stuck to the top, bottom and sides of the appliance.
- **Oven and stovetop:** As with the microwave, your oven and stove are bound to wind up with some grease and food bits. You can use household cleaners to wipe down the stovetop, and the same water trick you can use for the microwave also works for the oven.

- **Toaster:** Toasters naturally accumulate crumbs. You can easily remove most of those by taking out the crumb tray. You can also wipe down the exterior with a damp cloth. Just remember to unplug the toaster while you clean.
- **Coffeemaker:** Warm water with soap is enough to do the trick for cleaning your coffee pot and its filter. The rest of the appliance can be wiped down by hand.
- **Blender:** Washing your blender is similar to washing your coffeemaker, except you will need to make sure to wipe down the individual blades carefully.

Outside

Maintaining the exterior of your home does contribute to how it looks, but these chores are about more than just appearances. This home maintenance checklist for Florida homeowners will help you keep your home safe and dry.

1. Replace Outdoor Light Bulbs

At the end of the summer season, check your light bulbs on the exterior of your home. If any are dead, replace them. Proper lighting outside is an important safety feature. When you change your bulbs, you can look for options that will last in the Florida weather and help repel those pesky mosquitos. Energy efficiency is another helpful feature to consider.

2. Clean Your Home's Gutters

The rain gutters on any home will inevitably become clogged with leaves and debris. If left there, the gutters cannot do their job. Instead, you risk water damage to your landscaping and even the foundation of your home. At least once a year, set aside time to clean out those gutters. A professional service will come with a sturdy ladder, a pair of work gloves and the necessary tools to scoop out whatever is clogging the gutters.



3. Clean up Your Yard

Landscaping is one of the more obvious summertime home maintenance tips, but it is important to spend the time it takes. While a tidy lawn is visually appealing, it also deters pests and helps protect your home. Regular maintenance includes mowing your lawn, weeding and pruning any bushes in the yard. Regular watering in the heat of summer can help keep the grass you so carefully tend green.



In addition to tending to the lawn and any smaller plants in your garden, you can do a yearly check on the trees in your yard. Are they healthy? Are any limbs dangerously close to your home? If you think you have a sick tree or one that needs to have its boughs trimmed back, call a professional service. Properly caring for the trees on your property contributes to home value and helps to prevent any potential damage caused by low-hanging limbs.

4. Inspect Your Roof, Windows and Doors for Leaks

Not all signs of potential leaks can be found indoors. Homeowners also need to have the exterior of the home checked. Areas to inspect include outside water faucets including your garden hose and

your roof, as well as the exterior frames of your doors and windows. Watch for telltale signs such as water stains, mold and mildew. If you are going to look for leaks in your roof, keep safety in mind and engage a professional.

5. Check Your Home's Foundation

Foundation issues can be costly to repair, so an annual inspection can help you catch any problems early on. Here are a couple of things to consider when checking on your home's foundation:

- **Water damage:** Water damage is a major cause of foundation issues. Look for any signs of water damage along the exterior of your home. It is also helpful to look for water damage in your basement. If you notice a musty smell in your basement or the presence of mold, you will need to find the source to ensure your foundation hasn't already been affected.
- **Visible damage:** As you walk around the exterior of your home, can you see any visible damage? Look for cracks or chips in the concrete. Discoloration can also be indicative of a problem with the foundation. Additionally, cracks in your home's floors or walls can be a red flag that something is going on with your home's foundation.

Maintaining a proper drainage system is one of the best ways to protect your foundation from damage. If you suspect damage to your home's foundation, reach out to a professional and schedule an inspection.

6. Power wash the Exterior of Your Home

The exterior of your home is constantly exposed to the elements. Power washing can help remove the natural buildup of grit and grime, which can breathe new life into your home's appearance and curb appeal. You can rent or buy a power washer. Whichever option you choose, make sure you follow the instructions carefully. Check for any damage to your home's siding before you begin. If you power wash a damaged area, you will likely make it worse. While you are using the power washer, wear gloves and safety goggles. You can wash down the siding of your home, as well as your sidewalks, porch and deck.



7. Take Care of Your Pool

Not every home in Florida has a pool, but many people love having this feature to help them through the sweltering heat of summer. If your house has a pool, you will want to maintain it so it is just as pleasant to swim in year after year.

The basics of pool maintenance include keeping the water clear of debris, keeping the filter up-to-date and checking to ensure the water has the proper level of chemicals. If you use your Florida home as a summer vacation spot, you will want to prepare your pool for winter. If you don't have anyone to check on the pool while you are away, it may make the most sense to drain it completely. Otherwise, you will want to watch the pool's water levels to ensure rain does not cause overflow and evaporation does not cause the water level to sink too low. Before you leave for the season, make sure the cover is tightly fitted across the pool to keep out pests, such as mosquitos, and discourage the growth of algae. A professional service can help keep your pool clean and safe throughout the year.

Tenant Checklist

Know your rights when you rent a house or apartment. This information is available through the [HUD website](#) under Rental Assistance, More About Renting, Ten Tips every tenant should know.

Tip 1: Bring your paperwork.

The best way to win over a prospective landlord is to be prepared. To get a competitive edge over other applicants, bring the following when you meet the landlord: a completed rental application; written references from landlords, employers, and colleagues; and a current copy of your credit report.

To Get a Copy of Your Credit Report

You can order your credit report by mail, phone, or online at www.annualcreditreport.com or directly from the websites of the three major national credit bureaus:

- [Equifax](#)
- [Experian](#)
- [TransUnion](#)

Tip 2: Review the lease.

Carefully review all of the conditions of the tenancy before you sign on the dotted line. Your lease or rental agreement may contain a provision that you find unacceptable – for example, restrictions on guests, pets, design alterations, or running a home business. Ask questions; make sure you fully understand the lease.

Tip 3: Get everything in writing.

To avoid disputes or misunderstandings with your landlord, get everything in writing. Keep copies of any correspondence and follow up an oral agreement with a letter, setting out your understandings. For example, if you ask your landlord to make repairs, put your request in writing and keep a copy for yourself. If the landlord agrees orally, send a letter confirming this.

Tip 4: Protect your privacy rights.

Next to disputes over rent or security deposits, one of the most common and emotion-filled misunderstandings arises over the tension between a landlord's right to enter a rental unit and a tenant's right to be left alone. If you understand your privacy rights, for example, the amount of notice your landlord must provide before entering, it will be easier to protect them.

Tip 5: Demand repairs.

Know your rights to live in a habitable rental unit-and don't give them up. The vast majority of landlords are required to offer their tenants livable premises, including adequate weatherproofing; heat, water, and electricity; and clean, sanitary, and structurally safe premises. If your rental unit is not kept in good repair, you have a number of options, ranging from withholding a portion of the rent, to paying for repairs and deducting the cost from your rent, to calling the building inspector (who may order the landlord to make repairs), to moving out without liability for your future rent.

Tip 6: Talk to your landlord.

Keep communication open with your landlord. If there's a problem – for example, if the landlord is slow to make repairs – talk it over to see if the issue can be resolved short of a nasty legal battle.

Keep in mind, your first line of contact is the on-site manager. If an issue cannot be resolved at this level, it should be directed to the on-site manager's supervisor. Legal action should be the last course of action.

Tip 7: Purchase renter's insurance.

Your landlord's insurance policy will not cover your losses due to theft or damage. Renters' insurance also covers you if you're sued by someone who claims to have been injured in your rental due to your carelessness. Renters' insurance typically costs \$350 a year for a \$50,000 policy that covers loss due to theft or damage caused by other people or natural disasters; if you don't need that much coverage, there are cheaper policies.

Tip 8: Protect your security deposit.

To protect yourself and avoid any misunderstandings, make sure your lease or rental agreement is clear on the use and refund of security deposits, including allowable deductions. When you move in, do a walk-through with the landlord to record existing damage to the premises on a move-in statement or checklist.

Tip 9: Protect your safety.

Learn whether your building and neighborhood are safe, and what you can expect your landlord to do about it if they aren't. Get copies of any state or local laws that require safety devices such as deadbolts and window locks, check out the property's vulnerability to intrusion by a criminal, and learn whether criminal incidents have already occurred on the property or nearby. If a crime is highly likely, your landlord may be obligated to take some steps to protect you.

Tip 10: Deal with an eviction properly.

Know when to fight an eviction notice – and when to move. If you feel the landlord is clearly is the wrong (for example, you haven't received proper notice, the premises are uninhabitable), you may want to fight the eviction. But unless you have the law and provable facts on your side, fighting an eviction notice can be short-sighted. If you lose an eviction lawsuit, you may end up hundreds (even thousands) of dollars in debt, which will damage your credit rating and your ability to easily rent from future landlords.



National Center for Healthy Housing

National Healthy Homes Training Center and Network

Healthy Homes Maintenance Checklist

The following checklist was developed for the Healthy Homes Training Center and Network as a tool for healthy home maintenance. A healthy home is one that is constructed, maintained, and rehabilitated in a manner that is conducive to good occupant health.

To maintain a healthy home, occupants should keep it dry, clean, well-ventilated, free from contaminants, pest-free, safe and well-maintained. Good home maintenance can act to

reduce allergens, prevent illness, and reduce injury from accidents. This checklist provides basic guidelines; items may need to be checked more often depending on local conditions and manufacturer suggestions.

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

	Spring	Fall	Annual	As Needed	Pro Needed?
Yard & Exterior					
Water drains away from house	☺				
No trip, fall, choking, sharp edge hazards	☺	☺			
Fence around pool intact	☺	☺			
Check for signs of rodents, bats, roaches, termites	☺	☺			
Drain outdoor faucets and hoses		☺			
Clean window wells and check drainage	☺	☺			
Clean gutters and downspouts	☺	☺			

	Spring	Fall	Annual	As Needed	Pro Needed?
Exterior Roof, Walls, Windows					
Shingles in good condition	☺				
Check chimney, valley, plumbing vent, skylight flashing	☺				
Make sure gutters discharge water away from building	☺				
Check attic vents		☺			
Check attic for signs of roof leaks	☺				
Check for icicles and ice dams			winter		
Look for peeling paint	☺				
Look for signs of leaks where deck attaches to house	☺				
Check below window & door that flashing intact	☺				
Repair broken, cracked glass		☺			
Look for signs of leaks at window and door sills	☺				
Clean dryer vent	☺	☺			
Check exhaust ducts are clear	☺	☺			

	Spring	Fall	Annual	As Needed	Pro Needed?
Basement & CrawlSpace					
No wet surfaces, puddles	☺	☺			
Sump pump and check valve working	☺	☺			
Floor drain working	☺				
Vacuum basement surfaces	☺				
Check for signs of rodents, bats, roaches, termites		☺			

Maintenance Checklist continued on next page



Maintenance Checklist (continued)

Interior Walls, Ceilings, Windows, Doors

	Spring	Fall	Annual	As Needed	Pro Needed?
Check for signs of water damage			ⓐ		
Check operation of windows and doors	ⓐ				
Lubricate and repair windows and doors			ⓐ		

Plumbing, Fixtures and Appliances

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

HVAC Equipment - Replace filters

	Spring	Fall	Annual	As Needed	Pro Needed?
Warm air furnace (merv 8)		ⓐ			
Air conditioner (central air merv 8)	ⓐ				
Dehumidifier	ⓐ				
Outdoor air to return to heat recovery ventilation		ⓐ			

Appliances

	Spring	Fall	Annual	As Needed	Pro Needed?
Clean kitchen range hood screens				ⓐ	
Clean dryer vents and screens	ⓐ				
Clean exhaust fan outlets and screens	ⓐ				
Clean outdoor air intakes and screens		ⓐ			
Clean air conditioning coils, drain pans	ⓐ				ⓐ
Clean dehumidifier coils, check operation	ⓐ				
Clean and tune furnaces, boilers, hot water heaters		ⓐ			ⓐ
Clean and tune ovens and ranges		ⓐ			ⓐ

Electrical Equipment

	Spring	Fall	Annual	As Needed	Pro Needed?
Check for damaged cords	ⓐ	ⓐ			
Test ground fault interrupters	ⓐ				
Test outlets for proper hot, neutral and ground			once		
Check smoke and CO alarms	ⓐ	ⓐ			

Garage

	Spring	Fall	Annual	As Needed	Pro Needed?
Ensure storage of fuel cans	ⓐ	ⓐ			
Proper operation of garage door safety shut-off	ⓐ	ⓐ			
Check for signs of water damage	ⓐ				
Check for signs of rodents, bats, roaches, termites	ⓐ	ⓐ			

Attic

	Spring	Fall	Annual	As Needed	Pro Needed?
Check for signs of rodents, bats, roaches, termites		ⓐ			
Check for water damage		ⓐ			
Ensure insulation in place		ⓐ			
Check that fans still exhaust to outdoors (check ductwork connections)			ⓐ		