



HOMECARE ESSENTIALS

**AN ULTIMATE GUIDE FOR EFFICIENT
HOUSEHOLD MAINTENANCE**

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T H E U N I V E R S I T Y O F C A N B E R R A



ABSTRACT

"Homecare Essentials: An Ultimate Guide for Efficient Household Maintenance" serves as a comprehensive resource aimed at optimizing the upkeep of residential spaces. This guide is indispensable for homeowners looking to enhance the longevity, functionality, and aesthetic appeal of their homes through systematic and efficient maintenance practices.



Ultimately, "Homecare Essentials" is designed to empower homeowners with the knowledge and tools necessary to maintain a well-kept and functional living environment efficiently. Whether you're a novice or seasoned homeowner, implementing the strategies outlined in this guide can lead to a more enjoyable and stress-free home ownership experience.

LET'S GET STARTED

"Homecare Essentials: An Ultimate Guide for Efficient Household Maintenance" provides a comprehensive overview and practical strategies for homeowners to effectively manage and maintain their residences. This guide is structured to empower readers with essential knowledge and actionable steps aimed at optimizing home upkeep, ensuring both longevity and comfort.

WHY IS HOUSEHOLD MAINTENANCE IMPORTANT?



Household maintenance is crucial for several compelling reasons that span both practical and financial considerations:

1. **Preservation of Property Value:** Regular maintenance helps preserve the structural integrity and appearance of your home. By addressing minor issues promptly, you prevent them from escalating into larger, more expensive problems that could depreciate the value of your property over time.
2. **Ensuring Safety and Comfort:** Maintaining essential systems such as electrical, plumbing, and HVAC ensures that your home remains safe and comfortable for occupants. Regular inspections and upkeep help identify potential hazards or malfunctions before they pose a risk to your family's well-being.
3. **Cost Savings:** Proactive maintenance is often more cost-effective than reactive repairs. Addressing small issues early on can prevent the need for major repairs that can be significantly more expensive. For example, fixing a leaky roof promptly can prevent water damage that could lead to costly repairs to walls, ceilings, or even structural components.

4. **Energy Efficiency:** Regular maintenance of HVAC systems, insulation, and windows can improve energy efficiency. This not only reduces utility bills but also contributes to environmental sustainability by lowering your home's carbon footprint.

5. **Enhanced Longevity:** Well-maintained homes generally have longer life spans. Regular upkeep of appliances, roofs, siding, and other components helps extend their durability, reducing the frequency of replacements and the associated costs.

6. **Healthier Living Environment:** Regular cleaning and maintenance reduce allergens, pollutants, and mold growth, which can improve indoor air quality and contribute to better health outcomes for residents, especially those with allergies or respiratory issues.

In conclusion, household maintenance is not just about keeping up appearances; it's about safeguarding your investment, ensuring safety and comfort, and promoting cost-effective, sustainable living. By prioritizing regular maintenance tasks, homeowners can enjoy a higher quality of life and protect the value of their homes for years to come.

HOME MAINTENANCE TASKS TO COMPLETE 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.

BUDGET TO MAINTAIN FOR HOME MAINTANENCE

It's important for homeowners to anticipate and plan for home maintenance expenses. Unlike being a renter, when you're a homeowner, you're responsible for keeping up with regular maintenance and repairs, and making sure systems are working efficiently.



Of course, the age, size, and condition of the home will also play a big role in your home maintenance costs, which is why it's a smart exercise to look at your individual situation to come up with a budget goal that makes sense for you.

Understanding Home Maintenance Costs

Home maintenance costs encompass all of the money that you'll put into your house to keep it functional. This can include routine maintenance like furnace tuneups, gutter cleaning, and landscaping services; repairs on appliances as they age or become damaged; and replacements of major home elements like your roof, windows, HVAC systems, and more.

If you have a fairly new home with upgraded materials and appliances, it's less likely that you'll face a major expense right away. Older homes, however, may cost more to maintain. Another factor that can impact home maintenance costs is the climate where you live.

Average Home Maintenance Costs

According to research by HomeGuide, an online business that connects homeowners with home service professionals, here are some average costs for common home maintenance needs.

Different Budgeting Approaches

There are different schools of thought when it comes to budgeting for home maintenance:

- The Square Footage Rule
- Set Dollar Amount
- The Percentage Rule

Factors to Consider When Setting a Budget

When deciding how much to set aside, think about the size and location of your home as well as the age of your property. If you have an older home in an expensive city that's prone to extreme weather, you'll need to save more than someone in a newly built home with a brand-new structure, systems, and appliances, or who lives in a less expensive location with a moderate climate.

Creating a Personalized Budget

To create a personalized budget for home maintenance, think through your regular maintenance, the condition of your home, and the potential need for repair or replacement of major items.

- Tally up the cost of routine maintenance. This can include landscaping/lawn care, gutter cleaning, HVAC tuneups, and more.
- Assess your major appliances, structural elements, and systems and decide if any might need to be repaired or replaced this year. If you can save up and take care of these things proactively, it can prevent potential damage that may be costlier to repair/fix.
- Consider the overall condition of your home. If it's older, you live in an expensive area, or you know that major home features are approaching the end of their life spans, then bump up your savings goal.
- Create a separate savings account for your home costs. "I recommend homeowners keep this home repair money in a high-yield savings account," says Lieberman. "If you don't need to use the money, you'll be earning interest. And you can withdraw the money whenever you need it."

Tips for Managing Home Maintenance Expenses

With so many competing financial priorities, it can be challenging to save enough for your home maintenance, but there are some strategies that can help.

- Prioritize repairs that are necessary for the safety and functionality of your home. Not everything is an emergency, so focus on the repairs you need vs. the ones you want. Repairing or replacing a roof can cost thousands of dollars, but neglecting to maintain your roof can lead to leaks, water damage, and structural issues, which can significantly increase the repair costs.
- Don't neglect routine maintenance and checkups. "Get your HVAC system inspected once a year. This way you can catch affordable problems before they morph into expensive emergencies," Lieberman says. The same goes for checking out your roof, siding, and foundation, and doing seasonal checkups on your gutters, caulking, pipes, and more.
- Leverage warranties. Many appliances, systems, and materials used in homes come with manufacturer warranties, which can cover the cost of

repairs or replacements within a certain time frame. “Homeowners should keep track of their warranties and utilize them when needed to save money on maintenance expenses,” Buskuhl says.

- Consider home warranties and insurance products. A home warranty provides coverage for repair or replacement costs of major systems and appliances in the house; you just pay a monthly or annual premium. “This valuable protection can alleviate the financial strain of unforeseen maintenance issues, ensuring peace of mind and financial security,” Buskuhl says. Just be sure to read the terms and conditions carefully so you understand what is covered and what isn’t. If you do add a home warranty, you can include the premium amount in your home maintenance budget.

HOW TO DO HOME MAINTENANCE TASKS?

Whether you're new to homeownership or you're a seasoned pro looking to sharpen your skills, these home maintenance tasks are worth getting to know. While you might already be familiar with a few of these home improvement projects, whether snaking a drain or changing an air filter, others might be new to you. In fact, you might not even realize some of the items on this list should be maintained (sorry in advance for changing your weekend plans).



- **Stop a Running Toilet**

Over time, a toilet's water line may begin to run continuously, leading to higher water usage. To fix a running toilet, start by determining why the toilet is running. The problem could be due to an overflow tube that's too short, the water level could be set too high, the flush valve chain could be too short, the flapper could be worn or warped, or the flush and fill valves could need replacing.

- **Reset a Tripped Breaker**

To reset a breaker, locate your home's electrical panel and identify the tripped breaker. It will be the breaker with a switch that isn't fully on. To reset the tripped breaker, move the switch fully to the "off" position, then return it to the "on" position.



- **Fix a Leaky Faucet**

Drip, drip, drip ... that's the sound of money going down your drain. When simply turning your faucet off a little tighter no longer prevents it from leaking, it's time to learn to fix a leaky faucet. You'll also need to know how to shut off the water for this DIY home repair.

- **Repair or Replace Window Screens**

When mild weather rolls in, give your air conditioning system a well-deserved break. However, doing so before making sure your window screens are up to snuff will result in a house full of uninvited guests. Learn to repair and replace window screens to ensure your home stays pest free.

- **Patch a Hole in Drywall**

If you're transitioning from renting a home to home ownership, you might have already learned how to patch drywall the right way (or, at least good enough to secure your damage deposit). If not, fixing drywall holes from minuscule to monstrous with professional results is easier than you might think.

- **Find a Wall Stud**

Once you move into your first home, you have an endless list of items, from pictures to TVs, to hang on the wall. Whether you're hanging artwork or anchoring furniture to protect pets and kids, one of the first things you need to learn is how to accurately find a wall stud. This simple task can be completed through various methods, whether you opt to use a stud finder or simply tap the wall and measure accordingly.

MAINTAIN SAFETY AT HOME

Home fire safety and house fires

Fires can start from many common household appliances.

They can spread quickly. If fire takes hold, get out, stay out and call 000.

You can learn how to:

- prevent common fires in your home
- use some basic firefighting equipment like extinguishers and fire blankets.

Read more about home fire safety at ACT Emergency Services Agency.

Removing sharps

Injecting equipment such as a needle or syringe is called a sharp.

If you find a sharp in a public place:

- Do not touch it. If possible, stand guard to make sure no-one gets hurt.
- Call the Sharps Hotline on 132 281.
- A city ranger from Urban Services will come and collect it.

If the sharp is:

- in your home, you're responsible for getting rid of it
- in a common area of a block of flats, call Housing ACT on 1800 950 255.

Mould

Mould is common inside Canberra homes. It can cause health issues for many people.

It often grows in areas where it's cold, dark and damp.

You'll often find it in laundries, bathrooms or kitchens if you don't use an extraction fan or other ventilation to remove moisture from showers, cooking or clothes dryers.

Learn how to prevent condensation or remove mould.

Asbestos

If your home was built before 1990, it may have asbestos.

- When you move in, you'll get an Asbestos Advisory form telling you:
- where asbestos is usually found in homes
- if Housing ACT knows where asbestos is on your property.

Materials with asbestos are not a health risk if you leave them alone and keep them in good condition.

If material with asbestos breaks down or you damage it, contact Programmed Maintenance on 02 6207 1500 immediately.

If you get work done on your property, you must tell the tradesperson in writing about the asbestos before they start work. This is the law. You can give them the Asbestos Advisory Form.

MOST IMPORTANT HOME MAINTENANCE TASKS

If you're not properly maintaining your home, the damage will become clear come inspection time. Leaky roofs, faulty HVAC systems, wood damage hinting at major structural problems. Oh, my!

But what exactly are the most important chores to prevent longterm (and expensive) damage? I went straight to the source—professional home inspectors—to ask them what you should focus on. Here, the half-dozen tasks and missteps homeowners often make when it comes to home maintenance 101.



1. Cleaning your gutters

Check and clean out your gutters, soffits, and fascia throughout the year to prevent debris from accumulating. If you don't, it could cause leaks, rotting, and other

expensive damage, says Benjamin Martin, a home inspector and president and lead inspector for Florida Certified Home Inspections.

“Once debris is carefully removed, any dirt or grime should be thoroughly cleaned and cleared; any missing caulk replaced; and holes, cracks, or loose areas repaired,” he says.

Plan to tackle this chore every spring and fall (or hire a professional if ladders make you queasy). Hot tip: Pine needles cause frequent gutter clogging. If you have a tree near your gutters, plan to do this more often.

2. Checking in on your air conditioning and heating system

Martin says the most ideal scenario is to hire an HVAC professional for semi-annual maintenance, focusing on cooling in the spring and heating in the fall.

“In the meantime, homeowners, especially those with pets, should change their filters once a month,” he says.

If you notice condensation gathering on your outdoor AC unit, don’t panic. Flush the condensate drain with soapy, hot water and vinegar. (If you’re new to this, look for the drain near the air handler. It’s usually made of PVC with an easy-to-access cap). If condensation continues to appear on the unit, if you notice drips, or the AC isn’t cooling, call in a licensed professional, Martin recommends.

3. Regularly flushing out clogs

Keeping your plumbing systems running smoothly will help you avoid leaks and water damage, Martin says. You should address small clogs as soon as they pop up. Yes, that means regularly removing the hair build-up in your shower (as unpleasant as it may be).

Also, check underneath your sinks and inside cabinets to see if there are any water spots or puddles. You may have a hidden leaks that need attention.

4. Calling the exterminator in a timely fashion

If you see a couple of bugs crawling, you may get a tad creeped out, but mostly annoyed. However, allowing bug problems to escalate could wreak major havoc on

your home, says Kathleen Kuhn, CEO and president of HouseMaster Home Inspections.

Wood-eating termites, for example, notoriously put a home's structural integrity at risk, causing expensive repairs down the line. Carpenter ants also damage the wood where they nest. Powderpost beetles are wood-boring insects, creating hollowed out spaces in your wood.

5. Draining your hot water heater.

Keeping your water heater running efficiently can greatly benefit your pocket: Replacing a hot water tank can cost up to \$4,500. Bodrozic says to drain your tank from the bottom at least once a year to get the sediment out, then refill it.

Ahh, don't you wish homeownership came with a user's manual? To help, we've come up with a list of maintenance tasks that every first time home owner should know about.



ESSENTIAL TOOLS YOU SHOULD HAVE FOR EFFICIENT CLEANING

Tackling stubborn stains, buildup grease, and hard water stains may seem like back-breaking tasks. Undoubtedly, these chores require time, energy and proper techniques.

Luckily, stocking up on essential tools and products can make your life easier. While smart cleaning gadgets focus on achieving efficient results, basic tools like brushes and sponges can help you fight stains and grime like a pro, especially living in a rented property in ACT.

With so many options on the market, it becomes difficult to make the right choices. So, here is a list of the most essential tools you must include in your cleaning caddy for a sparkling home. These can free up cleaning time while promoting a healthy and hygienic home environment.

Let's Get Started!



Microfiber Cloths: Dust, Absorb And Wipe

These are affordable, durable and versatile cleaning tools to simplify dusting. It can help fetch dust particles, dirt, pollen, and other loose debris from hard surfaces without leaving scratches behind.

It can also help absorb excess moisture or liquid from delicate surfaces like couches, carpets or rugs. Whether it is about sparkling mirrors or wiping down countertops, microfiber cloths and dusters can do everything without any stress.

A High-Quality Vacuum Cleaner

Investing in a good vacuum cleaner can be a game-changer for your home. It is a must-have tool for picking up embedded dirt, dust and grime from floors, carpets and crannies. However, choosing the right machine depends on your specific requirements. Below are some of the most popular types to help make the right decision for speed cleaning.

- Upright Vacuums: These are heavy-duty vacuums with powerful suction. These are apt for cleaning large carpets and floors.
- Canister Vacuums: Comes with separate canister units; these vacuum machines are ideal for stairs, upholstery and carpets. However, you need to empty the bin after every cleaning.
- Stick Vacuums: These are cordless and lightweight, ideal for quick cleaning. You can easily clean tight spaces with a cordless vacuum machine.
- Robotic Vacuums: These smart gadgets automatically navigate and detect dust on floors. It uses sensors and motions to keep your floors and crannies clean.
- Decide what you want as per your estimated budget and specific requirements.

Telescoping Dusters For Hard-To-Reach Spots

Many renowned end of lease cleaning in Canberra professionals recommend using a long-handled duster for the hidden spaces. It enables you to remove dust and debris from hard-to-reach spots, such as ceiling walls, window casings, top of cupboards, cabinets, etc.

The best part is that you don't need to climb a ladder or bend down. So, this tool is ideal for elders and people with mobility issues. It is also use for planning the end of lease cleaning routine when moving out of the property to prevent backaches.

Drill Scrub Brush

Believe it or not! Drill scrub brushes are revolutionary tools in the cleaning industry. These scrub brushes can help you clean grout lines, tiles, and other hard surfaces without putting any elbow grease.

From built-up grease to soap scum and other messes, you can efficiently clean surfaces using different types of brushes. It can help you clean hard-to-reach spots without any stress. It saves time and energy and can come in handy when you are performing end of lease cleaning.

Magic Erasers For Scrubbing

Nothing works better than magic erasers. These are environmentally-friendly tools to help remove soap scum, scuff marks and paint from almost all surfaces.

A magic eraser is made of melamine foam to make your scrubbing task easier and more effective. Wet it and scrub off the stains. It can help clean walls, windows, sinks, faucets, and other surfaces.

Tip: Test a small area before scrubbing the painted walls of your home.



Assorted Sponges

Stock up on different types of sponges in your cleaning caddy to wash dishes, wipe surfaces and absorb liquids. A non-abrasive sponge is ideal for removing spills and splatters from delicate surfaces and stainless steel. It is a perfect tool to clean your kitchen.

Buy a Scrub Daddy sponge from Amazon for efficient cleaning. It becomes soft when it comes in damped in warm water, while it turns abrasive to tackle stains and gunk when you use it with cold water.

A Rubber Squeegee

Achieve streak-free windows and glass shower doors with this single tool. It can help remove excess water or soap from the glass surface and hard to reach areas without leaving scratches or streaks behind. It is also helpful in preventing the appearance of water spots when used regularly after baths.

A Toilet Brush

A toilet brush is also a scrub brush designed especially for toilet bowls. Make sure you apply white vinegar and warm water solution to tackle brown stains and grime from the surface that becomes dirty with regular use.

Spread baking soda on the toilet bowl and then pour some white vinegar over it. Let it stay for 30 minutes. To dislodge stains, scrub the surface with a toilet brush. It can help you get into nooks and crannies.

Steam Cleaner For Carpets

This is one of the most efficient tools to make your life a lot easier. The tool uses hot water and steam to dislodge accumulated dust, dirt, pet stains, and germs from delicate floor coverings and upholstery without causing discolouration.

Make sure you pre-treat stains with vinegar and a warm water solution instead of using harsh chemicals on your carpets. Commercial cleaners can make your floor coverings lose their shine and colour.

Microfiber Mop Or A Mop Stick

Microfiber mops are perfect for removing grime, gunk and spills from hardwood floors. It requires less water and effectively mops the surface without much effort.

A mop stick is also an advanced gadget that can help remove stains and grime from hard surfaces, blinds, tiles and other delicate areas with ease.

If you are preparing a rented apartment during the end of your tenancy, contact the best professionals for a budget end of lease cleaning Canberra and avoid unnecessary rental disputes.



WRAPPING UP!!

Manage house cleaning chores with these 10 essential tools and promote a healthy, hygienic, sparkling abode. Make sure you use all-natural homemade cleaners, such as vinegar, hydrogen peroxide, and baking soda, combined with sponges, scrub brushes and other tools for effective results.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, "Homecare Essentials: An Ultimate Guide for Efficient Household Maintenance" serves as an invaluable resource for homeowners seeking to

optimize the upkeep of their homes. By emphasizing proactive strategies and practical tips, this guide aims to empower readers with the knowledge and tools necessary to maintain a well-functioning, comfortable living environment.

Throughout the guide, we explored essential aspects of household maintenance, starting with establishing effective cleaning routines tailored to different areas and surfaces. By incorporating eco-friendly products and efficient techniques, homeowners can achieve cleanliness while minimizing environmental impact.



Organizational tips provided in the guide help homeowners maximize space utilization and create clutter-free living spaces. From storage solutions to decluttering methods, maintaining an organized home not only enhances visual appeal but also contributes to a more harmonious living experience.

Addressing basic repairs promptly is another critical focus. By identifying and fixing minor issues early, homeowners can prevent them from escalating into costly repairs that could compromise the structural integrity of their homes.

Ultimately, "Homecare Essentials" aims to empower homeowners of all experience levels to take control of their home maintenance routines confidently. Whether you're a first-time homeowner or looking to refine your current practices, this guide equips you with actionable insights to achieve efficient and effective household maintenance for years to come.

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