



Tips and trends for homeowners, buyers and sellers

## Making Your Home Pet-Friendly

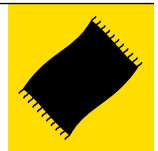
**H**ave you been thinking about adding a new furry, feathered or scaled friend to your household? Well before you make your way to the pet store, consider how you'll be able to make sure your home is as comfortable and safe as possible for your new companion.

**Choose a space that will be dedicated to your pet** — If you give your pet an ample amount of dedicated space of your home, they'll be less likely to sneak into the small, dangerous places where you don't want them wandering. If your pet is one that likes to wander beyond their allotted area, consider purchasing gates to create physical boundaries.



**Purchase trash cans with lids** — For pets that will grow tall enough or can jump high enough to access your trash cans, it will be well worth investing in cans that have a lid. Even better is a stainless-steel trash can with a lid that has a sensor and can only be opened by a hand motion.

**Hard vs. soft flooring** — There are pros and cons to the type of flooring you have for your pets. Hard surfaces like tile and hardwood are easier to clean, however softer surfaces like carpets and rugs may be easier for your pet to walk on. This will come down to your personal and pet's preferences.

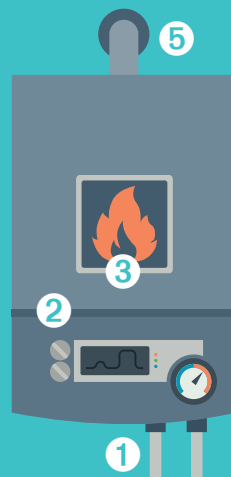


**Get a quality vacuum cleaner** — If you want to have carpets or rugs in your home, opt for materials that will sustain the least amount of damage. If you have a pet that sheds fur, you'll want to acquire a quality vacuum cleaner. There are some vacuum cleaners that are made specifically for pet hair to avoid potential jams and damage to the appliance.

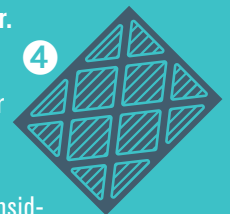
## Furnace Maintenance

Replacing a furnace is a large expense that you can easily avoid by taking the proper steps to maintain the one you have year to year. Furnace maintenance doesn't cost much, won't take too much time and will allow your home to be warmed more efficiently. Here's how you can best maintain your furnace this winter.

- 1. Examine the tubes and pipes** — Take a good look at the venting pipe, tubes, fasteners and gas line. If you smell rotten eggs, there's likely a gas leak.
- 2. Vacuum and dust** — The accumulation of dust and dirt will cause your furnace to function suboptimally. Use a small brush to dust off the smaller components of the furnace.
- 3. Clean the flame sensor** — You should clean your flame sensor once a year, as a dirty one can prevent the furnace from functioning all together.



- 4. Replace the filter** — It's critical for the longevity of your furnace that you change the filter often. Replacing the filter regularly can even save you a considerable amount on your energy bills. It's recommended that 1- to 2-inch filters be replaced every one to three months, every six to nine months for 3- to 4-inch filters and every 9 to 12 months for 5- to 6-inch filters.



- 5. Seal any air ducts that are leaking** — Using a special metal tape or high-temperature silicone, seal any leaky ducts, especially return air ducts.





**DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO IS THINKING ABOUT BUYING OR SELLING A HOME? PLEASE MENTION MY NAME.**

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## Can You Fix Your Own Plumbing?

**P**lumbing work can be costly, depending upon how complicated the problem is. To save money, it may make sense to tackle a smaller scale plumbing project yourself. Here's a guide on when you can do plumbing yourself and when you should pick up the phone to call for assistance.

### When to do it yourself



**Clearing out a backed-up drain** — If you have a drain that's running

slow, try pouring boiling water in the sink, followed by half a cup of baking soda. Let that combination sit for a bit, then follow up with one cup of vinegar and one cup of hot water. You'll want to block the drain to make sure the fizzing happens in the drain.



**Fixing a running toilet** — Did you know that

a running toilet can waste upwards of 200 gallons of water a day? This problem is usually caused by a faulty flapper valve. You'll want to find an exact replacement of your flapper valve, turn off the water, drain the tank and replace the valve.

**Unclogging a toilet** — A plunger can be one of your most useful household items. This is what you will want to use first when attempting to unclog a toilet at home. If this doesn't do the trick, try using a snake or auger, which you can pick up from any hardware store.



### When to call a professional



**Any kind of leak** — A leak may seem like a small problem, but there's always a chance that this seemingly small leak is leading to a larger issue. To save yourself from any future frustration, call a plumber to come out.



**Major appliance installations** — A licensed plumber will be able to properly install major appliances or fixtures. They will be able to troubleshoot problems that may come up, properly disconnect and reconnect pipes, as well as fix any damage sustained during the install.

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