



# Homeowner How-To Handbook

50 Simple Guides for a More Confident Homeowner

PRACTICAL  
KNOW-HOW

REAL  
SOLUTIONS

A STRONGER  
COMMUNITY

**Knowledge today. A more confident homeowner tomorrow.**

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# 1. How to Reset a GFCI Outlet

A quick homeowner check when an outlet suddenly loses power.

## STEPS

- 1 Unplug lamps, appliances, or other devices connected to the affected outlet.
- 2 Locate the GFCI outlet and press the RESET button firmly. You may feel or hear a click.
- 3 Plug in a small lamp or device to confirm that power has returned.
- 4 If the outlet will not reset, or it trips again after you reconnect a device, leave it alone and stop troubleshooting.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Keep GFCI outlets dry and accessible. They are commonly found in kitchens, bathrooms, garages, crawlspaces, and exterior locations.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if the GFCI repeatedly trips, will not reset, feels warm, looks scorched, buzzes, smells like it is burning, or has been exposed to water.

*Educational guide only. Follow manufacturer instructions and local requirements. When a repair exceeds your experience or presents an electrical, gas, structural, water-intrusion, or other safety hazard, use a qualified professional.*

## 2. How to Shut Off Your Home's Water

Knowing where the shutoff is can prevent a small leak from becoming major damage.

### STEPS

- 1 For a single leaking fixture, first look for the small shutoff valve serving that fixture.
- 2 For a larger leak, locate the home's main water shutoff.
- 3 For a wheel-style valve, turn clockwise. For a lever-style ball valve, turn the lever one-quarter turn until it is perpendicular to the pipe.
- 4 Open a faucet briefly to confirm the water has stopped. After the repair, reopen the valve slowly and check for leaks.

#### HOME READY PRO TIP

Label the main shutoff and make sure everyone in the household knows where it is.

#### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if the valve is seized, badly corroded, leaking, difficult to turn, or the water continues flowing after the valve is closed.

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# 3. How to Replace an HVAC Air Filter

One of the simplest ways to help protect airflow and HVAC performance.

## STEPS

- 1 Turn the HVAC system off at the thermostat.
- 2 Locate the filter at the return grille or air-handler filter slot.
- 3 Remove the old filter and confirm the replacement has the same dimensions.
- 4 Install the new filter with the airflow arrow pointing toward the blower or air handler.
- 5 Close the grille or filter cover and turn the system back on.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Write the installation date on the filter or keep a reminder on your calendar. Replacement frequency depends on the filter, household, pets, and system.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if the filter is wet or collapsed, you see ice or water around the system, airflow remains unusually weak, or the HVAC breaker trips.

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## 4. How to Fix a Running Toilet

A running toilet is often caused by a simple adjustment inside the tank.

### STEPS

- 1 Remove the tank lid and watch what happens during a flush.
- 2 Check whether the rubber flapper closes completely over the flush-valve opening.
- 3 Make sure the chain has a little slack and is not holding the flapper open.
- 4 Check the float and water level. Water should stop below the top of the overflow tube.
- 5 Flush several times to confirm the toilet fills and stops normally.

#### HOME READY PRO TIP

A few drops of food coloring in the tank can help reveal a leaking flapper if color appears in the bowl without flushing.

#### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if water is leaking onto the floor, the shutoff valve leaks, the tank or bowl is cracked, the toilet rocks, or the problem continues after basic adjustments.

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# 5. How to Re-Caulk a Tub or Shower

Fresh caulk helps keep water out of joints where it does not belong.

## STEPS

- 1 Remove the old caulk carefully without damaging the tub, shower, or tile.
- 2 Clean away residue and allow the joint to dry completely.
- 3 Apply a continuous bead of bathroom-rated silicone caulk.
- 4 Tool the bead smooth and remove excess material.
- 5 Allow the caulk to cure for the full time stated by the manufacturer before exposing it to water.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Preparation matters more than speed. New caulk adheres best to a clean, dry surface.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if tile is loose, the wall or floor feels soft, staining or mold keeps returning, or there are signs that water has traveled behind the finished surface.

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## 6. How to Patch a Small Drywall Hole

Small nail holes and minor wall damage are usually straightforward repairs.

### STEPS

- 1 Remove loose paper, paint, or damaged drywall around the small hole.
- 2 Apply a thin layer of lightweight spackle or patching compound.
- 3 Allow it to dry completely, then sand it smooth.
- 4 Apply a second thin coat if the patch is still visible or recessed.
- 5 Prime the repaired area and touch up the paint.

#### HOME READY PRO TIP

Several thin coats usually finish better than one heavy coat.

#### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if the drywall is wet or stained, the crack keeps returning, the damaged area is large, or wiring or plumbing is visible behind the opening.

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# 7. How to Fix a Squeaky Door

Most door squeaks come from a dry hinge or loose hinge screws.

## STEPS

- 1 Open and close the door slowly to identify which hinge is making noise.
- 2 Tighten loose hinge screws while supporting the door if needed.
- 3 Apply a small amount of appropriate hinge lubricant to the hinge pin and moving points.
- 4 Open and close the door several times to work in the lubricant.
- 5 Wipe away any excess.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Use lubricant sparingly. Too much can run down the door or collect dust.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if hinge screws will not hold, the frame is separating, the door binds badly, or the problem involves an exterior/security door that no longer closes correctly.

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## 8. How to Replace Door Weatherstripping

Worn weatherstripping can create drafts and allow moisture or insects around a door.

### STEPS

- 1 Identify the type and profile of the existing weatherstripping.
- 2 Remove the old material and clean the mounting surface.
- 3 Measure carefully and cut the replacement to fit.
- 4 Install the new strip according to its fastening method.
- 5 Close and latch the door to confirm an even seal without excessive resistance.

#### HOME READY PRO TIP

The goal is a continuous seal, not so much pressure that the door becomes difficult to latch.

#### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if the jamb is rotten, the door is significantly out of square, water is entering around the opening, or the latch no longer aligns correctly.

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# 9. How to Test Smoke & CO Alarms

Regular testing helps confirm that an important safety device can alert your household.

## STEPS

- 1 Tell everyone in the home that you are about to test the alarms.
- 2 Press and hold the TEST button according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- 3 If the alarms are interconnected, confirm the other alarms activate as expected.
- 4 Replace batteries and replace the alarm itself according to the manufacturer's instructions and service-life guidance.
- 5 Treat an actual smoke or carbon-monoxide emergency alarm as an emergency - not as a test.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Know the difference between a low-battery chirp and an emergency alarm. Keep manufacturer instructions for your specific models.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

If a CO or emergency alarm sounds outside of a planned test, leave the area and follow the alarm manufacturer's and local emergency guidance. Seek professional help for repeated unexplained activations.

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# 10. How to Clean a Dryer Vent

Lint buildup can reduce dryer performance and create a serious fire hazard.

## STEPS

- 1 Unplug the dryer before cleaning. If it is gas-connected, do not disturb the gas connection.
- 2 Clean the lint screen and accessible lint-screen cavity.
- 3 If safely accessible without disturbing gas or electrical connections, disconnect the vent section behind the dryer.
- 4 Use a dryer-vent brush and vacuum to remove accessible lint.
- 5 Reconnect the vent securely and check that air is exhausting properly at the exterior termination.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Clean the lint screen after every load and periodically check the exterior vent flap for restricted airflow.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if moving the dryer would disturb a gas connection, the vent is long or inaccessible, airflow remains weak, the dryer overheats, or you notice a burning smell.

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# 11. How to Reset a Tripped Breaker

A breaker reset is simple; repeated tripping is a warning that deserves attention.

## STEPS

- 1 Unplug or turn off devices on the affected circuit.
- 2 Locate the breaker that is tripped or sitting between ON and OFF.
- 3 Move the breaker firmly all the way to OFF.
- 4 Move it back to ON.
- 5 Reconnect devices one at a time. If the breaker trips again, leave it OFF.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Keep the electrical-panel directory legible so circuits are easy to identify during a problem.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if the breaker trips repeatedly, the panel or outlet is hot, you hear buzzing, see scorching, smell burning, or water is near electrical equipment.

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# 12. How to Fix a Loose Cabinet Door

Most modern cabinet hinges allow small alignment adjustments.

## STEPS

- 1 Support the cabinet door and tighten any obviously loose mounting screws.
- 2 Identify the hinge adjustment screws for side-to-side, depth, or height adjustment.
- 3 Make small adjustments - one screw and a small turn at a time.
- 4 Close the door frequently to check the reveal and clearance.
- 5 Stop when the door sits evenly and operates without rubbing.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Do not overtighten screws in particleboard or other engineered cabinet material; the screw hole can strip.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if screws will not hold, the cabinet box is loose, the door is cracked or unusually heavy, or normal hinge adjustments cannot restore alignment.

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# 13. How to Clear a Slow Bathroom Sink

Hair and soap buildup near the stopper are common causes of a slow bathroom sink.

## STEPS

- 1 Remove and clean the sink stopper.
- 2 Pull out any visible hair or debris near the drain opening.
- 3 Try a sink plunger, blocking the overflow opening with a damp cloth while plunging.
- 4 If you are comfortable doing so, place a bucket underneath and clean an accessible P-trap.
- 5 Reassemble the drain and run water while checking carefully for leaks.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Do not mix chemical drain cleaners. A simple mechanical cleaning is often safer and more effective for hair buildup.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if several fixtures back up at once, sewage is present, pipes are badly corroded, the trap leaks after reassembly, or the clog repeatedly returns.

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# 14. How to Replace a Toilet Flapper

A worn flapper can allow water to leak continuously from the tank into the bowl.

## STEPS

- 1 Turn off the toilet's water supply and flush to lower the tank water.
- 2 Unhook the old flapper from the flush valve and chain.
- 3 Install a compatible replacement flapper.
- 4 Reconnect the chain with a small amount of slack.
- 5 Turn the water back on, allow the tank to fill, and test several flushes.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Take the old flapper with you when shopping or identify the toilet model so you can match the replacement correctly.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if the shutoff valve leaks, the flush-valve assembly is damaged, the tank is cracked, or water continues leaking into the bowl after the new flapper is installed.

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# 15. How to Replace a Showerhead

Replacing a showerhead is a simple upgrade when the existing shower arm is secure.

## STEPS

- 1 Protect finished surfaces and carefully unscrew the old showerhead counterclockwise.
- 2 Clean old tape or debris from the shower-arm threads.
- 3 Follow the new showerhead manufacturer's directions for thread tape, washers, or seals.
- 4 Thread the new showerhead on by hand, keeping it straight.
- 5 Turn on the water and check the threaded connection for leaks.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Support the shower arm while working and avoid excessive force. Many showerheads only require hand tightening plus a small final adjustment.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if the shower arm moves inside the wall, the threads are damaged, water appears behind the trim, or stopping the leak requires excessive force.

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# 16. How to Safely Clear a Jammed Garbage Disposal

A simple reset or accessible obstruction may get a disposal working again.

## STEPS

- 1 Turn the disposal switch OFF and disconnect power at the plug or breaker before doing anything else.
- 2 Press the disposal's reset button if it has tripped.
- 3 If the manufacturer provides a wrench socket underneath, use the correct disposal wrench to gently work the motor back and forth.
- 4 Use tongs or pliers to remove only visible, accessible debris from above - never put your hand inside.
- 5 Restore power and test briefly with cold running water.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Never reach into a garbage disposal, even when it appears to be off. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for your model.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if the unit hums but will not turn, leaks from the body, repeatedly trips, has damaged wiring, or the jam cannot be safely cleared.

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# 17. How to Troubleshoot a Dripping Faucet

A persistent drip often comes from a worn internal seal, cartridge, or valve component.

## STEPS

- 1 Confirm which faucet and handle position is leaking.
- 2 Check the aerator and visible connections for looseness or mineral buildup.
- 3 If you plan to open the faucet, shut off the fixture's water supplies first and verify the water is off.
- 4 Identify the faucet manufacturer/model and obtain the correct cartridge, washer, or repair kit.
- 5 Reassemble according to the manufacturer's instructions and test for leaks.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Take photos during disassembly and keep small parts in order. Faucet internals vary significantly by brand and model.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if the shutoff valves leak or will not close, the faucet body is corroded, water is leaking below the sink, or the correct repair parts are uncertain.

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# 18. How to Replace a Toilet Fill Valve

A faulty fill valve can cause slow filling, noise, or water that will not shut off correctly.

## STEPS

- 1 Turn off the toilet water supply and flush to empty most of the tank.
- 2 Disconnect the supply line and place a towel or small container beneath the connection.
- 3 Remove the old fill valve according to its mounting design.
- 4 Install and adjust the replacement valve to the manufacturer's specified height and water level.
- 5 Reconnect the supply, turn the water on slowly, and check every connection for leaks.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Before buying a replacement, look inside the tank and note the existing valve type and available clearance.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if the shutoff valve leaks, the supply connection is corroded, the tank is cracked, or leaks continue after installation.

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# 19. How to Fix a Door That Won't Latch

A door that suddenly stops latching is often slightly out of alignment.

## STEPS

- 1 Tighten the hinge screws and check whether the door has dropped or shifted.
- 2 Close the door slowly and observe where the latch meets the strike plate.
- 3 Check for loose strike-plate screws or a very small alignment difference.
- 4 Make only minor adjustments to the strike plate when appropriate.
- 5 Test the door several times to confirm it latches without forcing it.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Start with the hinges before moving the strike plate. A loose top hinge can change the door position more than expected.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if the frame is split, the door is severely out of square, an exterior door no longer seals securely, or the problem appears structural.

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# 20. How to Repair a Small Window or Door Screen

Small screen damage can often be patched before it grows.

## STEPS

- 1 Clean the damaged area and trim loose strands carefully.
- 2 For a very small hole, install an appropriate screen patch according to its instructions.
- 3 For larger damage, remove the screen frame and old spline if you are comfortable replacing the mesh.
- 4 Lay new mesh square across the frame and install the correct-size spline without overstretching the screen.
- 5 Trim excess mesh and reinstall the screen.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Keep the mesh square and evenly tensioned. Pulling too tightly can bow a lightweight screen frame.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if the frame is bent or broken, the screen is part of a specialty/storm assembly, or removal requires working unsafely at height.

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# 21. How to Replace a Switch or Outlet Cover Plate

A cracked or stained cover plate is an easy cosmetic update when the electrical device itself is undamaged.

## STEPS

- 1 Make sure your hands and the surrounding area are dry.
- 2 For extra safety, turn off the circuit at the breaker before working around a damaged plate.
- 3 Remove only the cover-plate screw or screws - do not remove the electrical device from the box.
- 4 Position the matching replacement plate and tighten the screws gently.
- 5 Restore power if you turned the circuit off.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Do not overtighten plastic cover plates; they crack easily.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if the outlet or switch is loose, damaged, warm, scorched, buzzing, sparking, wet, or requires removal from the electrical box.

*Educational guide only. Follow manufacturer instructions and local requirements. When a repair exceeds your experience or presents an electrical, gas, structural, water-intrusion, or other safety hazard, use a qualified professional.*

# 22. How to Clean Gutters and Check Downspouts

Keeping roof drainage moving helps direct water away from the house.

## STEPS

- 1 From the ground, inspect gutters for obvious sagging, overflow staining, or disconnected downspouts.
- 2 Use only safe, stable access for sections you can reach without getting onto the roof.
- 3 Remove accessible leaves and debris while wearing gloves and eye protection.
- 4 Flush or test the downspout and confirm water exits freely.
- 5 Make sure discharge is directed away from the foundation and does not create erosion.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Ground-level observations during a rainstorm can reveal overflowing sections and drainage problems without climbing.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional when safe access requires roof work or difficult ladder positioning, or when gutters are loose, fascia is rotten, drainage is underground and blocked, or water is entering the home.

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## 23. How to Stop a Sink Leak at the P-Trap

A small drip at a slip-joint connection may come from a loose nut or misaligned washer.

### STEPS

- 1 Place a bucket and towel beneath the P-trap.
- 2 Dry the piping and run a little water to identify the exact leaking joint.
- 3 Hand-tighten a loose slip-joint nut slightly and test again.
- 4 If needed, disassemble the accessible joint and inspect the washer for damage or incorrect orientation.
- 5 Reassemble the trap squarely, run water, and check carefully for leaks.

#### HOME READY PRO TIP

Slip-joint fittings generally seal with their washers, not by extreme tightening. Overtightening can damage plastic parts.

#### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if the piping is corroded, cracked, glued in place, leaking inside the wall, repeatedly separates, or you cannot stop the leak without excessive force.

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# 24. How to Fix a Sticking Interior Door

Before sanding a door, determine why it is rubbing.

## STEPS

- 1 Open and close the door slowly and identify the exact contact point.
- 2 Tighten loose hinge screws and check for hinge movement.
- 3 Look for heavy paint buildup or a loose hinge before removing any wood.
- 4 Check whether seasonal humidity may be causing temporary swelling.
- 5 If a very minor high spot remains and the door is solid wood, carefully address only that area and reseal exposed wood as appropriate.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Do not start by aggressively sanding or planing the door. Alignment problems often originate at the hinges.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if the frame is moving, the opening is badly out of square, cracks are developing nearby, or an exterior/fire-rated door is involved.

*Educational guide only. Follow manufacturer instructions and local requirements. When a repair exceeds your experience or presents an electrical, gas, structural, water-intrusion, or other safety hazard, use a qualified professional.*

# 25. How to Repair Nail Pops and Minor Drywall Cracks

Minor finish defects are common, but recurring movement deserves a closer look.

## STEPS

- 1 For a nail or screw pop, remove loose compound and determine whether the fastener is still secure.
- 2 Secure the drywall appropriately near the affected spot if needed without damaging concealed utilities.
- 3 Cover the repair with joint compound in thin coats.
- 4 For a small stable crack, remove loose material and use appropriate tape/compound where needed.
- 5 Sand, prime, and paint after the repair is completely dry.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Mark the ends of a questionable crack lightly with pencil and monitor it. A crack that continues growing should not simply be covered repeatedly.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if cracks are wide, recurring, diagonal from doors/windows, accompanied by sticking doors or uneven floors, or the drywall is wet or stained.

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# 26. How to Replace a Faucet Aerator

Restore a cleaner, more even faucet stream with a simple maintenance step.

## STEPS

- 1 Close the faucet and place a towel in the sink so small parts cannot fall down the drain.
- 2 Unscrew the aerator from the faucet tip, protecting the finish if a tool is needed.
- 3 Note the order of the internal screens and washers, then rinse away debris or mineral buildup.
- 4 Install a compatible cleaned or replacement aerator and washer.
- 5 Turn the faucet on slowly and check the stream and connection for leaks.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Keep the old aerator until you know the replacement fits correctly. Thread size and style vary by faucet.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if the faucet tip or threads are damaged, the faucet body is loose, or leaking continues from somewhere other than the aerator.

*Educational guide only. Follow manufacturer instructions and local requirements. When a repair exceeds your experience or presents an electrical, gas, structural, water-intrusion, or other safety hazard, use a qualified professional.*

# 27. How to Fix a Loose Toilet Seat

A shifting toilet seat is usually a hardware problem, not a plumbing problem.

## STEPS

- 1 Locate the mounting bolts or fasteners at the back of the seat.
- 2 Hold the nut or mounting hardware underneath while tightening from above when required.
- 3 Center the seat on the bowl before final tightening.
- 4 If the hardware is damaged or will not stay tight, replace it with a compatible toilet-seat mounting kit.
- 5 Test the seat for secure movement without overtightening the porcelain-mounted hardware.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Many modern seats hide the mounting screws beneath small plastic caps. Open them gently.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if the toilet itself rocks, the porcelain is cracked, or the mounting area is damaged.

*Educational guide only. Follow manufacturer instructions and local requirements. When a repair exceeds your experience or presents an electrical, gas, structural, water-intrusion, or other safety hazard, use a qualified professional.*

# 28. How to Unclog a Tub or Shower Drain

Hair and soap buildup near the drain are common causes of slow drainage.

## STEPS

- 1 Remove the stopper or accessible drain cover according to its design.
- 2 Pull out visible hair and debris using an appropriate drain-cleaning tool.
- 3 Run warm water to see whether drainage improves.
- 4 If needed, use a small drain snake designed for the fixture and follow its instructions.
- 5 Reinstall the stopper or cover and test the drain.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Avoid mixing drain chemicals. Mechanical removal is often effective for hair clogs close to the drain.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if multiple fixtures back up, sewage appears, the clog repeatedly returns, or the drain cannot be cleared without forcing equipment.

*Educational guide only. Follow manufacturer instructions and local requirements. When a repair exceeds your experience or presents an electrical, gas, structural, water-intrusion, or other safety hazard, use a qualified professional.*

# 29. How to Clean a Showerhead

Mineral buildup can reduce flow and distort the spray pattern.

## STEPS

- 1 Turn the shower off and inspect the spray openings for visible mineral deposits.
- 2 Wipe the face and flexible spray nozzles gently according to the manufacturer's care instructions.
- 3 If the manufacturer permits it, soak the removable showerhead or affected portion in an appropriate descaling solution.
- 4 Rinse thoroughly and reinstall any removed parts.
- 5 Run the shower and confirm an even spray without leaks.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Check the manufacturer's finish-care instructions before using vinegar or other cleaners; some finishes can be damaged.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if flow remains poor throughout the shower, the shower arm moves in the wall, or water leaks behind the trim.

*Educational guide only. Follow manufacturer instructions and local requirements. When a repair exceeds your experience or presents an electrical, gas, structural, water-intrusion, or other safety hazard, use a qualified professional.*

# 30. How to Check Under a Sink for Leaks

A quick inspection can catch small leaks before they damage the cabinet or floor.

## STEPS

- 1 Empty enough of the cabinet to see the supply valves, supply lines, drain, and faucet connections.
- 2 Dry the area completely with a towel.
- 3 Run both hot and cold water while watching each connection.
- 4 Fill and drain the sink to check the drain and P-trap under a larger volume of water.
- 5 Feel around connections with a dry paper towel to locate very small drips.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Look for swelling, staining, rust, musty odor, or softened cabinet material even when no active drip is visible.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if a shutoff valve leaks, piping is corroded, water appears to come from inside the wall, or cabinet/floor damage suggests a concealed leak.

*Educational guide only. Follow manufacturer instructions and local requirements. When a repair exceeds your experience or presents an electrical, gas, structural, water-intrusion, or other safety hazard, use a qualified professional.*



# 31. How to Replace a Flexible Toilet Supply Line

An accessible flexible supply line can be replaced when its connections and shutoff valve are in good condition.

## STEPS

- 1 Turn off the toilet shutoff valve and flush the toilet to verify the water is off.
- 2 Place a towel beneath the connections and disconnect the old supply line.
- 3 Confirm the replacement line has the correct length and connection sizes.
- 4 Install the new line without twisting or kinking it, following the manufacturer's instructions.
- 5 Turn the water on slowly and check both connections carefully for leaks.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Do not reuse a supply line that is kinked, corroded, damaged, or questionable.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if the shutoff valve will not close, leaks when operated, piping is corroded, or the connection cannot be made without excessive force.

*Educational guide only. Follow manufacturer instructions and local requirements. When a repair exceeds your experience or presents an electrical, gas, structural, water-intrusion, or other safety hazard, use a qualified professional.*

## 32. How to Clean a Dishwasher Filter

A clean dishwasher filter can help with drainage, odors, and food residue.

### STEPS

- 1 Turn the dishwasher off and remove the lower rack.
- 2 Locate the filter using the owner's manual for your model.
- 3 Remove the filter according to the manufacturer's directions.
- 4 Rinse away food debris with warm water and a soft brush if permitted.
- 5 Reinstall the filter securely before running the dishwasher.

#### HOME READY PRO TIP

Do not force a filter that will not turn or release. Dishwasher filter designs vary significantly.

#### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if the dishwasher will not drain, leaks onto the floor, displays recurring error codes, or has standing water after the filter is cleaned.

*Educational guide only. Follow manufacturer instructions and local requirements. When a repair exceeds your experience or presents an electrical, gas, structural, water-intrusion, or other safety hazard, use a qualified professional.*

# 33. How to Clean a Washing Machine Drain Filter

Some front-load and other washers have an accessible pump filter that needs periodic cleaning.

## STEPS

- 1 Confirm your washer has a homeowner-accessible drain or pump filter by checking the owner's manual.
- 2 Unplug the washer and place towels and a shallow container near the access door.
- 3 Drain residual water using the manufacturer's procedure before removing the filter.
- 4 Clean debris from the filter and accessible housing without reaching into moving components.
- 5 Reinstall the filter securely and test the washer for leaks.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Expect residual water. Protect nearby flooring before opening the filter access.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if the filter is inaccessible, the washer will not drain, the pump makes abnormal noises, water leaks from the machine, or error codes continue.

*Educational guide only. Follow manufacturer instructions and local requirements. When a repair exceeds your experience or presents an electrical, gas, structural, water-intrusion, or other safety hazard, use a qualified professional.*

# 34. How to Clean Refrigerator Coils

Removing accessible dust can improve airflow around the refrigerator.

## STEPS

- 1 Unplug the refrigerator before cleaning accessible coil areas.
- 2 Use the owner's manual to locate the condenser coils or ventilation area.
- 3 Remove only homeowner-accessible grilles or covers.
- 4 Use a soft coil brush and vacuum to remove dust without bending components.
- 5 Reinstall covers, restore power, and make sure ventilation openings remain clear.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Some newer refrigerators have coil arrangements that are not intended for routine homeowner access. Follow the appliance manual.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if the refrigerator is not cooling properly, runs continuously, makes abnormal noises, or accessing the coils requires disassembling the appliance.

*Educational guide only. Follow manufacturer instructions and local requirements. When a repair exceeds your experience or presents an electrical, gas, structural, water-intrusion, or other safety hazard, use a qualified professional.*

# 35. How to Change a Refrigerator Water Filter

Replacing the correct filter helps maintain the refrigerator's water and ice system.

## STEPS

- 1 Identify the refrigerator model and correct replacement filter.
- 2 Locate the filter using the owner's manual.
- 3 Remove the old filter according to the manufacturer's procedure.
- 4 Install the new filter fully and reset the filter indicator if applicable.
- 5 Flush the required amount of water according to the manufacturer before normal use.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Use the exact filter type specified for the refrigerator. Similar-looking filters may not seal correctly.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if the filter housing leaks, the filter will not release or lock into place, or water flow remains abnormal after proper installation.

*Educational guide only. Follow manufacturer instructions and local requirements. When a repair exceeds your experience or presents an electrical, gas, structural, water-intrusion, or other safety hazard, use a qualified professional.*

# 36. How to Clean a Range Hood Filter

Grease buildup reduces airflow and can become difficult to remove if neglected.

## STEPS

- 1 Turn the hood and cooking surface off and allow everything to cool.
- 2 Remove the filter according to the hood manufacturer's instructions.
- 3 Determine whether the filter is washable or disposable.
- 4 Clean a washable filter with the manufacturer-approved method, or replace a disposable filter.
- 5 Allow washable filters to dry completely before reinstalling them.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Check the filter more often if you fry or cook with oils frequently.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if the hood fan does not operate correctly, wiring is exposed, the duct appears blocked, or grease buildup extends into inaccessible ductwork.

*Educational guide only. Follow manufacturer instructions and local requirements. When a repair exceeds your experience or presents an electrical, gas, structural, water-intrusion, or other safety hazard, use a qualified professional.*

# 37. How to Clean a Bathroom Exhaust Fan

Dust buildup can reduce the fan's ability to remove bathroom humidity.

## STEPS

- 1 Turn the fan off and switch off its circuit if the manufacturer's cleaning instructions require it.
- 2 Remove the grille carefully according to its attachment style.
- 3 Vacuum dust from the grille and homeowner-accessible fan surfaces without disturbing wiring.
- 4 Wash the grille if the manufacturer permits it and let it dry completely.
- 5 Reinstall the grille and test the fan.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

A fan that runs but does not clear humidity may have a duct or airflow problem rather than just a dirty grille.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if wiring is exposed, the fan is unusually noisy, the housing is loose, moisture is collecting around it, or airflow remains poor after cleaning.

*Educational guide only. Follow manufacturer instructions and local requirements. When a repair exceeds your experience or presents an electrical, gas, structural, water-intrusion, or other safety hazard, use a qualified professional.*

# 38. How to Check an HVAC Condensate Drain

A blocked condensate drain can lead to water around the HVAC system.

## STEPS

- 1 Turn the HVAC system off before inspecting the condensate area.
- 2 Locate only the homeowner-accessible condensate drain and termination points.
- 3 Look for standing water, algae buildup, a full auxiliary pan, or signs of previous overflow.
- 4 If your system has a manufacturer-approved accessible cleanout, follow the system's maintenance instructions.
- 5 Restore operation only when the drain area is dry and appears to be flowing normally.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Water around an air handler should never be ignored. Even a small recurring amount can damage ceilings, floors, or framing.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call an HVAC professional if the drain repeatedly clogs, the auxiliary pan contains water, a safety switch has shut the system down, or accessing the drain requires opening HVAC equipment.

*Educational guide only. Follow manufacturer instructions and local requirements. When a repair exceeds your experience or presents an electrical, gas, structural, water-intrusion, or other safety hazard, use a qualified professional.*



# 39. How to Clean Around Your Outdoor HVAC Unit

Keeping the outdoor unit clear helps maintain unobstructed airflow.

## STEPS

- 1 Turn the HVAC system off before working around the outdoor unit.
- 2 Remove loose leaves, grass, and debris from around the cabinet by hand.
- 3 Maintain reasonable clearance around the unit according to the manufacturer.
- 4 Gently remove surface debris from the exterior coil guard without bending fins or opening electrical panels.
- 5 Restore operation and keep landscaping from growing against the unit.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Direct mower discharge away from the outdoor unit to reduce grass buildup on the coil.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call an HVAC professional if the coil is heavily impacted, fins are badly damaged, the unit is icing, wiring is damaged, or cleaning requires removing service panels.

*Educational guide only. Follow manufacturer instructions and local requirements. When a repair exceeds your experience or presents an electrical, gas, structural, water-intrusion, or other safety hazard, use a qualified professional.*

# 40. How to Check Your Water Heater for Problems

A visual check can reveal warning signs before a water heater failure becomes a larger problem.

## STEPS

- 1 Look around the base and nearby piping for active water, staining, or corrosion.
- 2 Inspect visible supply connections and the drain area without operating safety valves unless instructed by the manufacturer.
- 3 Listen for new or unusual noises during normal operation.
- 4 Look for rust, bulging, scorching, or moisture around the unit.
- 5 Keep stored items and combustible materials away from the water heater as required.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Know the approximate age and type of your water heater and keep its model and serial number in your home records.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional for any active leak, gas odor, combustion concern, electrical burning, bulging tank, significant corrosion, or repeated loss of hot water.

*Educational guide only. Follow manufacturer instructions and local requirements. When a repair exceeds your experience or presents an electrical, gas, structural, water-intrusion, or other safety hazard, use a qualified professional.*

# 41. How to Check and Replace Exterior Caulk

Failed exterior sealant can allow water into joints around windows, doors, and penetrations.

## STEPS

- 1 Inspect accessible exterior joints for cracks, gaps, separation, or missing sealant.
- 2 Remove only loose failed caulk where the joint is intended to be sealed.
- 3 Clean and dry the joint thoroughly.
- 4 Apply an exterior sealant compatible with the surrounding materials and exposure.
- 5 Tool the joint as needed and allow it to cure according to the manufacturer.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Do not seal intentional drainage openings, weep holes, or ventilation paths.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if the surrounding wood is rotten, siding is loose, water has entered the wall, the correct joint design is uncertain, or safe access requires working at height.

*Educational guide only. Follow manufacturer instructions and local requirements. When a repair exceeds your experience or presents an electrical, gas, structural, water-intrusion, or other safety hazard, use a qualified professional.*

# 42. How to Inspect Your Roof From the Ground

You can spot many roof warning signs without climbing onto the roof.

## STEPS

- 1 Walk around the home from the ground and view the roof from several angles.
- 2 Look for missing, lifted, curled, or visibly damaged shingles.
- 3 Check visible flashing areas, roof edges, gutters, and penetrations for obvious damage.
- 4 Look for sagging rooflines, debris accumulation, or tree limbs touching the roof.
- 5 After storms, repeat the inspection and check ceilings/attic areas for new staining.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Binoculars or a zoom camera can improve a ground-level inspection without creating a fall hazard.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a roofing professional for suspected roof damage, active leaks, sagging, damaged flashing, or anything that would require climbing onto the roof.

*Educational guide only. Follow manufacturer instructions and local requirements. When a repair exceeds your experience or presents an electrical, gas, structural, water-intrusion, or other safety hazard, use a qualified professional.*

# 43. How to Check Your Home's Drainage After a Storm

Watching where water goes during and after rain can reveal drainage problems early.

## STEPS

- 1 Walk the property from safe ground after a substantial rain.
- 2 Look for standing water near the foundation, crawlspace, or basement walls.
- 3 Check whether downspouts discharge and whether gutters appear to have overflowed.
- 4 Look for soil erosion, washed mulch, channels, or water moving toward the house.
- 5 Note problem locations so drainage corrections can address the actual water path.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Photos taken during or immediately after rain can be extremely helpful when diagnosing intermittent drainage issues.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if water enters the home, foundation areas remain saturated, erosion is significant, underground drains are blocked, or grading appears to direct water toward the structure.

*Educational guide only. Follow manufacturer instructions and local requirements. When a repair exceeds your experience or presents an electrical, gas, structural, water-intrusion, or other safety hazard, use a qualified professional.*

# 44. How to Inspect Your Crawlspace for Moisture

A basic visual and odor check can help identify moisture problems before they spread.

## STEPS

- 1 Enter only if the crawlspace is safely accessible and you are comfortable doing so; otherwise inspect from the access opening.
- 2 Look for standing water, damp soil, wet insulation, staining, or condensation.
- 3 Notice musty odors or visible fungal-like growth without disturbing it.
- 4 Check the vapor barrier for large gaps, displacement, or pooled water.
- 5 Look for obvious plumbing leaks or daylight where exterior openings should be sealed.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Use a flashlight and avoid disturbing insulation, unknown materials, wiring, or suspected mold.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional for standing water, structural damage, significant growth, persistent high moisture, sewage, pests, unsafe access, or suspected hazardous materials.

*Educational guide only. Follow manufacturer instructions and local requirements. When a repair exceeds your experience or presents an electrical, gas, structural, water-intrusion, or other safety hazard, use a qualified professional.*

# 45. How to Check Your Attic for Leaks

Attic staining can reveal roof or condensation problems before they appear in finished rooms.

## STEPS

- 1 Inspect only from safe flooring or designated walk areas; do not step between ceiling joists.
- 2 Use a flashlight to look at roof decking, rafters, and insulation for staining or dampness.
- 3 Look around roof penetrations and valleys for evidence of previous water entry.
- 4 Check for compressed or visibly wet insulation and signs of condensation.
- 5 Document suspicious areas and compare them after the next rain.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Attics can contain exposed wiring, extreme heat, nails, low framing, and unsupported ceiling surfaces. Limit the inspection to safe accessible areas.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if you find active moisture, widespread staining, damaged framing, mold-like growth, unsafe access, or anything requiring roof access.

*Educational guide only. Follow manufacturer instructions and local requirements. When a repair exceeds your experience or presents an electrical, gas, structural, water-intrusion, or other safety hazard, use a qualified professional.*

# 46. How to Fix a Loose Interior Handrail

A secure handrail is a safety item, so looseness should be addressed promptly.

## STEPS

- 1 Stop using the rail for heavy support until you understand why it is loose.
- 2 Check whether accessible bracket screws are visibly loose.
- 3 Tighten only fasteners that are clearly anchored into solid framing or approved blocking.
- 4 Test the rail gently after tightening; it should not move at the wall or bracket.
- 5 If the fastener spins or will not tighten, stop rather than installing a larger screw blindly.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

A handrail should be anchored into structure, not merely drywall.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if brackets have pulled from the wall, framing is uncertain, the rail or bracket is damaged, or the repair affects a stair guard or other fall-protection system.

*Educational guide only. Follow manufacturer instructions and local requirements. When a repair exceeds your experience or presents an electrical, gas, structural, water-intrusion, or other safety hazard, use a qualified professional.*



# 47. How to Touch Up Interior Paint

Good touch-ups depend on matching both the color and the sheen.

## STEPS

- 1 Confirm the original paint color, product, and sheen whenever possible.
- 2 Clean the area and repair any small surface defects first.
- 3 Stir the touch-up paint thoroughly.
- 4 Use an application method similar to the original finish and apply a small amount.
- 5 Feather the edges and allow the paint to dry fully before deciding whether another coat is needed.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Even the correct color can flash if the sheen, roller texture, age, or lighting differs. Sometimes painting the full wall gives the best result.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional when there is widespread peeling, water staining, recurring cracking, suspected lead-based paint, or a larger finish problem that requires extensive preparation.

*Educational guide only. Follow manufacturer instructions and local requirements. When a repair exceeds your experience or presents an electrical, gas, structural, water-intrusion, or other safety hazard, use a qualified professional.*

# 48. How to Repair Minor Baseboard or Trim Damage

Small dents, nail holes, and failed caulk joints can often be refreshed without replacing the trim.

## STEPS

- 1 Clean the damaged area and remove loose paint or failed caulk.
- 2 Fill small nail holes or minor dents with an appropriate filler.
- 3 Sand the repair smooth after it dries.
- 4 Re-caulk only joints that are intended to be caulked, then allow the material to cure.
- 5 Prime bare repairs as needed and touch up with matching trim paint.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Do not caulk gaps that are caused by active movement until you understand why the trim is separating.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional if trim is rotten, swollen from water, pulling away repeatedly, or the damage suggests a leak, pest problem, or structural movement.

*Educational guide only. Follow manufacturer instructions and local requirements. When a repair exceeds your experience or presents an electrical, gas, structural, water-intrusion, or other safety hazard, use a qualified professional.*

# 49. How to Address Minor Bathroom Surface Mildew

Small surface mildew often points to excess humidity, but recurring growth can signal a larger moisture issue.

## STEPS

- 1 Wear appropriate household cleaning protection and ventilate the bathroom.
- 2 Clean only small surface areas using a product approved for that surface and follow the label exactly.
- 3 Dry the area completely after cleaning.
- 4 Use the exhaust fan during bathing and continue running it afterward as appropriate.
- 5 Watch the area over the following weeks for returning discoloration or moisture.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Do not paint or caulk over recurring growth without addressing the moisture source first.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a professional for widespread or recurring growth, soft or damaged materials, sewage contamination, suspected hidden moisture, health concerns, or growth involving HVAC systems or large concealed areas.

*Educational guide only. Follow manufacturer instructions and local requirements. When a repair exceeds your experience or presents an electrical, gas, structural, water-intrusion, or other safety hazard, use a qualified professional.*

# 50. How to Perform a 15-Minute Monthly Home Check

A short routine can help you notice small changes before they become expensive surprises.

## STEPS

- 1 Walk through bathrooms, kitchen, laundry, and utility areas looking under fixtures and appliances for water or staining.
- 2 Look at ceilings and walls for new discoloration, cracks, bubbling paint, or moisture.
- 3 Check HVAC returns, filters, visible drain areas, and unusual sounds or odors.
- 4 Walk the exterior from the ground and look at gutters, downspouts, siding, roofline, and drainage.
- 5 Confirm smoke/CO alarms appear intact, note anything needing attention, and schedule repairs before they grow.

### HOME READY PRO TIP

Use the same route each month and keep a simple dated note or photo when something changes.

### STOP & CALL A PROFESSIONAL

Call a qualified professional whenever your monthly check reveals electrical burning, gas odor, active water intrusion, structural movement, sewage, significant mold-like growth, or another condition outside normal homeowner maintenance.

*Educational guide only. Follow manufacturer instructions and local requirements. When a repair exceeds your experience or presents an electrical, gas, structural, water-intrusion, or other safety hazard, use a qualified professional.*