

PK PUBLISHING • HOME & DIY

The Seasonal Home Maintenance Checklist

Every job your house needs, sorted by season — with how long each one takes, what it costs, and what it costs you if you skip it.

70 tasks • 5 sections • print it and tick it off

Times, parts costs and pro rates included

Conditional jobs marked, so you can ignore what you don't have

PK Publishing

How to use this: not every task applies to every house. Anything that depends on what you own — a septic tank, a pool, gutters, a fireplace — is marked *only if*. Skip those freely. Work through the rest once a season and you will catch nearly every expensive failure while it is still cheap.

Every Season

7 TASKS

Recurring jobs that don't wait for the calendar

☐ Replace HVAC air filter HVAC

10 min · ~\$18 in parts · **only if you have heating or AC**

Slide the old filter out, note the size printed on the frame, and put the new one in with the airflow arrow pointing toward the furnace or air handler.

Why it matters: A clogged filter chokes airflow, drives up your power bill, and is the single most common cause of a frozen coil or a burnt-out blower motor.

☐ Test smoke & CO detectors SAFETY

10 min

Hold the test button on each unit until it sounds. Replace any detector older than 10 years — the date is printed on the back.

Why it matters: Detectors fail silently. A one-minute test each month is the cheapest life-safety insurance you own.

☐ Run water in unused drains WATER

5 min

Run every seldom-used sink, tub, and floor drain for 30 seconds to refill the P-trap.

Why it matters: A dry trap lets sewer gas straight into the house.

☐ Check water softener salt WATER

10 min · ~\$9 in parts · **only if you have a water softener**

Lift the brine tank lid. Keep salt at least a third full and break up any crusted 'salt bridge' with a broom handle.

Why it matters: An empty or bridged tank quietly stops softening, and hard water scales up your water heater and fixtures.

☐ Clean the garbage disposal APPLIANCES

10 min · ~\$2 in parts

Grind a tray of ice cubes with a cup of coarse salt, then a halved lemon. Scrub the rubber splash guard underneath.

Why it matters: The smell almost always lives on the splash guard, not in the drain.

☐ **Clean dishwasher filter** APPLIANCES

15 min

Twist out the cylindrical filter in the floor of the tub, rinse it under hot water with a soft brush, and reseal it until it clicks.

Why it matters: A blocked filter is the number one reason dishes come out gritty and the machine smells.

☐ **Degrease range hood filter** APPLIANCES

15 min • ~\$2 in parts

Pop the metal mesh filter out and soak it in very hot water with dish soap and a scoop of baking soda, then rinse and dry.

Why it matters: Grease-saturated mesh stops venting and becomes a genuine fire risk over a gas range.

Undo winter's damage and get ahead of the growing season

☐ **Inspect the roof after winter** ROOF

45 min · \$200 if you hire it out

From the ground with binoculars, look for lifted, cracked, or missing shingles, damaged flashing at the chimney and vents, and granules collecting at the downspout outlets.

Why it matters: Catching three bad shingles in spring costs nothing. Finding them after they leak means drywall, insulation, and possibly framing.

☐ **Clean gutters & downspouts** ROOF

90 min · \$175 if you hire it out · **only if you have gutters**

Scoop out debris, flush each run with a hose, and confirm every downspout discharges at least four feet from the foundation.

Why it matters: Overflowing gutters dump water straight against the foundation — the root cause of most wet basements.

☐ **Service the AC before cooling season** HVAC

60 min · \$150 if you hire it out · **only if you have air conditioning**

Book a tune-up: refrigerant charge, coil cleaning, capacitor and contactor check, condensate drain flush.

Why it matters: Nearly every mid-July no-cool call is something a spring tune-up would have caught for a fraction of the emergency rate.

☐ **Clear & rinse the AC condenser** HVAC

30 min · **only if you have air conditioning**

Kill power at the disconnect. Pull leaves and seed pods out of the cage, then rinse the fins from the inside out with a gentle hose spray. Keep two feet clear all around.

Why it matters: A dirty outdoor coil can add 20–30% to cooling costs and shorten compressor life.

☐ **Test the sump pump** WATER

15 min · **only if you have a sump pump**

Pour five gallons of water into the pit. The float should trip, the pump should clear the pit and shut off cleanly. Check the discharge line outside is not blocked.

Why it matters: Spring thaw and spring storms are exactly when a seized pump gets discovered the hard way.

☐ **Inspect exterior caulk & seals** EXTERIOR

60 min · ~\$22 in parts · \$250 if you hire it out

Walk the perimeter and check the caulk joints around windows, doors, trim, and any pipe or wire penetration. Cut out anything cracked or pulled away and re-caulk.

Why it matters: Every failed bead is an open invitation for water and insects behind your siding.

☐ **Check foundation & grading** EXTERIOR

40 min

Look for new or widening cracks — mark and date them with a pencil so you can tell later if they move. Confirm soil slopes away from the house about an inch per foot for the first six feet.

Why it matters: Grading that has settled flat over the years is the quietest and most expensive drainage problem a house develops.

☐ **Check outdoor faucets for freeze damage** WATER

15 min

Turn each hose bib on with your thumb over the opening. If you can stop the flow with your thumb, the pipe behind it has likely split.

Why it matters: A cracked sill cock only leaks when it's on — usually into the wall cavity, unseen, all summer.

☐ **Clean the dryer vent duct** SAFETY

45 min · ~\$30 in parts · \$150 if you hire it out

Pull the dryer out, disconnect the duct, and brush it through end to end. Check the exterior flap opens freely.

Why it matters: Lint in the duct causes thousands of house fires a year and adds 20+ minutes to every load.

☐ **Inspect & rehang window screens** EXTERIOR

60 min · ~\$15 in parts

Wash the screens, patch small holes with a screen repair kit, and swap out storm windows.

Why it matters: Cheap to do now, and it's the difference between an open-window spring and a sealed-up one.

☐ **Inspect the attic for leaks & pests** ROOF

30 min · **only if you have an attic**

With a bright flashlight, look for water staining on the sheathing, matted or tunnelled insulation, and daylight around vents.

Why it matters: Roof leaks show up in the attic months before they show up on your ceiling.

☐ **Vacuum refrigerator coils** APPLIANCES

20 min

Unplug the fridge, pull it out, and vacuum the condenser coils at the back or behind the toe-kick grille.

Why it matters: Dust-blanketed coils make the compressor run constantly — it's the most common cause of a fridge dying young.

☐ **Start up & test the irrigation system** YARD

60 min · \$110 if you hire it out · **only if you have irrigation**

Open the main slowly, then run each zone and watch for broken heads, misaimed spray, and soggy spots that mean a cracked line.

Why it matters: A single broken head can waste hundreds of gallons a week before anyone notices.

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- ☐ **Service mower & small engines** SEASONAL
60 min • ~\$35 in parts • \$95 if you hire it out • **only if you have a yard**
Fresh oil, new spark plug, clean or replace the air filter, and a sharpened blade.
Why it matters: A dull blade tears grass instead of cutting it, which browns the lawn and invites disease.
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- ☐ **Open the pool** SEASONAL
180 min • ~\$150 in parts • \$400 if you hire it out • **only if you have a pool**
Remove and clean the cover, reinstall the ladder and fittings, restart the pump, then shock and balance the water.
Why it matters: Opening late means fighting an algae bloom instead of preventing one.
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- ☐ **Fertilize & overseed the lawn** YARD
90 min • ~\$70 in parts • \$220 if you hire it out • **only if you have a yard**
Rake out thatch, spread seed on bare patches, and apply a spring feed with pre-emergent if crabgrass is a problem.
Why it matters: Thick turf is the cheapest weed control there is.
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- ☐ **Inspect driveway & walkways** EXTERIOR
30 min • ~\$25 in parts
Fill cracks wider than a pencil with a flexible crack filler and note any slab that has heaved into a trip hazard.
Why it matters: Water in a crack freezes, expands, and turns a \$10 repair into a \$5,000 replacement.
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- ☐ **Test every GFCI outlet** SAFETY
15 min
Press TEST on each GFCI in kitchens, baths, garage, and outdoors — the RESET should pop and power should cut. Press RESET to restore.
Why it matters: GFCIs wear out. One that won't trip looks completely normal and protects nobody.
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Keep cooling efficient and protect the exterior while it's dry

☐ **Clean fans & set them counter-clockwise** ENERGY

25 min

Wipe the blades (an old pillowcase slipped over each blade catches the dust) and flip the direction switch so the fan blows down.

Why it matters: A downdraft makes a room feel 3–4°F cooler, which is worth a couple of degrees on the thermostat.

☐ **Flush the water heater** WATER

60 min · \$160 if you hire it out · **only if you have a tank water heater**

Shut off power or gas, hook a hose to the drain valve, and drain until the water runs clear. Test the T&P relief valve while you're there.

Why it matters: Sediment on the bottom of the tank insulates the burner from the water — it wastes fuel and is what finally rusts the tank through.

☐ **Descale the tankless water heater** WATER

90 min · ~\$45 in parts · \$200 if you hire it out · **only if you have a tankless water heater**

Circulate white vinegar through the service valves for 45 minutes with a small pump, then flush with clean water and rinse the inlet screen.

Why it matters: Scale buildup is the one thing that kills a tankless unit early, and it's excluded from most warranties.

☐ **Inspect washing machine hoses** WATER

15 min

Feel along both supply hoses for blisters, rust at the crimps, or damp spots. Replace rubber hoses over five years old with braided stainless.

Why it matters: A burst supply hose puts several hundred gallons an hour on your floor. It's the most common large water claim in American homes.

☐ **Trim trees & shrubs back from the house** YARD

120 min · \$350 if you hire it out · **only if you have a yard**

Cut limbs back at least six feet from the roof and a foot from siding. Clear anything overhanging the driveway or service lines.

Why it matters: Branches on a roof grind off shingle granules every time the wind blows, and they're a highway for squirrels and ants.

☐ **Pest inspection & perimeter treatment** SAFETY

45 min · ~\$35 in parts · \$140 if you hire it out

Walk the foundation looking for mud tubes, sawdust, and entry gaps. Treat the perimeter and seal any opening bigger than a pencil.

Why it matters: Termite and carpenter ant damage is almost never covered by homeowners insurance.

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- ☐ **Clean bathroom exhaust fans** HVAC
- 30 min
- Drop the cover, vacuum the fan housing and blades, and confirm the duct actually vents outside — not into the attic.
- Why it matters:** A weak bath fan leaves moisture in the room, and moisture is how you get mould and peeling paint.
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- ☐ **Touch up exterior paint & trim** EXTERIOR
- 180 min · ~\$60 in parts
- Scrape and spot-prime any bare or peeling wood, especially south-facing trim, window sills, and the bottoms of door casings.
- Why it matters:** Paint is the only thing standing between wood trim and rot. Touch-ups are hours; replacement is days.
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- ☐ **Deep clean & check the grill** SEASONAL
- 45 min · ~\$15 in parts
- Burn off and scrub the grates, clear the burner tubes with a wire, empty the grease tray, and soap-test the gas connections for leaks.
- Why it matters:** Grease fires and leaking connections cause thousands of grill fires each year.
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- ☐ **Service the garage door** SAFETY
- 30 min · ~\$12 in parts · \$130 if you hire it out · **only if you have a garage**
- Lubricate rollers, hinges, and springs. Test the auto-reverse with a 2x4 laid flat on the floor, and wipe the photo-eye lenses.
- Why it matters:** A garage door is the heaviest moving object in the house, and a failed auto-reverse is a genuine hazard.
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- ☐ **Check basement humidity** WATER
- 15 min · **only if you have a basement**
- Aim for 45–55% relative humidity. Empty and clean the dehumidifier bucket and rinse its coil filter.
- Why it matters:** Above 60% you are growing mould whether you can see it yet or not.
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- ☐ **Seal the driveway** EXTERIOR
- 240 min · ~\$90 in parts · \$450 if you hire it out
- Pressure wash, fill cracks, and roll on sealer on two consecutive dry days above 50°F.
- Why it matters:** Sealing every three years roughly doubles the life of an asphalt driveway.
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- ☐ **Wash exterior windows** EXTERIOR
- 120 min · ~\$15 in parts · \$220 if you hire it out
- Wash the glass, then clean the sill weep holes at the bottom of each frame with a piece of wire.
- Why it matters:** Blocked weep holes trap water in the frame and rot out the sash from the inside.
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- ☐ **Inspect & pump the septic tank** WATER
120 min · \$450 if you hire it out · **only if you're on septic**

Have the tank pumped and the baffles inspected on a three-year cycle, or sooner for a large household.

Why it matters: A neglected tank sends solids into the drain field. Replacing a drain field runs well into five figures.

- ☐ **Test well water quality** WATER
30 min · ~\$45 in parts · \$180 if you hire it out · **only if you're on a well**

Send a sample for bacteria and nitrate testing at minimum. Check the well cap seal and keep the area around it graded away.

Why it matters: Contamination has no taste or smell. Annual testing is the only way you'd know.

- ☐ **Clean & seal the deck** EXTERIOR
300 min · ~\$110 in parts · \$600 if you hire it out · **only if you have a deck**

Wash with a deck cleaner, let it dry two days, then apply stain or sealer. Probe the posts and joists with a screwdriver for soft spots while you're down there.

Why it matters: An unsealed deck greys and checks in two seasons, and structural rot at the ledger board is how decks collapse.

Close the house up before the first freeze

- ☐
Clean gutters after leaf drop
ROOF

90 min · \$175 if you hire it out · **only if you have gutters**

Wait until most leaves are down, then clear everything, flush the runs, and check that the gutter hangers are still tight.

Why it matters: Gutters packed with wet leaves freeze into a solid block and tear away from the fascia under the weight.
- ☐
Service the furnace or boiler
HVAC

75 min · \$160 if you hire it out · **only if you have a furnace or boiler**

Book a heating tune-up: burner and heat exchanger inspection, flue draft test, safety controls, and blower cleaning.

Why it matters: A cracked heat exchanger leaks carbon monoxide. This is the one appointment on the list worth never skipping.
- ☐
Service the heat pump
HVAC

75 min · \$160 if you hire it out · **only if you have a heat pump**

Have refrigerant charge, defrost cycle, and auxiliary heat strips checked before the first cold snap.

Why it matters: A heat pump with a failed defrost board ices over and falls back to expensive resistance heat — often unnoticed until the bill lands.
- ☐
Chimney sweep & inspection
SAFETY

90 min · \$250 if you hire it out · **only if you have a fireplace or chimney**

Have the flue swept and inspected, and confirm the cap and spark arrestor are intact.

Why it matters: Creosote buildup is what causes chimney fires, and they routinely reach 2,000°F inside the flue.
- ☐
Winterize outdoor faucets
WATER

30 min · ~\$12 in parts

Shut the interior valve for each hose bib, open the outside spigot to drain it, disconnect all hoses, and add insulated covers.

Why it matters: A hose left connected traps water in the sill cock — the classic way to split a pipe inside the wall.
- ☐
Blow out the irrigation lines
YARD

60 min · \$95 if you hire it out · **only if you have irrigation**

Have the zones cleared with compressed air and shut down the backflow preventer.

Why it matters: Water left in a zone valve cracks the body, and you won't find out until spring startup floods the lawn.

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- ☐ **Close & winterize the pool** SEASONAL
180 min · ~\$160 in parts · \$400 if you hire it out · **only if you have a pool**
Balance the water, lower the level, blow out and plug the lines, add winter chemicals, and secure the cover.
Why it matters: Water left in the plumbing freezes and cracks the pump, filter, and heater in one night.
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- ☐ **Reverse ceiling fans to clockwise** ENERGY
10 min
Flip the direction switch on each fan and run it on low.
Why it matters: Clockwise on low pulls cool air up and pushes the warm air pooled at the ceiling back down the walls.
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- ☐ **Replace weatherstripping & door sweeps** ENERGY
90 min · ~\$45 in parts
Close a door on a dollar bill — if it slides out easily, the seal is done. Replace the stripping and add sweeps at the thresholds.
Why it matters: The gaps around doors and windows typically add up to a hole the size of an open window.
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- ☐ **Check attic insulation depth** ENERGY
30 min · **only if you have an attic**
You want roughly 14–18 inches of loose fill. Check that it isn't blocking the soffit vents and that no bath fan dumps into the attic.
Why it matters: Insulation settles and gets trampled over the years. Topping it up has one of the fastest paybacks in the house.
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- ☐ **Clear leaves from roof valleys & drains** ROOF
90 min
Rake the roof valleys and behind the chimney, clear window wells and yard drains, and keep leaves off the AC condenser.
Why it matters: Wet leaf packs hold moisture against shingles and flashing all winter.
-
- ☐ **Drain & store hoses and yard gear** SEASONAL
45 min · **only if you have a yard**
Drain hoses fully, coil and store them indoors, empty fuel from the mower or add stabilizer, and clean and cover the patio furniture.
Why it matters: Freezing water and stale ethanol fuel are what wreck the gear you paid for.
-
- ☐ **Run a full heating test cycle** HVAC
30 min
Run the heat for 20 minutes before you actually need it. Listen for grinding, smell for burning dust after the first minute, and check every register for airflow.
Why it matters: Finding the problem on a mild October afternoon costs a normal service call, not an emergency one.
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☐ **Inspect roof flashing & chimney cap** ROOF

40 min · \$180 if you hire it out

Check the metal flashing at the chimney, valleys, skylights, and vent boots. Cracked rubber vent boots are the most common leak on a modern roof.

Why it matters: Almost all roof leaks happen at a penetration, not out in the open field of shingles.

☐ **Seal rodent entry points** SAFETY

60 min · ~\$25 in parts

Stuff copper mesh and seal any gap over a quarter inch at the sill plate, dryer vent, pipe penetrations, and garage door corners.

Why it matters: Mice come inside the week it turns cold. Sealing beats trapping every time.

☐ **Service the standby generator** SAFETY

60 min · ~\$40 in parts · \$200 if you hire it out · **only if you have a generator**

Run it under load, change the oil and filter, check the battery, and confirm the transfer switch operates.

Why it matters: A generator that hasn't run in a year is a generator that won't start in an outage.

☐ **Replace detector batteries** SAFETY

20 min · ~\$15 in parts

Swap the batteries in every smoke and CO detector, even the ones still chirping along fine.

Why it matters: Tie it to the clock change and you'll never have to think about it again.

☐ **Service snow gear & restock salt** SEASONAL

60 min · ~\$45 in parts · \$90 if you hire it out · **only if you're in a cold climate**

Get the snowblower serviced with fresh fuel and a new plug, check the shovels, and buy ice melt before the first storm sells it out.

Why it matters: Everyone else buys theirs the morning of the storm.

Watch for the failures cold weather causes

☐ **Check for ice dams after each storm** ROOF

15 min · **only if you're in a cold climate**

Look for thick ice ridges at the eaves and icicles hanging off the gutters. Rake snow off the lower three or four feet of roof from the ground.

Why it matters: An ice dam backs meltwater up under the shingles and into the ceiling below. It's one of the most expensive winter claims there is.

☐ **Check attic ventilation & frost** ROOF

20 min · **only if you have an attic**

On a cold day, look for frost on the underside of the roof sheathing and damp insulation near the eaves.

Why it matters: Frost in the attic means warm indoor air is leaking up. When it melts, it looks exactly like a roof leak.

☐ **Keep indoor humidity at 30–45%** HVAC

10 min

Check a hygrometer. Service the humidifier pad if you have a whole-house unit, and drop the setting if you see condensation on the windows.

Why it matters: Too dry cracks trim and floors; too humid puts water inside your walls.

☐ **Inspect the basement after thaws** WATER

20 min · **only if you have a basement**

After every thaw or heavy rain, check the corners, the base of the walls, and around the sump for damp spots or efflorescence.

Why it matters: Finding a small seep early is the difference between a \$200 grading fix and a finished-basement gut job.

☐ **Locate & exercise the main water shutoff** WATER

15 min

Find the main valve, turn it fully off and back on, and make sure everyone in the house knows where it is.

Why it matters: A valve that hasn't moved in ten years seizes. You do not want to learn that during a burst pipe.

☐ **Vacuum vents, radiators & returns** HVAC

30 min

Vacuum supply registers and cold-air returns, bleed air from hot-water radiators, and make sure furniture and rugs aren't blocking airflow.

Why it matters: Blocked returns starve the system and create the hot and cold rooms everyone blames on the thermostat.

- ☐ **Hunt down drafts** ENERGY
60 min • ~\$30 in parts
On a windy day, move a lit incense stick slowly around window frames, outlets on exterior walls, and the attic hatch. Seal what smokes sideways.
Why it matters: Air sealing beats adding insulation almost every time, and it costs a fraction as much.
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- ☐ **Inspect under every sink** WATER
25 min
Clear out the cabinet and run your hand along the supply lines, trap, and cabinet floor. Look for corrosion, staining, or swelling particle board.
Why it matters: Slow drips rot the cabinet and floor long before anything ever puddles.
-
- ☐ **Check fire extinguishers** SAFETY
10 min
Confirm the gauge reads green, the pin and seal are intact, and the unit is under 12 years old. Invert and shake dry-chem units to loosen the powder.
Why it matters: A packed-down extinguisher discharges a useless puff when you pull the trigger.
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- ☐ **Update home inventory & review insurance** SAFETY
60 min
Walk the house filming every room and open every closet and drawer as you go. Store the video off-site, then check your policy still covers replacement cost.
Why it matters: After a fire or flood, the claim is settled on what you can prove you owned.
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- ☐ **Insulate pipes in unheated spaces** WATER
60 min • ~\$35 in parts • **only if you're not in a hot climate**
Slip foam sleeves over any pipe running through the garage, crawlspace, or an exterior wall cavity.
Why it matters: Pipes freeze where the heat doesn't reach. Foam sleeves cost about a dollar a foot.
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The jobs are twenty minutes. The consequences are years away.

That gap is the whole problem. Nobody hands you this list at closing, so you find out the expensive way — the roof leak that started as three lifted shingles, the AC that died in a heat wave because nobody rinsed the condenser, the water heater that rusted through because sediment sat in the tank for nine years.

None of that is a skill problem. It is a knowing-when problem, and a printed list on the fridge solves most of it.

If you'd rather not keep track on paper

HomeFix Calendar asks six questions about your house — age, climate, which systems you actually have — and builds this list down to only the tasks that apply to you. It reminds you before things get expensive, logs what you did and what it cost, keeps your appliance model and serial numbers with their warranty dates, and gives you one honest monthly number for what the house costs to keep, roof included.

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