



A Complete Guide To Home Maintenance

By Ava Smith

Abstract

This comprehensive guide on home maintenance provides a thorough exploration of strategies to ensure the longevity and comfort of residential spaces. Emphasizing the importance of proactive measures, the presentation covers both interior and exterior maintenance tasks, seasonal considerations, and the decision-making process between DIY and professional approaches. Practical insights into budgeting, the synergy between home improvement projects and maintenance, and the integration of technology underscore the guide's applicability. With a focus on emergency preparedness, the guide equips homeowners with the knowledge needed to cultivate resilient, safe, and enduring living spaces. This concise yet informative resource empowers homeowners to navigate the complexities of home maintenance effectively.

A Complete Guide to Home Maintenance Options

This title indicates that the guide is an all-encompassing resource covering a wide array of strategies, methods, and choices available to homeowners when it comes to maintaining their homes. It suggests that the guide is not narrowly focused on a specific aspect of home maintenance but aims to provide a holistic overview, catering to the diverse needs and preferences of homeowners. Readers can anticipate a thorough exploration of topics ranging from basic upkeep to more advanced options for preserving the condition and value of their homes.

Keeping up with annual chores can be daunting if you don't have an organized action plan. Since maintenance is ongoing, it's easy to get lost or fall behind schedule. However, regular home maintenance will protect your wallet from costly repairs in the future. To make life easier, we've created an easy-to-follow monthly task list so you can handle each repair project seamlessly. We'll provide a monthly to-do list along with seasonal sales to look out for to save you money on new appliances. Keep in mind that your region and climate will play a significant role in ongoing home repairs, but you can use this guide as a reference point when evaluating your home.

Benefits of Routine Home Maintenance and Repairs

Think of your home the same way you think of your body. You need to conduct regular maintenance and repairs to ensure optimal performance all year round. While some of your home's components need repairs once every decade, others need seasonal maintenance. As your home gets older, maintenance routines become more relevant.

Some of the primary benefits of regular home maintenance include:

- **Increased Home Value**Regular upkeep is an excellent way to boost the value of your home. The work you put in now will pay off if you ever decide to put your house back on the market.
- **Saves Money**When you catch malfunctions early, you can end up saving big on repair costs or insurance premiums.
- **Less Power Consumption**An old HVAC system uses far more power than a newer one. By keeping your appliances in top shape, you can consume less energy and save a good dime on your utility costs.

- Creates a Safer Environment Neglecting home maintenance can make a hazardous environment for your family. Keeping all of your home's components up-to-date will reduce the risk of injuries.



Spring Home Maintenance

With the cold winter coming to an end, spring is when most people get excited about cleaning and upgrading their homes. It's also an excellent time to scout around your home to see if there are any damages left from the harsh winter weather.

Here's a breakdown of a solid spring maintenance routine:

March

- March is the perfect month to catch up on all the garden and yard work that wasn't possible during winter. This includes trimming hedges, top dressing and reseeded the lawn, edging beds, fertilizing everything, building arbors and trellises, etc.
- If you have a garden, now's the time to start preparing and planting cool-season veggies such as carrots, cabbage, lettuce, and broccoli.
- Go through all of your documents and recycle anything unnecessary.
- Start preparing your taxes so that everything is ready before April 15th.
- Thoroughly check your basement for cracks, leaks, mold, and mildew. Get a professional to check out any concerning finds

April

- It's time to whip out the vacuum cleaner and start vacuuming the ceiling lining, furniture, walls, basement, and all other rooms you haven't touched in a while.
- Dust and wash all additional surfaces, like ceiling fan blades, lampshades, shelves, blinds, tall furniture, etc.
- Use your dishwasher to clean larger items, like garbage cans, broiler pans, or bath caddies.
- Wash all of your home's windows, and give all your appliances a good clean.
- Do a smoke alarm test and replace batteries if necessary.
- Remove tire studs from your car if you have them.
- Empty all of your closets, toy chests, and declutter your rooms. Donate any items you don't need anymore.
- Wash all of your curtains and drapes.
- Check your yard's sprinkler systems to ensure everything is working correctly.



May

- Now's a fantastic time to plan a garage sale to sell off any unwanted items and use that cash for your upcoming summer vacation.
- Complete all of your other internal spring cleaning projects.
- Look through your gutters, downspouts, and roofing to spot any damage or leaks. Spring is an excellent time to schedule roof repair if necessary.
- Cut back any trees or branches that are touching the siding or roof.
- Call a professional pressure washing service to clean out your home's exterior.
- Clean out your fireplace and chimney if you have one.
- Remove any trash or debris underneath your deck or porch. Make sure to wash all of your patio furniture as well.
- If you notice a pest infestation, contact your local pest control service.

Items on sale in spring: spring clothing, luggage, gardening supplies, lawnmowers
Summer Home Maintenance

Summer is the perfect time to make use of the warm weather. After completing some minor maintenance tasks, you'll be ready to relax on your summer vacation without worrying about your property.

- **June**
- Replace all of your home's air filters to ensure optimal indoor air quality.
- Clean out all of your home's vents to maximize your air conditioner's performance.
- Check hoses on your washer, refrigerator, and dishwasher. If they show signs of deterioration, replace them.
- Set up a programmable thermostat to cut back on energy costs.

- Check wood decks for signs of wear or deterioration. Repair or replace as needed. If you have nails popping up, consider replacing them with galvanized screws instead. Clean and seal your decks.
- Check exterior railings and stairs. Repair if they are loose or showing signs of wear.
- Inspect your swimming pool for any cracks or damages if you have one.
- Service furnace or heating system.
- Make sure attic vents work properly. Consider installing a whole house fan.
- Now is the time to order firewood and give it a few extra summer months to season.



July

- Clean out any unwanted junk from the garage.
- Inspect your fences for any damages and make repairs accordingly.
- Organize your tool shed and gardening equipment.
- Patch any cracks in your driveway and fill potholes with gravel. You can also have it power washed.
- If you have a septic system, have the tank pumped.
- If you need to paint your home's interior, July is the month to do it. Crack open those windows and get painting.
- Make sure you check with your local government about waste requirements. Don't dump any toxic chemicals down the drain, and ensure all of your waste is disposed of properly.

August

- Check that all of your door and window locks are functioning correctly.
- If you have an attic, check to see if you need to install new insulation.
- Perform garage door maintenance.

- If you didn't have time to clean your gutters in the spring, now's the second-best time to do so before the weather gets colder. Want to cut down on gutter cleaning? Consider installing a gutter guard.

Items on sale in August: towels, linens, patio furniture, back-to-school supplies, swimsuits
Fall Home Maintenance

Now that summer has come to an end, and school is about to start up again, your home must be in complete working order. Fall is also an excellent time to get any outdoor chores done before the winter comes.



September

- Take a look at your home's siding to see if there are any cracks or damages.
- Do one final check of your fireplace and chimney to see if it's good to go for winter.
- Have your heat recovery vent (HRV) serviced.
- Drain the hot water heater, flush, and refill.
- Change the furnace filter.
- If you have a sump pump, test, clean and lubricate.
- Make sure your clothes dryer vent is clean and working correctly.
- Seed your lawn one last time until next spring.
- Add compost, manure, and mulch to garden beds.
- Inspect your windows for any leaks.

October

- Inspect your roof shingles for any damage.
- Clean all of your windows before you install the storm windows.
- Clean your yard, remove any debris from the perimeter, and trim trees and shrubs that touch the house.
- At the end of the month, check system and fix leaks, then drain and turn off lawn sprinkler system.
- Drain and store garden hoses. Wrap insulation around outdoor faucets and pipes in unheated garages.
- Schedule an appointment to have the air conditioner serviced.
- Replace weatherstripping and caulk around doors and windows.

November

- Cut back any plants that didn't survive the frost.
- Give your lawn mower a tune-up before the lawn snows over.
- Rake your lawn and remove all leaves.
- Clean gutters and downspouts.
- Clean, oil, store garden tools.
- If it's your festivity, decorate your home with Christmas lights.

Items on sale in the fall: winter clothes, space heaters, comforters, blankets

Winter Home Maintenance

Without a doubt, winters can be harsh. Property damage is exceptionally prevalent during these months. It's best to be vigilant and ensure your entire home is in the best shape possible.



December

- Donate any unwanted winter clothing to charity.
- Decorate your home's interior with holiday decorations.
- Prepare for the snow if you live in a cold climate.
- Make sure your furnace is working correctly.
- Check your basement for any air leaks and seal them right away.

January

- Start decluttering all of the Christmas decorations.
- Clean out your closets and throw away any unwanted items. You can also still donate any unwanted clothes to your local charity.
- Replace your drawer liners and shelf papers.
- Tighten all of the screws on the locks, doors, windows, or anywhere that seems loose.
- Inspect your house for any other damage, make a list, plan the repairs, and shop for supplies.
- Check your energy consumption for the last few months. Is it worth improving your home's energy efficiency? Ask your local utility company if they offer an energy audit. Also ask them whether you should have your home tested for radon gas.
- Wrap up your annual accounting for the previous year and prepare for the current year.

February

- Plan out all of your repair projects for the next few months and create a schedule to follow.
- Inspect your flooring and carpet for damages and clean thoroughly.
- Start preparing all of the seeds you want to grow during spring/summer.
- Organize your laundry area. Throw out any unnecessary items and replace any necessary goods.
- Reorganize the pantry. Rotate in fresh staples, make meal plans to use what's about to go bad, and donate what you won't use.
- Clean the grout between your tiles in your kitchen/bathroom.

Items on sale in winter: electronics, flooring, furniture, fitness equipment

Time to Get to Work!

Now you know what it takes to keep your home in tip-top shape all year round. While it may seem like an overwhelming amount of work, you should be alright as long as you take it one step at a time.

Remember, your home maintenance task list will vary depending on where you live and the weather. It's always better to be well prepared ahead of time, rather than waiting for the last minute to conduct repairs. You'll save money in the long run.

Why Does Home Maintenance Matters?

Like your car or body, your home, too, does require regular maintenance to help keep it in mint condition. Unfortunately, that's not always the case. Most people tend to neglect this vital task and wait until their homes develop a problem to react. If you are reading this, then the chances are that you are planning on initiating a regular maintenance program. But, you are holding back the thought as you are not sure if it's the right move. Without saying much, Here are the benefits that come by asking for regular maintenance services:

Boost Your Home's Value



Like any other purchase, your home is considered as a significant investment. Whether you are looking to sell it soon or in the coming years, one thing you would want is the best return for your effort and money. Not long ago, a survey found out that homes with upgrades and renovations can have gains that raise their value.

You must have in mind that every other buyer is looking for a home that won't ask for much upkeep for a few years. Therefore, the more you maintain your home, the more your chances of

grabbing a fair price during the transaction. It would be best if you, therefore, hire the services of a contractor to handle the regular repairs now and then.

Saves You Money

Take an example of your home's roof, it remains one of the vital elements in a home, and that requires regular maintenance. If ignored, the roof can tear off. With time, the tiny holes may start seeping water into your house during the rainy season. Within a short time, the leaking roof can cause damage to your interior and even electronics. The cost of catering for such losses is a bit high, as opposed to the initial cost of regular maintenance.

Another example you can consider is your home's water heater. Today, tank water heaters are known to last about 8-12 years. If you use the tankless heater, you can expect it to serve you up to 20 years. However, the lifespan can be shortened by many factors, such as technical problems. The cost of maintaining your water heater is nothing compared to when you need to replace the entire system. If you are looking to have your water heating system serve you in the shortest time possible, then you should consider having regular maintenance. You may not realize how effective these regular services impact your budget until you wake up to a broken water heater, for instance.

Reduces the Energy Consumption



In the modern world, the cost of energy takes almost half of the monthly expenses. The rate is alarming, especially in this era when the economy is unforgiving. Luckily, for you, you can reduce your energy consumption by practicing regular maintenance. During your maintenance routines, you can check and repair gaps and cracks on your windows and doors that may cause drafts. Also, the scheduled maintenance procedures allow you to test your appliances to ensure

that they are operating efficiently. By doing so, you will be reducing the energy loss while saving money.

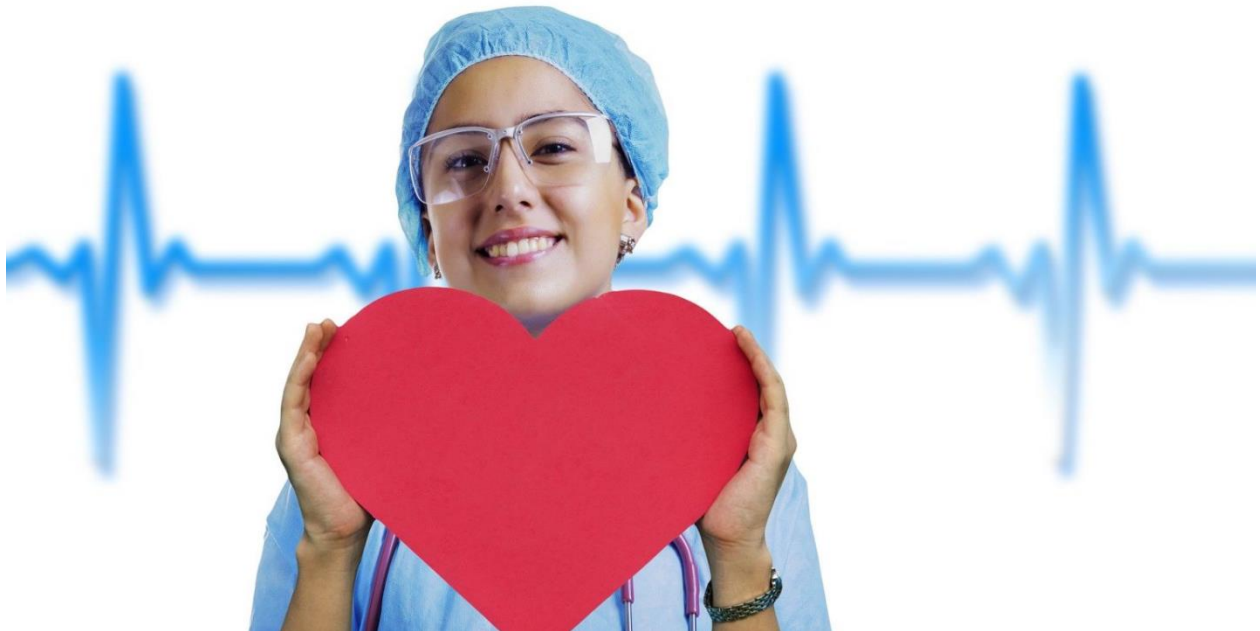
Boosts Your Home's Safety

In the modern world, the cases of house and apartment fires are on the rise. Most of these fires result from faulty electrical connections or gas leakage. Fire breakout is one of the reasons why you should schedule regular maintenance on your home. You would want your home to be safe from any sought of harm, fire included. Things such as broken drainages are also common and can mean damage to you. Luckily, you can prevent the incident from happening for the very first time by practicing preventive maintenance of the drainage system.

Creates Peace Of Mind

Often, homes are regarded as a safe haven. It's where you get time to relax after a tiring day in the office, for example. There is nothing that feels more fulfilling than coming to a home that you know is safe to stay in. The regular maintenance services can help you achieve that peace of mind. With the proper maintenance, you will stay in the house knowing that there won't be any fire breakouts, accidents, and flooding to mention a few common incidents. Besides, with the regular maintenance schedules, you live comfortably, knowing that there won't be a need to replace any of your appliances anytime soon.

Good For Your Health



Your home's AC is one of the crucial parts of a home that you must consider checking now and then. It is tasked with controlling the temperatures in your home, making your stay comfortable. You can't as well forget the fact that the AC ensures that clean air gets into your home. By filtering impurities of the air, it reduces the cases of infections. Therefore, you must ensure that the filters in your AC are replaced now and then to ensure that they are functioning efficiently. Also, the regular cleaning of your floor and sofas keeps your house clean and disease-free, which is the key to a happy home.

According to real estate experts, the regular maintenance of your home is regarded as the secret to increasing its resale value. However, most homeowners tend to overlook the activity. Explained in this article are some of the many benefits that come with scheduling regular maintenance apart from increasing the resale value. By reading the entire piece, you will have a detailed understanding of the reason why you shouldn't hesitate to perform regular maintenance services.

DIY vs. Professional Maintenance

There's something appealing about the idea of a do-it-yourself home improvement project. By tackling a job yourself, you can save money on labor costs and enjoy work that's been done with your own hands.

But the reality is some projects are better left to the experts. Professional contractors can handle tasks that are complicated, time-consuming or downright unpleasant. Whether you plan to spruce up your entire home or just remodel part of one room, you'll want to make a smart choice between doing it yourself or hiring and paying a pro.

Here are some tips to help you choose.



When you could try DIY

The project is small enough to learn quickly

It's a good idea to take some time to research a home improvement job before you start. If you want to paint your deck, for example, you may need to watch tutorial videos, read about paint

choices, and ask paint sellers for advice. If you're willing to learn the steps, a do-it-yourself project could make sense.

You have patience to work through small mistakes

You may have to make extra trips to the store because you didn't correctly measure the amount of wood you needed. Or you may discover your paint dried unevenly, and you'll need to start over to get the look you want. Expect that your DIY project won't be perfect on the first try. It'll help if you're flexible enough to work through small errors.

You view the home repair as more hobby than work

If you enjoy carpentry, painting and other renovation-related activities, you may enjoy a DIY project involving those or similar tasks. You may even find the process as enjoyable as the final result.

You're OK with "good enough"

There's a chance your project won't turn out as well as a pro's work. There may be some visible brushstrokes in a newly painted room. Some floor tiles may be slightly uneven. If the problems are minor and you'll be able to live with the results, it could be worthwhile to try a small DIY job.

When it's best to hire a home improvement contractor

A mistake would have serious or disastrous consequences

If an error would make your home unsafe — faulty electrical wiring that could cause a fire, for example — it's not worth the risk of doing it yourself. Outsource projects that could affect your family's well-being or that would be expensive to correct if not done right. Reputable contractors will have insurance and offer a warranty for their work, which protects you as the homeowner. If they make a mistake or worse, damage your property, they'd pay to fix the problem.

The home renovation requires permits

Many localities require permits for electrical, structural and other major work. You'll want to contact your city government and ask local contractors which remodel licenses are required in your area. These jobs generally require specialized knowledge, so it's better to let a professional handle the work.

Your time's better spent on something else

Paying a contractor can free you up for other activities, such as spending more time with your family. If you put a premium on those other activities, it makes sense to hire a professional.

You're planning to sell your home

When you get ready to sell your house, you want it to be in the best condition possible. An amateurish DIY job could be a turnoff for potential buyers. They may even wonder if the home has other problems.

If you do decide to hire a pro, you'll need to do some legwork. Make sure you get estimates in writing, and ask for and contact references. You should also confirm that the contractor has the

licenses and insurance needed for the job. You can learn more about how to hire a reputable contractor from the Federal Trade Commission.

In some cases, you might do some parts of a remodel or upgrade yourself while also working with an expert. For example, you could decide to take on the role of general contractor for a major project, such as a bathroom remodel, and hire out subcontractors for specialized work, including electrical wiring, plumbing and cabinet installation.

When considering a home improvement project, you'll want to know the difference between a DIY job and one that should be handled by an experienced contractor. By considering the time you would have to spend on the project, your experience and the difficulty of the job, you can weigh the benefits and make the best decision for your situation.

How To Hire The Best House Cleaning Service



Maintaining a tidy, organised and germ-free home is essential to promote a healthy and positive indoor environment. Unfortunately, with tight schedules, busy professional lives and responsibilities, managing sufficient time to spruce up a house thoroughly can be difficult. You need time and energy to scrub the stains, vacuum carpets and mop the floors- which is quite physically draining and challenging.

That's where professional house cleaning services come into the limelight. Instead of doing it yourself, you can book expert cleaners who can come to your house and tackle grime, stains, mould and mildew using tried and tested products and methodologies.

The best part is that you can hire a professional house cleaning service in Perth on a weekly, monthly and fortnightly basis depending on your specific requirements and property's condition. Here are some of the best tips and tricks to help you hire the best professionals for house cleaning chores in your city:

Know Your Specific Needs

Before you search for the best option, do some homework and know your cleaning requirements. Whether you want a quick cleaning service or a deep house cleaning to keep stubborn stains, grime, caked-on grease and germs at bay.

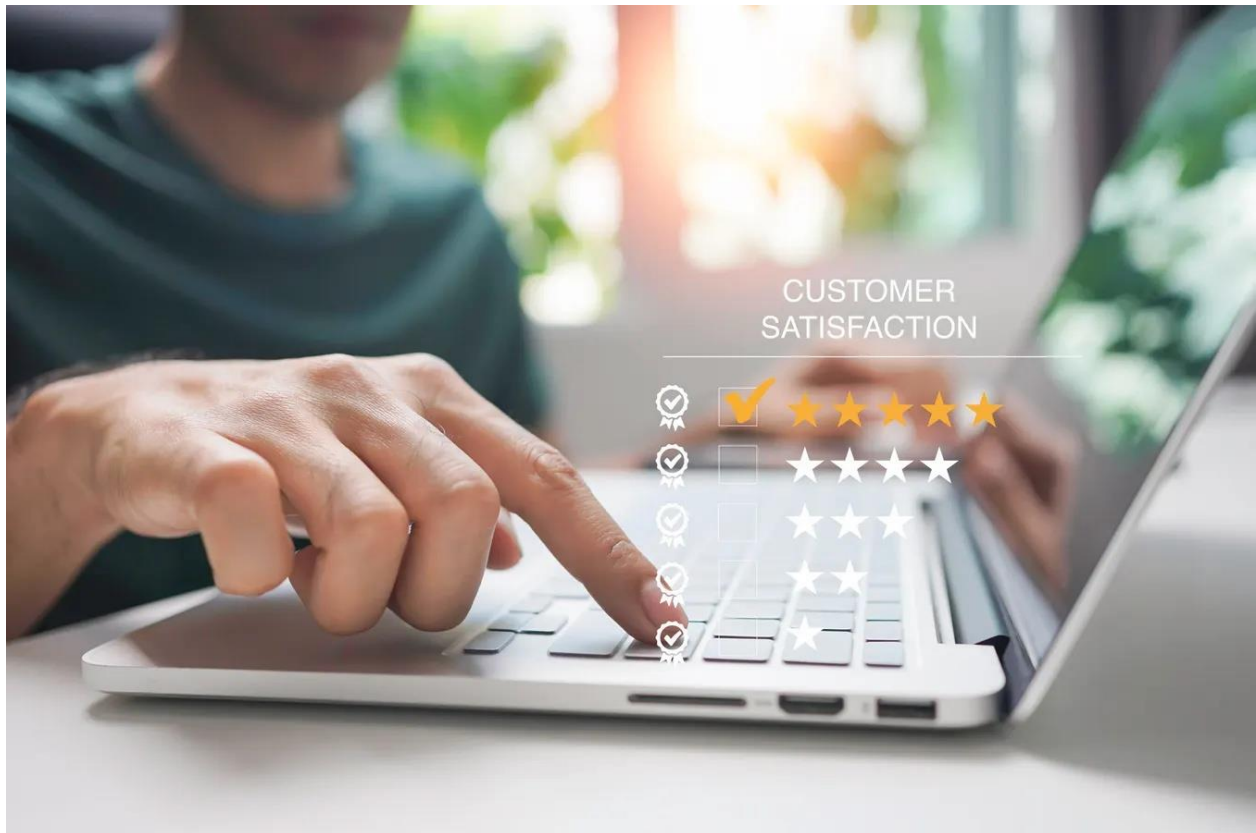
Apart from this, create a rough budget and look for the right options accordingly. If you need a thorough carpet shampooing service or pressure washing, pay extra for these services.

Get Referrals & Recommendations

It is good to ask your family, friends and neighbours for genuine recommendations. You can also use the internet and google your search to find the most reliable companies specialising in house cleaning services.

This trick works wonders when looking for expert vacate cleaning in Perth before the end of the tenancy. You can book the best company and secure your full bond money with ease.

Consider Reputation & Reviews



Believe it or not! Online customer reviews and ratings play a vital role in determining the authenticity of professional cleaning companies. If you want experts to spruce up your home without causing any damage, read reviews and look for companies with positive feedback and good star ratings.

Contact past customers to clarify doubts related to their professionalism, pricing policy and other key aspects.

Know More About Services Offered By Companies

It is important to know the type of services provided by house cleaners in Perth. Make sure they offer a comprehensive range of cleaning solutions you need to maintain a healthy and hygienic home.

Find out whether oven or microwave cleaning is included in the service or if windows are covered. These small things can help you make a well-informed decision with ease.

Ask Relevant Questions

Interviewing shortlisted cleaning professionals can make a huge difference. You can talk to their representatives and ask important questions to clear your doubts:

- How many years of experience do you have in house cleaning industry?
- Do you bring all cleaning supplies?
- What type of products are used during the process?
- Do you follow green cleaning practices?
- Do you charge hourly or by service?
- Is there any cancellation policy?
- Can I reschedule the service?

These questions will help you find the best house cleaning as well as vacate cleaning Perth depending on your specific cleaning requirements.

Ask For Background Checks

Since house cleaners who come to your home have full access to your personal space, make sure you search for fully insured and police-verified companies. For that, thoroughly check their backgrounds and ensure whether the service has liability insurance or not.

Check the details about liabilities, such as an on-site injury or damaged household belongings. Get everything in writing to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Check Their Expertise



Make sure you inquire about the company's training practices, professional approach and cleaning skills. You can check their official website and choose a company with at least 5 years of experience cleaning all types and sizes of residential properties.

How To Clean A House Like A Pro?

If you are running low on budget, try the following hacks and spruce up your house like a pro and promote a healthy living space.

- Prepare a Cleaning Schedule
- It is good to break down your cleaning chores into daily, weekly, monthly and yearly schedules and tackle grime accordingly. This will help you maintain a healthy home all year round.
- De-clutter on a Regular Basis
- If you want to maintain a neat and organised home, then focus on de-cluttering your rooms. Get rid of unwanted items and clean as you go to reduce your load on a daily basis.
- Stock up on the Right Tools and Products
- It is always good to invest in quality and multi-purpose cleaning tools, such as microfiber cloths, steam cleaners, brushes, a HEPA-filtered vacuum cleaner and eco-friendly products to keep your house clean and spotless.
- Delegate Tasks
- Encourage your family to participate in housekeeping chores, including your kids and delegate tasks depending on their skills. You can start with simple tasks, such as folding clothes, dusting surfaces, wiping spills, etc. You can make cleaning fun with kids and get the job done.
- Clean Top to Bottom
- Start cleaning from the top of your room, such as ceiling fans and walls, to prevent dust from settling on previously cleaned surfaces like carpets and floors.
- If you are at the end of your lease, make sure you return the premises in the clean condition to get your bond back. Therefore, look for professionals that can give you quality vacate cleaning Perth at the best price.

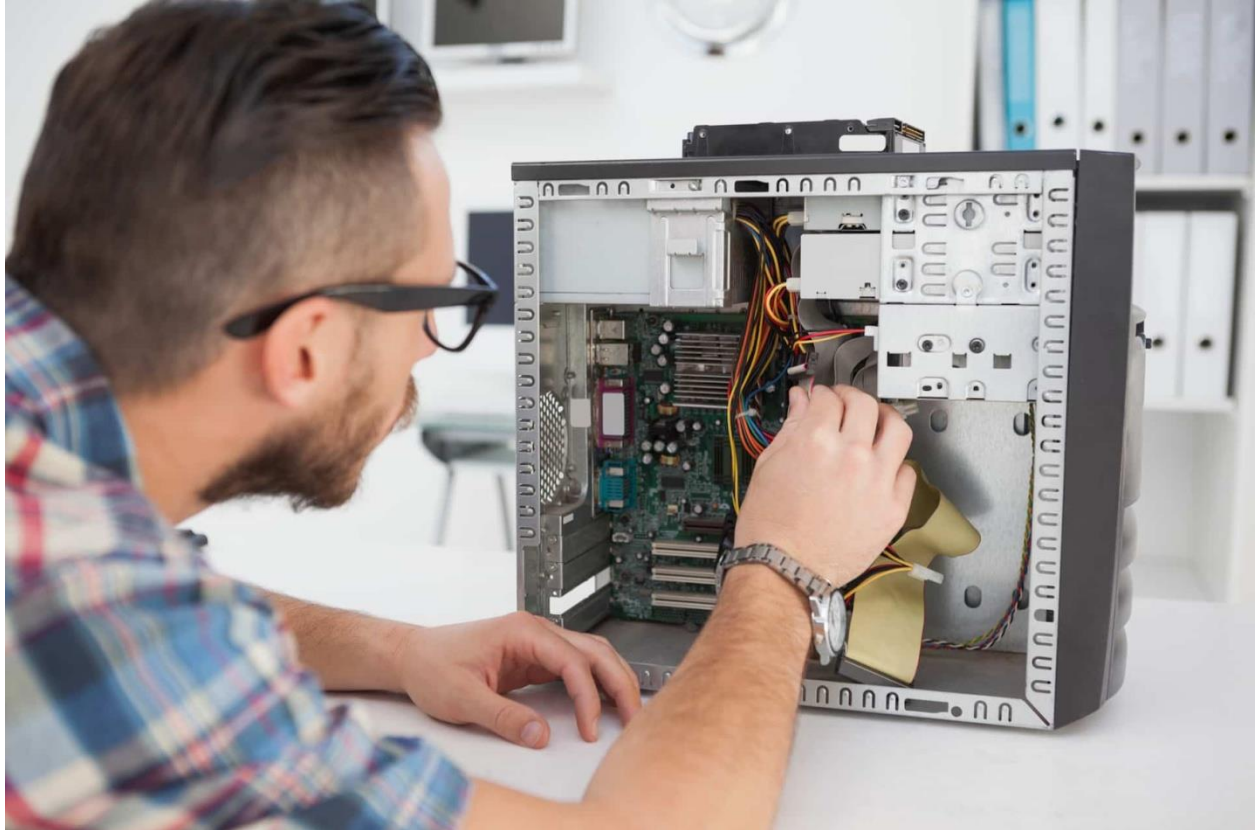
Wrapping Up

Choosing the right house cleaning service requires proper research and planning. With the help of these tips, you can book the best professionals and enjoy a tidy, well-maintained and beautiful abode.

Technology Repairs And Maintenance

- A regular maintenance schedule will help you to prevent or identify problems early.
- Develop an annual schedule to check and maintain the inside and outside of your home.
- Get expert advice and services where needed, especially for specific problems such as leaks, cracks and settlement, damp, salt, or termites.
- If you have an older home, it may include hazardous materials, such as asbestos or lead paint. Do not try to remove hazardous materials yourself. Get expert advice. Sometimes the best course of action is to seal the material, rather than removing it.

General maintenance



Repairs and maintenance extend the life of your home, improve its liveability and reduce health risks. With advice from a builder or designer, create a repair and maintenance schedule that prioritises urgent concerns and prevents larger problems from developing. Some of the examples listed below may require advice and repairs by a suitably qualified professional.

Outside your home:

- Check external painting and touch up as required.
- Repair or seal broken glass and windows with air leaks to reduce draughts and heat loss. Repair windows that are jammed or 'painted closed' and make them operable to improve cross ventilation. A variety of sealing strips, tapes and seals are available from hardware outlets.
- Protect and restore old windows and joinery.
- Check subfloor areas for dampness. Divert groundwater and provide additional subfloor ventilation where existing ventilation is inadequate.
- Check and replace corroded sacrificial anodes in hot water tanks, and check the pressure release valve for operation and leaks.
- Install, repair or replace insect screens to encourage natural cooling and 'night purging' in hot weather.
- Replace insulation that has been moved or damaged in ceilings and fill insulation gaps. Older insulation can settle and loses its insulating properties. Check the depth and 'loft' and replace as necessary.
- Replace cracked roof tiles and repair roof ridging, if necessary.
- Clean gutters regularly and check for leaks. Ensure adequate fall to the drainage outlet.
- Trim trees and shrubs away from the house.

Inside your home:

- Check fridge door seals and replace if necessary. If your fridge is not energy efficient, now might be the time to upgrade to one with a high energy star rating.
- Install smoke detectors in correct locations and check the batteries in them.
- Check for air leaks. Fit dampers to chimney flues (or insulate if unused), seal around windows and doors, and fill cracks and gaps to reduce draughts.
- A thermal imaging camera can help to detect water leaks, shifted insulation and other issues. A qualified professional can assist.
- Have your heating and cooling systems checked and maintained by a qualified professional.
- Paint and repair walls and ceilings with low-VOC (volatile organic compound) paints to improve amenity and air quality.
- Consider replacing doors so you can 'zone' areas to control heat flow.
- Remove worn carpets, which can be a source of dust mites and allergens.

Specific problems

Leaks

Leaks can quickly lead to significant damage.

- Roof leaks are often best detected when it is raining, because you can trace the water from the wet spot back to the source. Replace loose roof fixings and seal holes with silicone or bitumen-backed tape and a heat gun (do it yourself, or get a builder).
- Cavity wall leaks are often caused by failed cavity capping or flashings and blocked weepholes along the base of the wall or over windows and door openings. Replace flashings (get a plumber and bricklayer), clear weepholes, and remove and replace bricks where necessary to get rid of debris and mortar droppings (do-it-yourself, or use a bricklayer).
- Floor leaks can commonly be traced to leaking pipes or to moisture under concrete slabs being forced up through cracks and fissures by hydrostatic pressure. They can be rectified by repairing or replacing drainage (use a plumber) or installing adequate, up-slope groundwater drainage or diversion (get professional advice).
- Shower recesses may be a source of leaking if waterproofing is inadequate or has been damaged. Check and repair if necessary (get a waterproofing expert or qualified tradesperson).
- Check water supply and drainage pipes for signs of rust and/or leakage. Repair or replace as necessary and, while you are there, insulate exposed hot water pipes (get a plumber).

Cracks and settlement



Cracks and settlement can be cosmetic or an indication of more serious structural problems. Common causes are:

- 'heave' (soil expanding and pushing the ground upwards) of reactive (clayey) soils
- slip by unstable or disturbed soils
- settlement (compression and sinking of the ground) under poorly prepared footings
- variable soil moisture content causing uneven foundation swelling or heave due to drying by tree roots
- poor drainage.

Seek professional advice from an engineer before repairing. Sometimes repairs can act as wedges and increase structural damage when foundations swell in the next wet or dry season.

Rectification can involve underpinning of footings to provide better support or piering to ensure that each section of the building is supported by material with similar bearing value (that is, it all moves by the same amount). Sometimes, underfloor drainage is required to ensure that internal walls bear on material with similar moisture content to the sun and wind-exposed external walls, to create even heave. Control joints that accommodate movement while remaining sealed may be required, if even heave is not achievable.

Damp

Damp in a home can cause poor indoor air quality as well as mould, mildew and rot. This can increase the risk of health problems and shorten the lifespan of your building. Damp can be caused by:

- condensation, commonly due to inappropriate insulation, poor ventilation of bathroom and kitchen areas or use of inappropriate unflued heaters. Address this by installing insulation and building membranes correctly, improving ventilation levels and installing externally vented exhaust fans and appropriate heating.
- underfloor and wall cavity moisture, caused by poor subfloor ventilation or ground clearance, excess moisture (leaking flashings, pipes or plumbing) or condensation build-up. Check subfloor and cavity wall vents to make sure they are not obstructed by previous additions, garden beds, mulch build-up, or nests of insects or other pests. Install additional vents as required. Repair leaking pipes and divert stormwater.
- rising damp occurs in the absence or breakdown of damp-proof courses in masonry. If left untreated it will rot timbers that are in contact with the masonry and cause structural failures. Leaking shower recesses are a common problem in homes built from the mid-1970s, commonly because of movement in timber structures and failure of waterproofing membranes. Rising damp can be permanently removed by a specialist company, and do-it-yourself kits are also available, preferably for use at the outset of renovations.

Salt

Salt in brickwork is caused by high soil salinity levels and rising water tables. It usually occurs below the damp-proof course and can completely destroy brickwork, causing collapse if left untreated. In extreme cases, it can also rust poorly placed or protected reinforcing steel in footings and slabs. Seek professional advice on its cause and solutions.

Termites

Termite risk factors to look for include:

- inadequate subfloor clearances and slab-on-ground
- insufficient subfloor ventilation and light
- abutment with susceptible construction or soil (for example, slabs, verandas, patios, steps, gardens)
- inadequate site drainage, leaking water services
- presence of subfloor attractants (for example, tree roots, buried timber, damp areas)
- cracks and fissures in slabs
- penetration of service connections.

To prevent termites, remove any risk factors in your home. Check for and fit adequate termite protection (if you're repairing or renovating, do it while the existing structure is exposed) with:

- continuous termite shield to cavities
- ant-capping to piers and bearers
- shields to service penetrations.

To deal with existing termite damage, remove and repair or replace any termite-damaged timber and ensure that the pests are no longer active or able to access the building. Identify the access point for any previous damage and repair or install barriers.

Get a professional assessment and report by a suitably qualified pest control contractor, and implement all the preventive steps recommended in your termite report including:

- checking all ant caps and barriers
- restoring at least 400mm clearance under subfloor timber structures and making sure there is good ventilation and drainage

- clearing garden beds and mulch build-up from walls and exposing at least 100mm of slab edges where possible.

Tip



Physical barriers, adequate clearance and yearly inspections are the best protection against termites.

Retrofitting using physical barriers is simplest for homes with raised timber floors and isolated piers, and more complex for perimeter masonry foundations or slab-on-ground. Retrofit barriers to protect wall cavities, such as mesh or graded stone, and termite-proof service penetrations using physical barriers.

Environmentally benign chemical barriers are the least preferred, but may be necessary in some situations. Use chemicals with minimum toxicity. Chemicals that require regular reapplication are usually the safest option. Ensure that they are reapplied according to the recommended schedule. Retrofit a reticulated system in cavities for chemical protection.

Schedule an annual termite inspection by a reputable, licensed inspector.

Dealing with hazardous materials

Be cautious before disturbing existing materials:

- Many pre-1982 buildings have some asbestos including linings of eaves, roofing, wall linings in wet areas and cladding.
- Most pre-1970 buildings have lead paint.
- Other harmful substances can include PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) from old fluorescent light fittings, loose glass fibres or old asbestos pipe and duct insulation.

Removal is not necessarily the best option – sometimes it is better to seal and enclose.

Bottom Line

A proactive approach to home maintenance is an investment in the longevity, safety, and overall well-being of your living space. Regular interior and exterior checks, seasonal upkeep, and a combination of DIY efforts and professional assistance contribute to a home that not only retains its value but also provides a secure and comfortable environment for its inhabitants. By embracing a comprehensive guide to home maintenance options, homeowners can mitigate potential issues, save on long-term costs, and ensure that their residences remain not just houses, but thriving and resilient homes for years to come. Remember, the key to a harmonious

and sustainable living experience lies in the thoughtful care and attention dedicated to maintaining the place you call home.

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