

Tips on home repair and maintenance

Once you've finally settled in, you may start to view your home with a more objective eye. Perhaps there are things you'd like to change — the kitchen cabinets or the flooring, for instance. Perhaps there are things that require repair or replacement, such as the plumbing or the windows. You will soon realize that maintenance, repair and renovations are a normal part of homeownership.

Do regular maintenance and repair

By doing regular maintenance and taking care of small repairs right away, you'll avoid more costly repairs down the road.

One of the best things you can do is get to know your new home. Here are some things you need to know:

Your home is made up of various components that work together. These include mechanical systems (heating, air conditioning and ventilation) and

the building envelope (foundations, floors, walls, windows, doors and roof).

You need to learn enough about the major mechanical systems of your home to be able to perform routine maintenance and handle various emergencies. Every adult member of your household should know the location of and how to operate the following:

- Main shutoff valves for water and fuel (oil or natural gas);
- Emergency switch for the furnace or burner;
- Hot water heater thermostat and breaker;
- Main electrical switch;
- Fuse box or circuit breaker box.

Renovations targeted at increasing energy-efficiency may affect appliances venting by a chimney. Check chimney performance if you tighten the envelope or add exhaust fans.

Remember that homes, like people, get old. It's a good idea to inspect your home regularly

and replace or repair parts and materials that wear out with use and time. And remember that since different components of your home work together and affect each other, minor repairs can quickly become major ones if they are not immediately taken care of.

You will probably be able to do many of the repairs yourself. However, if you feel you cannot handle the job on your own, it is best to call an expert. No matter who carries out the repair, remember that the work has to be well done. Bad materials and poor workmanship will end up costing you more in the end. Don't forget to keep records of any repairs and improvements you make.

Home improvements

Besides doing regular maintenance and repairing your home, you will also want to consider renovating or making improvements. These changes will not only make the home more pleasant for you to live

in, they may also increase its value.

Change is good but be careful not to go overboard unless you plan to stay in your home for many years. If you are planning to sell your house, you also have to ensure that the changes don't make your home worth a lot more than the other homes around you. Remember that the value of your home is closely related to the other homes in your area.

Here are some things to keep in mind when planning a change or renovation:

Think about how changes would appeal to someone buying your home in the future. You can make very personalized changes with paint because it is inexpensive and can easily be changed. However, things like flooring, cabinets and countertops have a longer life — make choices that will also be appealing to others.

Think about getting your home energy-rated. This will

tell you how energy efficient your home is and what improvements are possible. Visit the Natural Resources Canada Office of Energy Efficiency at www.oeec.nrcan.gc.ca/residential to learn more about the ecoENERGY Retrofit program.

Updating the bathrooms and kitchens in an older home can increase its resale value.

Don't underestimate the importance of landscaping. The right planting can improve the appearance and value of your home.

Updating your exterior paint, installing new roofing, resurfacing your walkways and driveway, adding attractive mailboxes and front-yard planting will also help make your home more appealing.

Over time, some renovations can practically pay for themselves, especially if they result in savings on utility bills, a higher selling price or years of greater comfort and enjoyment in your home.



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