



## Home Maintenance Tips by Area of Home

### **Bathroom:**

- Use a glass cleaner to clean chrome or brass.
- Use a “soft-scrub” cleaner for marble and cultured marble.
- Use a stiff brush to clean grout. For a heavy stain, use a commercial grout cleaner. RegROUT if necessary to prevent water from seeping behind the tile and into the walls.

### **Cabinets:**

- Do not clean with abrasive cleaners; use a “soft-scrub” type of cleaner.
- Wood cabinets should be cleaned and waxed just like fine furniture.
- Plastic coated cabinets may be cleaned with a detergent solution.

### **Cleaning Walls:**

- Some painted surfaces may be cleaned with a mild solution of detergent and water. If you are not sure about the washability of the paint, try testing it in an inconspicuous area.
- Glazed brick or tile should be washed with soap and water. Use a non-abrasive household cleaner to remove stains.
- Wood paneling should be cleaned with a wood cleaning product and then treated with paneling wax or linseed oil.

### **Counter Tops:**

- Counter tops should be cleaned with a “soft-scrub” cleaner.
- Although most counter tops are heat and stain resistant, you should not place hot objects directly on the counter tops.
- Formica tops can be cut easily and therefore a chopping block should be used.

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## **Home Maintenance Tips by Area of Home, (cont.)**

### **Doors:**

- If you have a door that sticks, check to see if the hinges are aligned and tightly screwed to both the frame and door. If they still stick, wrap a piece of sandpaper around a block of wood and sand the edges that are sticking. Seal or repaint the sanded area. This will prevent moisture, which can cause warping, from being absorbed by the wood.
- Inspect all exterior doors each spring and fall. Check for wear and inspect to see that weather stripping is tight and free from defects.
- Check the fit of exterior doors. Thresholds are adjustable – use a quarter to turn the screws.
- Check garage overhead doors, tighten bolts as needed and lubricate springs with motor oil. Have repairs done by a professional.

### **Drains:**

- Never pour grease down your drains. Keep hair and food out of the drain and do not use any kind of lye if you have a plastic pipe system.
- Every month or so you should:
  - Run hot water down the drain.
  - Add three tablespoons of baking soda.
  - Add a little hot water and let it stand for 15 minutes then flush with hot water.
- Pour water down the basement floor drain. As drain water evaporates, sewer odors can seep into the house.

### **Fireplace and Chimney:**

- Check to see if any of the “fire clay” (mortar) has fallen out and replace it if necessary.
- Check to make sure the damper is working properly and make sure it closes tightly.
- Check the flue with a flashlight for soot build-up. For heavy soot deposits, a professional chimney cleaner should be hired.
- Review safe fireplace operation. Inspect chimney for bird nests. Provide professional cleaning at regular intervals.

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### **Floors:**

- Wood floors should be mopped or vacuumed. Use a paste wax (if recommended by the flooring manufacturer) on hardwood floors, and if excessively soiled, clean with mineral spirits or a commercial cleaner. Check with a flooring company to find out if your hardwood floors should be professionally cleaned and resealed after a certain period of time.
- Linoleum, asphalt, vinyl, vinyl-asbestos and rubber floors should be swept, mopped or vacuumed regularly. You can clean these floors with diluted detergent or a recommended floor cleaner and then wax if required.
- Slate or clay tile should be sealed to protect and prevent staining. Use a diluted detergent or tile cleaner to clean.
- Carpeting should be vacuumed regularly and shampooed when needed. Avoid excessive wetting when shampooing.
- Inspect grout around tile (floor or wall) and touch up.

### **Garbage Disposal:**

- Always use cold water when the disposal is operating.
- Occasionally you should grind some ice cubes and lemon peels to clean and freshen the disposal.
- Always read the manufacturer's maintenance manual.

### **Gutters and Downspouts:**

- It is very important that you provide or maintain splash blocks and downspout extensions so they are in a position to carry roof water a minimum of five feet away from the foundation.
- Make certain the gutters are sloping properly, allowing water to flow freely to the downspout.
- Keep the gutters and downspouts clear of leaves and debris.
- Keep the gutters and downspouts in good repair.
- After snowfall, brush snow off gutters and away from downspouts.

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### **Heating and Cooling Systems:**

- Set your thermostat at 78 degrees in the summer and 68 degrees in the winter. Constant changing of the thermostat wastes energy.
- Close registers and doors in rooms that are not normally used.
- Hot air rises and cold air falls. With this in mind, in the summer you should close some downstairs registers and open some upstairs registers and reverse the process in the winter.
- Keep registers and cold-air returns free from obstacles, such as drapes, furniture and other items.
- Check the filter in your heating system at least twice a year to see if it needs cleaned or changed. The filter should be checked more often if there is a lot of traffic in and out of the home.
- Operate the heating and cooling system to make sure they are functioning properly.
- Make certain the air-conditioning compressor is level and clear of debris.

### **Miscellaneous:**

- Clean and test smoke detectors.
- Test and reset ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI) breakers.
- Drain sediment from the bottom of the water heater per the manufacturer's instructions.
- In the spring, turn off the humidifier.
- Check foundation, concrete, and yard for settling. Fill in as needed for positive drainage.

### **Landscaping:**

- Be sure the ground slopes away from the foundation.
- Plant trees at least twelve feet and shrubs at least four feet away from the foundation.
- Do not allow sprinklers to hit the area within four feet of your foundation.
- Do not allow puddles to form near the foundation.
- Before the first freeze, remove hoses from exterior faucets. Drain the water from outside faucets and put away the hose.
- Drain your sprinkler systems before the first freeze.
- In the spring, start and adjust the sprinkler system. Test exterior faucets for broken pipes.

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### **Paint:**

- Clean the surface.
- Repair minor cracks and imperfections with spackle.
- Reset nail “pops” in the drywall, spackle and sand smooth.
- Sand woodwork and enameled or varnished surfaces.
- Be sure the surface is dry before painting.
- Check exterior paint and stained surfaces (especially stained doors) and finish as needed.

### **Roof:**

- Do not walk on the roof, but rather inspect it from the edges. If you must walk on the roof, do so very carefully.
- Snow, ice and high winds can damage a roof. Every spring and after a heavy storm, you should check for water stains under the overhang and in the attic. Loose or damaged shingles should be replaced.
- Check the flashing around the chimney, in the roof valleys and against any walls to see that it is secure and watertight.

### **Windows and Screens:**

- For lightly soiled windows, use a solution of one cup of vinegar to one gallon of warm water.
- For heavily soiled windows, use a solution of one tablespoon household ammonia and three tablespoons denatured alcohol or vinegar to one quart of warm water.
- Clean weep holes and lubricate tracks.
- Check caulking inside and out, and touch up as needed.

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