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*"Fairness and Integrity Above All"*

# Homeowner's Maintenance Guide

*This is a packet of suggestions for homeowner's maintenance, which should be regular and thorough in order to ensure the proper performance of your home. Items not included in this document may also require maintenance.*



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## Owner's Maintenance Schedule

**Monthly**

- Replace AC filter
- Clean/test smoke alarm(s)

**Quarterly**

- Treat AC unit area for fire ants
- Run 2 trays of ice in garbage disposal
- Inspect/clean roof valleys and gutters
- Check/clean dryer vent pipe
- Inspect shower caulking
- Clean bottom of shower door
- Inspect/maintain proper drainage
- Lubricate garage door tracks
- Inspect/adjust exterior door weatherstripping
- Pest control

**Semi-Annually**

- Heating/AC Serviced
- Flush condensation drain with 1 cup bleach
- Caulk tile (kitchen and baths)
- Caulk windows and siding
- Inspect exterior paint
- Inspect/repair settling cracks and gaps
- Clean mildew on exterior surfaces
- Reseal exterior wood doors

**Annually**

- Drain, flush, and refill water heater
- Seal granite and grout

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## Before You Move In

1. **Seal Granite:** This is recommended in order to preserve the life of your granite. Granite is a porous surface, meaning it can absorb products and spills on the counter. To prevent absorption, seal your granite annually. Never use acidic or citrus cleaners on granite.

2. **Seal Grout:** This is recommended to prevent discoloration of the grout between tiled surfaces. With regular use, grout will absorb stains/dirt and change color over time, but sealing annually will prevent some discoloration. Before you seal the grout, be sure to remove any existing stains with a half water/half vinegar mixture.

3. **Run All Water Lines:** Run all the faucets and water lines in the house before using the water or turning on appliances. Be sure to drain the refrigerator lines and washer lines before turning these appliances on. This will ensure your lines are debris free and will prevent clogs in your appliances.

4. **Exterminate:** Hire an exterminator to get all the cracks, weep holes, vents, and walls before you move in. This will ensure a pest free environment and will prevent any damage due to pests. Check with your builder for recommended pest control schedules.

5. **Plant Yard:** This is recommended to ensure the proper drainage and grading of your yard. Making sure your yard is properly maintained will help prevent any foundation problems due to drainage. Water newly planted sod or seed for 30 minutes twice daily for the first month, then reduce to once every other day.

6. **Appliance Warranties:** Obtain, fill out, and mail any warranty registration postcards provided with your appliance manuals. Should anything break on an appliance, you will be the registered owner with the manufacturer.

7. **Test/Label Each Electrical Circuit:** Trip each circuit and then label what it controls. Reset to ON.

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## Maintenance Items

*This is a list of suggested regular maintenance items. You may find additional maintenance items that are not included in this document. If you have any questions about maintenance items, please contact your builder or local code certified inspector.*

1. **Site Work (Maintenance of Drainage/Grading/Landscaping)**

   a. The purpose of grading is to ensure that surface water will flow away from your home. There could be settlement in areas around your home. If this occurs, simply spread more soil in the depressions to re-establish the grade and drainage.
   b. To prevent erosion and water puddle formation:
      - Add grass to all unplanted/unseeded yard areas (water new grass for 30 minutes twice per day for the first month).
      - Maintain the drainage slope that the builder used originally.
      - Keep ditches or swales free of leaves or debris.
      - Direct water run-off away from the home.
      - Don't allow sprinklers to wet the house or form puddles.
      - If water is standing near your foundation within 48 hours after a storm, contact your builder.
      - Trees & plants need maintenance (be sure to water, prune and treat for pests regularly).
   c. Owner must maintain the soils near the foundation of the home in a manner that will assure a uniform, but not saturated, moisture level in the subsurface soil. Areas of soil with no landscaping may be more susceptible to evaporation and may require more moisture.
   d. Be aware of the placement of landscaping. Landscaping that requires heavy watering will cause a higher moisture content in the soil. Reasonably balanced moisture content around the entire foundation must be maintained. Owner is responsible for landscaping not installed by the builder and its effects.

2. **Concrete (Maintenance of Foundation/Driveways/Patios)**

   a. Yard grading must be maintained to ensure that surface water will flow away from your home. The soils near the foundation of the home must have a uniform, but not saturated, moisture level. Be aware of the placement of landscaping.
   b. The drainage pattern established by the builder must not be altered by addition of soil, landscaping or other improvements.
   c. Slight cracking of concrete is normal, but expansion joints can somewhat reduce cracking. You can purchase commercial patching mixtures to fix any cracks in the concrete.
   d. Do not allow extremely heavy vehicles into your driveway. Cement trucks, some moving vans, etc. can cause cracks.
   e. Do not use salt on concrete. Use sand if necessary.

3. **Masonry (Maintenance of Lintels/Paint/Caulking/Siding)**

   a. Lintels must be repainted. Check for deteriorations every six months and repaint as needed.



   b. Owner must maintain an adequate cover of paint on the house. This maintenance may need to be performed more frequently due to the severity of weather in Texas.
   c. Check for and clean mildew or fungus off masonry every six months.
   d. Inspect and repair masonry caulking every six months. Use a caulk that paint will adhere to (see recommended products list).
   e. Protect siding from damage. Don't let sprinklers run on it. Inspect and caulk every six months.

4. **Exterior (Maintenance of Roofing/Gutters/Sealants)**

   a. Have your roof inspected by a qualified roofer every three years. Be careful when walking on your roof because the materials can become loose.
   b. Keep gutters clean and free of debris so they can drain the water quickly from the roof. Make sure water doesn't pool around the foundation of the home.
   c. Check for and clean mildew or fungus off masonry every six months.
   d. Inspect and repair caulking (possible leaks) every six months. Pay close attention to caulking around doors and windows.

5. **Doors & Windows (Maintenance of Stains/Weatherstripping)**

   a. Sticking doors: check to see if hinge screws are tight and holding properly. If they're tight and the door is still out of alignment, sand or plane the edge that is binding. Be sure to paint anything you sand to prevent moisture penetration.
   b. Latch doesn't work: raise or lower the striker plate at the doorjamb to ensure the latch catches.
   c. Wooden exterior doors should be checked for deterioration every six months and repainted/stained as needed. To extend time between repainting, oil the finish on a wooden door with a wood preserver every three months. Reseal the wood after painting/staining to prevent moisture penetration.
   d. For aluminum doors, place a silicone lubricant on the tracks.
   e. Make sure the weatherstripping is in place every six months. Applying a silicone spray to the weatherstripping may help prolong the life of stripping made of vinyl or rubber. Replace any stripping that becomes loose or damaged.
   f. Lubricate the moving parts of garage doors every three months. Every year, tighten the screws and bolts that fasten the hardware to any wooden areas. Tracks should be kept clean.
   g. Condensation on windows is a common occurrence. Keep the windowsills dry to prevent warping. Don't install film coatings because they cause heat buildup and void the warranties.
   h. Keep the tracks and rollers for all windows lubricated, adjusted and clean. Take care to avoid damage to finishes on windowsills.

6. **Interior (Maintenance of Walls/Floors/Hardware/Baths)**

   a. Minor cracks can appear in drywall. Simply fill the cracks with spackling, sand and repaint. For nail pops, gently drive the nail or screw into the wall, re-spackle, and repaint.
   b. To remove spots from walls, a gentle cleaning with water and mild soap should do the trick. Keep your furnace and A/C filters clean, use the exhaust fans provided, and clean dust frequently.
   c. Vinyl flooring, should be cared for following manufacturer specifications. Dirt & spills should be cleaned up immediately. Indentation from heavy loads (high heels, furniture legs, etc.) can occur on vinyl floors. Rubber backed mats can cause discoloration or mildew.

d. Hardwood floors: pay special attention to the type of wood and the finish (clear coat, Dura-seal, hand rubbed) and follow manufacturer specifications for cleaning/care. Avoid water and clean up spills immediately to prevent permanent damage. High heels and heavy loads can cause indentations. Maintain constant humidity and temperature levels to prevent separation.
e. Carpet should last for years with proper maintenance. Vacuuming twice a week and using a carpet rake (don't use on Berber) will prevent matting in high traffic areas. Have a professional carpet cleaning at least once per year. Clean spills immediately.
f. Clean ceramic tiles with a moist cloth. Clean the grout between tiles with a brush and mild cleanser (or half vinegar/half water solution). Seal grout annually. If grout joints deteriorate, they should be cleaned out and re-grouted.
g. When cleaning sinks/tubs/showers use only non-abrasive cleansers. Do not use steel wool pads. For fiberglass, spray window cleaners are very effective. For hard water deposits, use 1 tbsp. of ammonia in a quart of water.
h. Common cleaning products will damage hardware and natural stone products. Be careful when cleaning brass hardware.
i. Inspect corners and edges for cracks every three months. Repair and repaint as needed.
j. Cultured marble baths: clean with non-abrasive detergent and damp cloth. If cracks appear in caulk joints, they should be cleaned out and re-caulked immediately (see product recommendations).
k. Inspect bathrooms (especially around tub/shower) for cracks and caulk immediately.

7. **Appliances (Maintenance of Appliances/Disposal/Detectors)**

a. Fill out and turn in all product registration cards (in manuals).
b. Consult and review all manuals before attempting to operate or fix any appliance.
c. If there is a problem you'll need to contact the manufacturer. Have the date of purchase (closing), the serial/model numbers from the metal plate on the bottom of the appliance, and a description of the problem handy.
d. Disposal should be operated with cold running water and the unit turned on prior to putting the food in. Clean the disposal quarterly by running a bucket of ice through (if the disposal stops working: unplug the unit, check for clogs, free the blades with a hex wrench on the bottom center of the unit, and push the reset button on the bottom).
e. Check smoke detectors monthly. Battery should be replaced every six months or as needed.

8. **Vents/Chimneys (Maintenance of Louvers/Fireplaces/Vents)**

a. Make sure all vents are unobstructed at all times.
b. Read manufacturers guidelines before operating fireplace.
c. Maintain a clean, unobstructed fireplace and chimney.
d. Have a professional check and clean soot annually.
e. To properly use the wood burning fireplace: open the flue damper fully and check to make sure its unobstructed, use a grate to elevate the wood above the fireplace floor, place newspaper under the grate, arrange logs in a pyramid on the grate, ignite newspaper, close screen, finally close the flue when fire is completely out the next day.
f. Protect siding from damage. Don't let sprinklers run on it. Inspect and caulk every six months.



9. **Cabinets & Countertops**

a. Wood cabinets: one coat of lemon oil or furniture polish twice per year. Only non-abrasive cleaners should be used. Lubricate hinges periodically.
b. Laminate Countertops: always use a cutting board, don't put anything extremely hot directly on the counter, and be careful of inks (especially newspaper ink). Recaulk if any separation occurs. Clean stains/spills immediately.
c. Cultured marble: clean with non-abrasive detergent and damp cloth. If cracks appear in caulk joints, they should be cleaned out and re-caulked immediately (see product recommendations).
d. Granite/Natural Stone Countertops: seal annually. Do not use citrus or acidic cleansers. Polish as needed. You can clean granite with Windex and alternate with a granite polish.

10. **Plumbing (Maintenance of Water Supply/Fixtures/Drains)**

a. In the event of plumbing problems, attend to them immediately to avoid major issues. Become familiar with the water shut off valves for your house and turn them off if a major leak occurs. If you are away for an extended period of time, drain your water supply lines.
a. Clean aerators every three or four months: unscrew from the mouth of the faucet and remove any debris. Remove the washer and the screens and rinse them thoroughly.
b. If a faucet leaks in the off position, you may need to replace the interior cartridge.
c. Cleaning Toilets - do not use cleaners containing calcium hypochlorite because it damages the water tank. Never stand on the toilet seat cover. Don't flush hair, grease, lint, diapers, trash, or paper towels. If the toilet is running, check the chain on the flush handle to make sure it's not too tight.
d. Drains usually have a "J" shape to provide a water barrier between your home and sewer gas. If you don't use a drain very much, you should turn the water on regularly to fill the "J" drain. Make sure no foreign objects are put into the drains.
e. When a drainpipe stops up, first try a plunger (if plunging a sink, cover the overflow outlet). If that doesn't work, try a plumber's snake. If that doesn't work, try a liquid un-clogger.
f. Read your manufacturer's manual to find out how to clean your water heater and what type it is. You should drain your water heater annually. Check the pilot light if your water doesn't heat.
g. Every six months, check the temperature and pressure relief valve on your water heater to be sure the lever works properly. If the thermostat fails to work, this valve prevents increases in water temperature and pressure.
h. Drain or otherwise protect lines, pipes, and exterior faucets from freezing. Freezing of pipes generally occurs only below 25 degrees.

11. **Electrical (Maintenance of Fuses/Breakers/Outlets)**

a. GFI outlets are installed in the bathrooms and outdoors per code and should not be altered. Don't use heavy appliances or multiple appliances on these outlets.
b. If the main circuit breaker trips you may need to switch the breaker from FULL OFF to FULL ON.
c. If one area goes off, just find the breaker that is trip and reset it.
d. If a wall switch or outlet is hot to the touch, trip the circuit breaker serving it immediately and contact an electrician.

e. Before calling an electrician, check all switches and breakers controlling that particular appliance and make sure the GFI button doesn't need to be reset. If everything is connected electrically, test it on a working outlet.

12. **HVAC (Maintenance of Heating/Cooling/Ventilation)**

a. Thermostat: Set between 70 and 72 degrees for heating. Set at 78 degrees for cooling. Install window coverings to maintain temperatures.
b. Filters: Change the Air Conditioner filter monthly.
c. Drain Lines: Make sure the two condensation lines drain every six months. Clean and remove clogs annually.
d. Gas Furnace: Do not store combustible items near the furnace. Have your unit and vent stacks checked out by a professional annually.
e. Insulation: As long as the insulation is kept undisturbed, it shouldn't need maintenance. Obtaining and installing adequate window coverings will help reduce heat build up in the house.
f. Attic vents, soffit vents, and ridge vents should be kept clear and free of debris. Blocked air vents can cause excessive heat build up in the attic. Make sure they haven't been stepped on or deformed or knocked loose by high winds annually.

13. **Foundation**

a. The main purpose of a slab-on-grade foundation is to provide a floor surface and a support for the structure above it. To support the structure above, the foundation must provide sufficient stiffness, or rigidity, so that undue distress does not occur in the frame structure above. When a foundation bends or flexes excessively, distress will show in various forms, including, without limitation, interior wallboard or plaster cracks, doors out of square, doors that do not open or close properly, cracks in exterior cladding materials, cracks in brick veneer and/or separation of adjacent components such as door or window frames, or building frames and trim elements. Some of these signs of distress may be unequal shrinkage of dissimilar materials such as concrete and wood or wood and brick. Some are due to normal seasonal changes in foundation supporting soil volumes because of changes in natural moisture contents.
b. The owner is responsible for ensuring a uniform, but not saturated, moisture level in the subsurface soil. Consequently, landscaping changes should be made with care. Reasonably balanced moisture content around the entire foundation must be maintained. Owner is responsible for landscaping not installed by the builder and its effects.
c. Additionally, the builder has established grading and swales in your lot to ensure that water flows away from your foundation. You must not alter these drainage patterns in any way or you could change the moisture level around the foundation.



## Recommended Products

| | |
|---|---|
| **Granite/Grout Sealer:** | Miracle 511 Impregnator by *Miracle Sealants Company* |
| **Granite Polish:** | Marble & Granite Magic by *Magic American Products* |
| **Caulk (exterior/interior walls):** | DAP Alex Plus by *DAP, Inc.* |
| **Caulk (baths/high moisture):** | Monarch Tub & Tile by *One Shot Adhesive Caulk* |
| **Mild Non-Abrasive Cleanser:** | Dish Soap (*Joy* or *Dawn*) |
| **Natural Cleaner (grout):** | 1 tsp. vinegar/4 tsp. water |
| **Glass Cleaner:** | Glass Cleaner by *Sprayway* |
| **Carpet Spot Treatment:** | Spot Shot by *WD 40* |
| **Tile Cleaner:** | 1 tbsp. Pine Sol/1 qt. water |
| **Bathroom Cleaner:** | Sanitizing Bathroom Cleaner by *Comet* |

## Energy Saving Tips

- Install Sufficient Window Coverings
- Clean or Replace A/C Filters Monthly
- Keep thermostat at 78°F in summer and 68°F in winter
- Put computer monitors on Standby Mode
- Install LED light bulbs instead of traditional
- Make sure all doors are properly sealed
- Keep all interior doors/vents in open position

## Water Saving Tips

- Turn down water pressure valves under sinks
- Water your yard in the evening (water grass only)
- Check Regularly for water leaks/running toilets
- Soak dishes/pots/pans before putting in dishwasher
- Insulate hot water pipes

## Mold Prevention Tips

- Keep moisture out and house well ventilated
- Water spray down the roof to remove growth
- Clean gutters with a hose or leaf blower
- Inspect and recaulk siding, windows, utility penetrations, and doors
- Check weatherstripping on all of the above
- Make sure ground slopes away from foundation
- Redirect sprinklers away from house or siding
- Trim plants/landscaping away from house
- Run exhaust fans for 20 minutes after showers
- Inspect underneath/behind plumbing fixtures



## Regular Exterior Maintenance

| Category | Items to Check (at six-month intervals) | √ |
|---|---|---|
| **Drainage** | • Check that water does not pool near the foundation after a heavy rain. If found, correct the grade slope or add underground drainage. | |
| | • Check the automatic sprinkler system (if applicable) for proper settings to give the site vegetation sufficient moisture to keep it from wilting, but without over-watering it. As part of the check, look inside each underground valve box and in the main water meter valve box to make sure they are dry. If the valves are submerged, suspect over-watering and stop watering in those zones until they are again dry or until the vegetation begins to wilt. | |
| | • Check that patios and flatwork around the structure are providing positive drainage away from the foundation. | |
| | • Check that fences, flowerbeds, or edging are not blocking drainage. | |
| | • Check that downspouts and gutters are clean, and water from downspouts is directed away from the foundation. | |
| | • Check for clogs or leaks in any existing downspout extensions, area drains, or underground drainage pipes, and clean and repair as required. | |
| **Vegetation** | • Check that there is no broadleaf tree (e.g., oak, ash, tallow, pecan, and hackberry, etc.) closer to the foundation a distance equal to the height of the tree, even if the tree is on an adjacent property. If such is the case, begin a pruning program to keep the tree's canopy at that size for the rest of its life. A reasonable pruning interval would be every 2 - 3 years. (Does not apply if the soil is known to be predominately non-expansive.) | |
| | • Check that there is no conifer tree (e.g., pine) closer to the foundation a distance equal to the radius of its canopy, even if the tree is on the adjacent property. If such is the case, begin a pruning program to keep the tree's canopy at that size for the rest of its life. A reasonable pruning interval would be every 2-3 years. (Does not apply if the soil is known to be predominately non-expansive.) | |
| | • Check that there is no new tree of any kind coming up next to the foundation. If found, remove it. | |
| | • Check that there are no shrubs next to the foundation that have grown to one story roof in height. If found, cut them back to window height or replace them with a smaller variety. (Does not apply if the soil is known to be predominately non-expansive.) | |
| **Water Leaks** | • Check that no leaks have developed near the foundation, such as a faucet drip or a condensate drip from an air conditioning unit, particularly from its emergency overflow pipe. If found, repair as needed. | |
| | • Check that the underground drainage system (if applicable) is properly functioning. If it does not drain freely, investigate and clean as needed to achieve normal flow. | |

## Regular Interior Maintenance

| Category | Items to Check (at six-month intervals) | √ |
|---|---|---|
| **Water Leaks** | • Check that all plumbing works properly, and that there is no stoppage or leaks. If found, repair as needed. | |
| **Miscellaneous** | • Check that there are no uncomfortable floor slopes by walking each room. If the maintainer is the tenant, perhaps ask someone else to check this, as it is easy to become accustomed to slopes that have gradually changed over time. | |
| | • Check that wood rafters (where applicable) in the attic are not pulled away from ridge members. | |
| | • Check that each door hangs properly (or as it did before), i.e., it does not stick, or swing open, or shut on its own, and there is no appreciable gap between the top of the door and its doorframe header above. | |
| | • Check interior countertops for levelness, and check cabinet doors and drawers for proper operation. | |

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ACES Builders' Warranty is the warranty administrator your builder has chosen to provide you with itemized performance standards. ACES has been operating in Texas since 1994, helping to facilitate efficient and comprehensive resolutions in the event of a problem. We promote the improvement of the building industry and believe in "fairness and integrity above all."

With tens of thousands of homes enrolled in the program and hundreds of dispute resolutions, ACES helps homeowners and builders resolve their disputes efficiently. Please visit our website for Homeowner Maintenance Tips.

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