



JUST A START'S HIP PROGRAM PRESENTS:  
A HOMEOWNER'S GUIDE  
TO PREVENTATIVE  
**HOME**  
**MAINTENANCE**



25+ Essential Household Maintenance Tasks  
What to do, when to do it, and who to call when you can't!

Whether you are a recent homebuyer, or have lived in your house for many years – this guide will offer tips on preventative home maintenance, **what to check for, how to do it** (or who to call) and **the ideal time of year** to perform each task.

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE:

This free guide and checklist has been created by the [Just A Start HIP Program](#) to serve as a resource to help **preserve and extend the life of your home, and save you money!** The guide includes “how to videos” from YouTube and other sources to help you identify and perform regular home maintenance tasks. Just A Start does not specifically endorse any products or companies associated with these videos, and is not responsible for outcomes associated with following this guide.

While regular maintenance will extend the life of your home, problems don't always follow your preventative maintenance schedule and systems eventually fail. If you spot an issue before the designated time listed in this guide. Follow up ASAP to prevent costly repairs down the road!



### Live in a condo?

Some maintenance is likely handled by your condo association and/or property manager. Be sure to check with your condo trustees before doing any preventative maintenance particularly to the outside of your unit.

**This Old House** put together a useful article to help you predict how long systems and appliances should last in your house. It is a good tool to help plan financially for forecasted repairs.

[LINK HERE](#)





# WINTER PREP

## TACKLE THIS MAINTENANCE EVERY WINTER

**CHECK FOR ICE DAMS AND ICICLES.** Ice Dams are ridges of ice that form at the bottom of your roof and gutters. They can build up over time in cold weather and cause water damage inside your home. [LINK HERE](#)

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**TEST YOUR SUMP PUMP.** Your sump pump (if you have one) is located in the basement and is used to pump collected ground water away from your house. As rains come in spring, it is best to test your pump at the end of the winter to make sure it is still pumping water using a bucket of water.

[LINK HERE](#)

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**CHECK AROUND TOILETS AND SINKS FOR LEAKS.** Even a small leak can waste hundreds of gallons of water, increase your bill and cause damage to your bathroom. A simple annual dye test can help you ensure your toilet is not leaking. [LINK HERE](#)

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**CHECK WINDOWS & DOORS FOR DRAFTS.** Early in the winter, test each exterior door and windows for evidence of wind getting in around the seams. A little caulking and weather stripping can seal up the gaps. Here's how to caulk a window: [LINK HERE](#)



**Looking to stay warmer in the winter?** In addition to windows and doors, proper wall insulation is a big energy saver all year long. **Mass Save**, a free State program to promote home energy efficiency offers great discounts on insulation among other things. If you qualify for fuel assistance – **CAPIC** can offer great benefits including free boilers and furnaces in some circumstances. Just A Start's HIP Program can also offer low/no interest loans and technical assistance to qualified homeowners. *See Resources section at the end of this guide for more details.*

**CHANGE YOUR FURNACE / HVAC FILTERS.** To preserve the life of your furnace and HVAC systems and to keep them running most efficiently and safely, the filters should be changed every 1-3 months. Each system has different filter specifications, so please consult your system's owner's manual for details.

[LINK HERE](#)



# SPRING CLEANING

## SPRINGTIME IS BEST TO DO THE FOLLOWING

**INSTALL AIR CONDITIONER UNITS.** To preserve the unit and allow for safe, clean air to circulate, air Conditioner filters should be cleaned before use. [LINK HERE](#)

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**CHECK AND CLEAN YOUR LAUNDRY DRYER VENT.** *Note: the dryer vent is different from the dryer filter, which should be removed of lint after each use.* The exterior exhaust vent will get clogged over time which makes the dryer work less efficiently and is a fire hazard. [LINK HERE](#)

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**CLEAN YOUR KITCHEN VENT HOOD FILTER.** Keep the vent working properly and safely and avoid a big greasy buildup. [LINK HERE](#)

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**TEST AND CHANGE BATTERIES ON YOUR SMOKE AND CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS.** Ensure they are working properly, and to avoid that annoying chirping noise, do this regularly and keep spare batteries on hand.



**CHECK OUTDOOR TREES** to ensure they are clear of electrical lines.

Found a tree making contact with an electrical line or downed power line? Call Eversource (800) 592-2000. **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO REMOVE BRANCHES YOURSELF.**

**CHANGE YOUR FURNACE / HVAC FILTERS**

# HOMEOWNER MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST

**HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST:** This free guide/checklist is provided as a resource to our clients and offers recommendations on regular maintenance to help keep extend the functional operations of building systems in the home. Home maintenance is unpredictable. By providing this list, JAS is not warranting that it is comprehensive and is in no way responsible or liable for issues that may arise. Spot an issue, before the designated month on the checklist? **DON'T WAIT**, follow up ASAP to prevent costly repairs or damage down the road.



	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Inspect drainpipes, gutters and vents											<input type="checkbox"/>	
clean your kitchen vent hood filter												
inspect tub and shower grout and caulking	<input type="checkbox"/>											
visual check around toilets and sinks for leaks	<input type="checkbox"/>											
perform a dye test in toilet					<input type="checkbox"/>							
check gutters and roof for ice dams and icicles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>									<input type="checkbox"/>
test your sump pump			<input type="checkbox"/>									
check windows and doors for drafts												<input type="checkbox"/>
change your furnace / hvac filters	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		
test and set up your air conditioner units					<input type="checkbox"/>							
remove storm windows and install screens					<input type="checkbox"/>							
check and clean your laundry dryer vent <i>(as often as monthly)</i>				<input type="checkbox"/>						<input type="checkbox"/>		
test smoke alarm and CO detectors			<input type="checkbox"/>								<input type="checkbox"/>	
change smoke alarm and CO detector batteries			<input type="checkbox"/>							<input type="checkbox"/>		
ensure outdoor trees are clear of electrical lines <i>(call eversource)</i>				<input type="checkbox"/>								
Trim trees and shrubs away from house						<input type="checkbox"/>						
check for driveway cracks						<input type="checkbox"/>						
check for cracks in house foundation						<input type="checkbox"/>						
inspect house for insect activity						<input type="checkbox"/>						
safety check your fire extinguisher <i>(as often as monthly)</i>							<input type="checkbox"/>					
clean out your freezer								<input type="checkbox"/>				
vacuum your refrigerator coils								<input type="checkbox"/>				
service your furnace											<input type="checkbox"/>	
clean gutters and roof drains (Late November)											<input type="checkbox"/>	
turn off your outdoor water supply											<input type="checkbox"/>	
remove screen windows and install storms											<input type="checkbox"/>	
inspect and clean your chimney flue									<input type="checkbox"/>			
remove or cover window air conditioners										<input type="checkbox"/>		



# SUMMER UPKEEP

## PROJECTS TO HANDLE IN SUMMER MONTHS

**TRIM TREES AND SHRUBS** at least three inches away from the house.

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**LOOK FOR CRACKS IN THE FOUNDATION** as they are an entry point for water and pests to enter your home. Cracks larger than 1/2" in width could be a sign of structural damage and we recommend that you have the foundation inspected/repaired by a specialist.

**CHECK YOUR DECK** - Get ready for outdoor get togethers by ensuring your deck is in good shape. Broken boards and damaged railings should be replaced. Check for rot, and insect damage from carpenter ants and termites.

**INSPECT YOUR HOUSE (INSIDE AND OUTSIDE) FOR INSECT AND RODENT ACTIVITY.** An extermination company can help address pest issues in your home and many give free estimates. [LINK HERE](#)

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**CHECK YOUR FIRE EXTINGUISHER** to ensure it is working properly. [LINK HERE](#)

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**CLEAN YOUR REFRIGERATOR COILS** to keep your fridge and freezer running optimally. Performing this task annually will save energy & money and extend the lifespan of the appliance. [LINK HERE](#)

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**CHANGE YOUR FURNACE / HVAC FILTERS**



# FALL MAINTENANCE

## GET READY FOR WINTER WITH THESE TASKS

**GET YOUR FURNACE/HVAC SYSTEM SERVICED** by a licensed professional.

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**CLEAN YOUR GUTTERS AND ROOF DRAINS** of any leaves or debris in late November/early December when the leaves have all fallen. Have the roof checked for damage/leaks. *We suggest setting up an annual contract with a gutter cleaning company.*

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**TURN OFF YOUR OUTDOOR WATER SUPPLY** and store outdoor hoses inside for the winter. Pipes typically freeze when temperatures dip below 20 degrees fahrenheit for six or more hours. *Call a professional if you don't know where your outdoor water supply is located.* [LINK HERE](#)

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**TEST AND CHANGE THE BATTERIES** on your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

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**REMOVE WINDOW SCREENS AND INSTALL STORM WINDOWS**

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**INSPECT AND CLEAN YOUR CHIMNEY FLUE** (if you use your fireplace). *We recommend hiring someone for this work.*

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**CHANGE YOUR FURNACE / HVAC FILTERS**

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



**FIND HANDYMEN AND SERVICEPEOPLE:** Homeadvisor and Angi (formerly Angieslist) are a good starting point. Read reviews, see if they offer senior discounts if you are eligible, or annual service plans for services like gutter cleaning pest control, and boiler/furnace maintenance. Ask your neighbors, family and friends. There is nothing more valuable than a good referral from someone you trust.

**LEARN SOME HOME MAINTENANCE SKILLS.** Save money and have fun in the process through an online or local class. A few local options that offer classes and workshops are the Cambridge Center for Adult Education, Boston Building Resources, and the Cambridge Public Library. Big Box home improvement stores like Lowes and Home Depot also offer free in person and online classes.

## TIME TO RENOVATE?



**Just A Start's Home Improvement Program (HIP)** has been helping Cambridge homeowners and landlords make repairs and improvements to their homes for over 45 years. We offer low-no interest financing to income qualified applicants through a partnership with the City of Cambridge. We also offer technical expertise by identifying needed repairs and improvements, competitively bidding out projects to contractors and helping to oversee projects through their life cycle. For more information, please contact **Ethan Solomon** at **(617) 918-7514** or [ethansolomon@justastart.org](mailto:ethansolomon@justastart.org) for more details.







**Just A Start** is a community development corporation dedicated to building the housing security and economic stability of people with low- to moderate-incomes in Cambridge and nearby communities.

JAS offers a wide variety of programs and services including affordable housing, workforce development, and housing resources.

**To learn more please visit:**

[www.justastart.org](http://www.justastart.org)

[www.justastart.org/housing/home-improvement-program/](http://www.justastart.org/housing/home-improvement-program/)