

LET'S GET STARTED!

This maintenance section has been written to provide you, the homeowner, with more information so you can better understand the various items that will require upkeep inside and outside the home. It is recommended that you review the home as soon as you take possession, while it is still empty. This can allow you to see any conditions which may have changed, occurred or become evident since the inspection. The following items are among the first to be checked when you take possession of the home.

ROOF: Roof surfaces should not have any openings or deterioration that could allow water to pass. Special attention should be paid to protrusions through the roof such as chimneys, plumbing stacks, skylights, roof vents, etc. Eavestroughs should be free of leaves and other debris that could hamper water flow. Tree branches should be cut back at least six feet from the roof.

EXTERIOR: All windows and doors should have up to date painting and caulking to ensure a weather proof envelope around the house. Any damaged or broken windows should be repaired. Review exterior grading to ensure water around the house drains away from the house. This includes ensuring that all downspouts for above grade systems ideally discharge six feet or more away from the house. Any windows that may be at or below grade should be in window wells that are equipped with clear plastic window well covers. This will help to minimize the risk of moisture penetration around the windows.

GARAGE: If the garage is equipped with automatic garage door openers, ensure that they are properly set up to operate safely. If there is a door into the house directly off the garage, it should have a properly operating automatic door closer to keep carbon monoxide fumes out of the house.

INTERIOR: Safe first! Check smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors for proper operation. Ensure furnace is operating safely and efficiently. Fireplaces and gas or oil water heaters should also be checked. All stair railings should be checked to ensure they are properly secured. For safety sake, all operating windows should have proper screens in place to help keep children from falling out. Ensure switches, plugs and devices are in good safe working order. Know where shutoffs are for water, electricity and gas/oil.

Notes

MAINTENANCE

These pages give a suggested maintenance schedule for each area of the home. When regular maintenance is performed, it can reduce the risks of surprise, high cost repairs which usually occur at the most inconvenient moment possible. In short, doing regular maintenance can save you time, money and headaches in the long run.
(see "Checking It Out")

ANNUAL MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE

ITEM TO REVIEW	Read	Monthly	Spring	Fall	Yearly	As Needed
EXTERIOR						
Roofing	1.1		✓	✓		
Eavestroughs & Downspouts	1.1		✓	✓		
Fascia & Soffit	1.2		✓	✓		
Walls	1.3				✓	
Windows & Doors	1.4				✓	
Garage(s) & Garage Door Opener(s)	1.5		✓	✓	✓	
Deck(s) & Porch(es)	1.6				✓	
Retaining Walls	1.7				✓	✓
Trees, Shrubs, Vines, etc.	1.8				✓	
Lot Grading	1.9					✓
Driveways & Walkways	1.95				✓	
STRUCTURE						
Structure	2.0					✓
Foundation	2.1					✓
Columns & Beams	2.2					✓
Flooring	2.3					✓
Walls & Ceilings	2.4					✓
Roof Framing	2.5					✓
INTERIOR						
Windows & Doors	3.0				✓	
Fireplace(s) & Chimney Flue(s)	3.1				✓	
Smoke & Carbon Monoxide Detector(s)	3.2	✓				✓
HEATING						
Forced Air System	4.0	✓			✓	✓
Hot Water System	4.1				✓	✓
Electric/Baseboard System	4.2				✓	✓
Wood Stove(s)	4.3				✓	✓

MAINTENANCE

ITEM TO REVIEW	Read	Monthly	Spring	Fall	Yearly	As Needed
COOLING						
Air Conditioning	5.0				✓	
Heat Pumps	5.1				✓	
Geothermal System	5.2				✓	
PLUMBING						
Water Supply & Distribution	6.0					✓
Water Treatment System	6.1					✓
Water Heater	6.2					✓
Fixtures	6.3					✓
Drainage	6.4					✓
ELECTRICAL						
Meter & Mast	7.0				✓	
Main & Sub Panel(s)	7.1				✓	
Distribution & Devices	7.2				✓	
Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters	7.3	✓				
MISCELLANEOUS						
Pests, Rodents & Birds	8.0				✓	✓
Security System	8.1					✓
Intercom System	8.2					✓
Fencing	8.3				✓	
Other items specific to your home						

MAINTENANCE

These pages can be used to record maintenance done on your home based on the Maintenance Schedule provided on the previous two pages in this section. Hopefully, this chart will allow you to effectively maintain your home while helping to ensure nothing is overlooked.

ANNUAL MAINTENANCE RECORD

ITEM TO REVIEW	Date Item Reviewed					
EXTERIOR						
Roofing						
Eavestroughs & Downspouts						
Fascia & Soffit						
Walls						
Windows & Doors						
Garage(s) & Garage Door Opener(s)						
Deck(s) & Porch(es)						
Retaining Walls						
Trees, Shrubs, Vines, etc.						
Lot Grading						
Driveways & Walkways						
STRUCTURE						
Structure						
Foundation						
Columns & Beams						
Flooring						
Walls & Ceilings						
Roof Framing						
INTERIOR						
Windows & Doors						
Fireplace(s) & Chimney Flue(s)						
Smoke & Carbon Monoxide Detector(s)						
HEATING						
Forced Air System						
Hot Water System						
Electric/Baseboard System						
Wood Stove(s)						

MAINTENANCE

ITEM TO REVIEW

Date Item Reviewed

COOLING						
Air Conditioning						
Heat Pumps						
Geothermal System						
PLUMBING						
Water Supply & Distribution						
Water Treatment System						
Water Heater						
Fixtures						
Drainage						
ELECTRICAL						
Meter & Mast						
Main & Sub Panel(s)						
Distribution & Devices						
Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters						
MISCELLANEOUS						
Pests, Rodents & Birds						
Security System						
Intercom System						
Fencing						
Other items specific to your home						

CHECKING IT OUT!

"Checking it Out" is intended to assist with regular home maintenance. Although we are trying to provide as much information as possible, we do not claim this is a complete how to list of maintenance items. This listing covers the most common concerns, but because most homes are unique, you may wish to add items to the list. It may be helpful to consult a professional. Please understand your own capabilities (i.e. if you are not comfortable going up onto the roof, hire a professional.)

EXTERIOR

1.0 Roofing: The roofing system's primary function is to keep the elements from causing damage to the interior of the home. As such, the roof should provide a weather tight covering over the home. It should be checked to ensure there are no gaps or weaknesses that may allow the elements in. Also, have any tree branches cut back that may be near enough to the roof to cause damage to it. Tree branches may also provide animal access to the roof.

Protrusions - All roofs have protrusions (i.e. chimneys, plumbing stacks, roof vents, skylights etc.). It is important to make sure the protrusions are well sealed where they intersect with the roof. Caulking and flashings around protrusions should not have gaps or cracks.

Shingle Roofs - Asphalt shingle roofs routinely have a life span of approximately fifteen years. As they age, they will curl, begin to lose the granules and become brittle. They may also split, blow off and crumble. In deciding whether to replace your roofing, it is advisable to err on the side of caution when these signs appear. Sometimes, trying to squeeze another year from a tired roof can have expensive consequences. If in doubt, consult a roofing professional.

Flat Roofs (asphalt roll type) - It is important to keep seams sealed at all times and to check for damage or deterioration in the material. This type of roofing has a life span of approximately ten years or less.

Flat Roofs (built up tar) - Look for cracks and evidence of bubbles. These are usually good indicators of a tired roof. Built up tar roofing has a life span of approximately ten years. Flat roof failure tend to be unpredictable. Err on the side of caution. If in doubt, consult a roofing professional.

Flat Roofs (built up tar and gravel)- Ponding, moss and/or bubbles or small mounds are usually good indicators of problems with this type of roofing. Lifespan for this type of roofing is approximately ten to twenty years. Failures tend to be unpredictable. Err on the side of caution. If in doubt, consult a roofing professional.

1.1 Eavestroughs & Downspouts: This system's sole function is to handle water flow coming off the roof and carry it to ground level to be discharged away from the home. Discharge can occur either at grade (on the lawn) or below grade (underground drainage system). Items to look for include obstruction like leaves and toys (tennis balls, etc.), poorly secured, poorly maintained or deteriorated eavestroughs and downspouts.

MAINTENANCE

1.2 Fascia & Soffit: The purpose of a fascia & soffit system is two fold, Firstly, it serves to cosmetically trim the space between the roof and exterior walls. Secondly, the fascia may also serve to support the eavestroughs. An exposed wooden system will require periodic painting and occasionally some board replacement. An aluminum or vinyl clad system generally requires no maintenance.

1.3 Walls: Exterior walls are commonly brick/stone, stucco/EIFS, wood, aluminum or vinyl. All of these materials except for stucco/EIFS and wood are relatively maintenance free. Wood will require periodic painting, while stucco may develop cracks which will need repair. EIFS requires 100% perfect seating at all times to avoid trapping water behind it, which can cause mold and wood rot issues. With new homes, it is important to note that settlement cracks may become evident in the first two to three years. This is a common occurrence, and it is advisable to monitor the degree of cracking. The majority of these cracks never amount to anything significant. When in doubt, consult a professional.

1.4 Windows & Doors: When checking the exterior of windows & doors, it is important to keep in mind they must form a weather tight barrier for the structure. Caulking should be complete and in good condition. Frames should be well maintained (i.e. paint, if necessary) and windows should not be cracked, broken or missing.

1.5 Garage(s): Attached garages can pose a carbon monoxide hazard to occupants of the home. There should be a gas tight seal between the house and the garage. Any holes in the common wall should be corrected. Any doors into the house from the garage must have appropriate seals and be equipped with a properly adjusted automatic door closer.

Garage Door Opener(s): Automatic garage door openers can pose a serious threat to people and property, if the safeguards are not functioning correctly. Most openers are equipped with an automatic reversing feature that can be triggered by one or two devices. Photo sensing equipment, usually located near the bottom of the track, should detect an obstruction and reverse the door. This can be tested by disrupting the light beam while the door is coming down. Resistance sensing equipment, usually located in the motor box, should sense unusual resistance and reverse the door. This can be tested by resisting the downward travel of the door(s). Inspectors commonly grab the bottom of the door with their hands at chest height, standing out of the door's path, and apply resistance. Be aware that an improperly adjusted door opener can deliver bone crushing force and govern yourself accordingly!

1.6 Deck(s) & Porch(es): Since decks and porches are commonly made of wood, they may require periodic painting/sealing. Decks and porches should also be checked for deteriorated wood and loose, improper, deteriorated or missing railings.

1.7 Retaining Wall(s): The primary purpose of a retaining wall is to hold back soil that is at a different height than the soil next to it. They can be made with a variety of materials ranging from wood through interlocking stone to poured concrete. Leaning and/or deteriorated walls/railings should be corrected and ensure drainage holes are functioning.

1.8 Trees, Shrubs, Vines, etc.: Trees that are close to a house can pose problems. Branches can damage siding, windows, eavestroughs, downspouts, soffits, fascia and roofs. It is advisable to trim branches back a safe distance from the house. Tree roots can also damage foundations and drainage piping. Therefore, when planting any new trees, consider the proximity to the home, Shrubs close to the home can keep moisture near the foundation, complicating basement dampness concerns. Vines growing on exterior walls can be quite damaging to brickwork and siding materials. While cosmetically appealing to some people, from a practical viewpoint, they should be removed. Vines can also cause roof drainage concerns when they grow over into the eavestroughs.

1.9 Lot Grading: The purpose of good lot grading is to direct water away from the structure in an attempt to keep the basement as dry as possible. The grading in the home's immediate vicinity should be sloping away from the structure. Any downspouts discharging above grade should discharge at least six feet from the home. If proper grading is lost to settlement, it should be corrected as soon as possible.

1.95 Driveways & Walkways: With frost cycles, driveways & walkways can "float". Uneven "float" can cause trip hazards between walkway slabs as well as at driveway-garage intersections. Because of the safety and liability concerns, these areas should be repaired as soon as possible. Seal all intersections between the home and driveways or walkways to protect against moisture penetration. The sealant should be a flexible butyl or silicone type material to allow for the "float." You may also wish to periodically have your driveway surface sealed.

STRUCTURE

2.0 Structure: The primary function of the structure is to support the load of the home. Generally, the only maintenance needed is to monitor settlement in the first two to three years after construction. You may notice that doors don't quite latch and floors may not maintain original level. Door hardware may need adjustment. If settlement appears extreme, consult a professional. You may also wish to advise your homebuilder.

2.1 Foundation: The primary purpose of a foundation is to support the structure. Foundations generally require no maintenance and are commonly hidden from view. Other than the appearance of significant cracks in the foundation walls, they are generally not monitored.

2.2 Columns & Beams: Columns and beams are generally installed in the interior core of homes and their purpose is to support floors and loads bearing walls. These items are generally maintenance free. Columns should be plumb and beams should be level. Neither should show signs of deterioration.

2.3 Flooring: Flooring systems should be level, firm, and without visible signs of deterioration. They are generally maintenance free items.

2.4 Walls & Ceilings: While generally maintenance free, they can show visible indicators of water damage (i.e. water stain on the ceiling of the room below the bathroom with the leaking shower). Walls should be plumb, ceilings should be level, and neither should bow.

2.5 Roof Framing: The purpose of roof framing is to support the loads of the roofing system. Viewed from the attic, signs of mold or mildew, twisted or cracked timbers, and/or water marks should be considered warning signals that something may be wrong. Mold or mildew are indicators of poor ventilation. Twisted or cracked timbers are indicators of unusually heavy loads or poor construction. Water marks may be signs of water penetration past the roof coverings. Try to differentiate between water marks which may have occurred during construction and ones that would be more recent.

MAINTENANCE

INTERIOR

3.0 Windows & Doors: Interior windows & doors should be checked for proper operation and that screens are installed correctly on all operating windows. Have window and door tracks cleaned as necessary to ensure smooth operation. Have any broken or cracked glass replaced as necessary.

3.1 Fireplace(s) & Chimney Flue(s): Periodic chimney sweeps should be performed, as well as reviewing the general condition of the fire box and any doors/screens in front of fireplaces(s). The damper(s) should be operated to ensure proper fit and operation.

3.2 Smoke & Carbon Monoxide Detector(s): Test/Upgrade/Install Upon Occupancy. These safety devices are tested by pushing the "push to test" button. This should sound the alarms. Battery powered units will require periodic replacement of batteries, and the unit may alert you to this need with intermittent beeping. Detectors usually have a specific life span and this information can generally be found on the unit itself. Replace units based on their life span date. Any units that are malfunctioning should be replaced immediately! These items are life saving devices and should be treated as extremely important!

HEATING

4.0 Forced Air System: Filter(s) should be cleaned/replaced on a regular basis, ideally every month or two. Humidifiers should be cleaned at least twice during the heating season. Oil fired systems should have the tank and fuel lines checked at least twice during the heating season. Oil fired systems should have the tank and fuel lines checked regularly for possible leaks and corrosion. Heating systems should have an annual maintenance performed by a professional heating contractor. Duct cleaning may be suggested for people with allergies or sensitivities to dust. Keep all supply and return air registers unobstructed.

4.1 Hot Water System: Annual service and maintenance should be done by a professional heating contractor. All piping and connectors should be checked for possible leaks and corrosion. All valves should be checked to ensure they are operating properly. Oil-fired systems should have the tank and fuel lines checked for possible leaks and corrosion.

4.2 Electric/Baseboard System: Radiant baseboard systems are basically maintenance free. Periodic vacuuming to remove dust is suggested. Also ensure that drapery etc. has not made contact with the heating element. Fan assisted space heating may require periodic lubrication.

4.3 Wood Stove(s): Apart from ensuring that the installation is a safe one, a periodic cleaning of the chimney flue is recommended. There should be no cracks or deterioration in the unit itself.

HEATING

5.0 Air Conditioning: Have service and maintenance performed by a professional heating and cooling contractor to check for proper refrigerant levels, etc. Warning: these systems are under high pressure! Do not disconnect any lines yourself! The unit should be level and allow a free flow of air through it (i.e. no shrubs or decks too close).

MAINTENANCE

5.1 Heat Pumps: Have service and maintenance performed by a professional heating and cooling contractor to check for proper refrigerant levels, etc. Warnings: these systems are under high pressure! Do not disconnect any lines yourself! The unit should be level and allow a free flow of air through it (i.e. no shrubbery too close).

5.2 Geothermal Systems: Geothermal systems combine heat pump technology with a liquid pumped through underground lines to transfer heat from one location to another. Service and maintenance of this type of system is best left to a professional heating and cooling contractor experienced in geothermal technology.

PLUMBING

6.0 Water Supply & Distribution: Check for leaks and ensure that the piping is properly secured. Also, check to ensure that copper piping is not in contact with any metal heating ducts. This contact can lead to corrosion and leaks. Lines with condensate evidence should be insulated to prevent condensate dripping onto finishings.

6.1 Water Treatment System: It is important to refill the salt in a water softening system before it runs out. Failure to do so could result in premature failure of the resin tank. It is advisable to use the best quality salt. Understand and follow your manufacturer's recommendations for filter maintenance, if applicable to your system. Check for possible leaks or deterioration on system lines or fittings.

6.2 Water Heater: Water heaters can be rented or owned. Check for possible leaks, rust and deterioration of the unit. The unit should be located near a floor drain in case of failure. Ensure temperature settings are not high enough to scald at the taps! Water heaters should have safe clearances from combustibles.

6.3 Fixtures: Fixtures should not be dripping or leaking and should be properly secured. Showers should be well sealed and caulked. If water flow appears compromised, aerators may be filled with grit or debris and can be removed for cleaning. Clothes washing machine shut-off valves should be kept closed when the washer is not in use.

6.4 Drainage: Drainage pipes should be free of leaks, deterioration and any unsealed openings. Proper drainage can be checked by filling sinks and observing the speed at which the water drains. If sinks drain slowly, the trap underneath can usually be opened for cleaning. If toilets drain slowly, a plunger or snake can be used to clear the obstruction.

ELECTRICAL

7.0 Meter & Mast: Meters should be checked to ensure they are properly secured and that covers are tight. A mast is only present with overhead services and should also be checked to ensure it is properly secured. If the mast goes through the roof, it should be checked to ensure that it is sealed where it contacts the roof.

7.1 Main & Sub Panel(s): With fuse type systems, all fuses should be properly sized for safety (typically 15 amp (blue) fuses). With breaker type systems, it is recommended to turn each breaker on and off at least once a year to prevent them from stiffening up. All panels should have complete covers and no openings uncovered. All panels should be properly secured and protected from weather and dampness.

MAINTENANCE

7.2 Distribution & Devices: The distribution wiring in your home begins at the electrical panel and finishes at the devices. All visible wiring should be properly secured, not damaged or vulnerable to damage. All devices should be checked to ensure they are operating properly and are not loose or without covers. All electrical appliances should be kept unplugged when not in use.

7.3 GUCCI: Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter devices are recommended for all exterior and bathroom circuitry. Gucci's come in two forms, breaker and plug/receptacle type. Both types have a test button which should be operated monthly. In the breaker style, the reset is the breaker switch and the plug/receptacle style has a reset button. These devices are designed to protect a person from getting a shock.

7.4 FACE: Arc Fault Circuit Interrupter devices are usually installed in the electrical panel box (look like a circuit breaker) and protect circuits from overheating caused by "arcing" by detecting the characteristic "Arc" in the electrical current that could cause a fire and they shut down power to the circuits they protect. These devices usually protect bedroom circuits and should be tested periodically by pushing the "test button"

MISCELLANEOUS

8.0 Pests, Rodents, & Birds: These intruders can attack a home from a variety of locations. Pests (such as termites, carpenter ants, powder post beetles, etc.) that are destructive to the home are what we are most concerned about. If you suspect their presence in your home, consult a qualified exterminator. Rodents are less likely to gain access to your home if appropriate exterior maintenance is maintained. Rodents and birds can enter your home through fireplace chimneys and any other small openings left unsealed. Capping chimneys and filling unnecessary openings in the structure are good defensive measures. Tree branches that could provide animal access to the roof should be cut back. If you suspect rodents or birds have gained access, consult a qualified professional at your earliest opportunity to minimize possible damage.

8.1 Security System: Consult your system provider regarding any test procedures recommended, as well as battery maintenance, if applicable.

8.2 Intercom System: Intercom systems are generally maintenance free except for occasional dusting.

8.3 Fencing: Wood fencing that is painted or stained will require regular paint/stain maintenance. Fencing should be plumb, secure and free of deterioration or rot. Gate hardware should be operating, secure, properly adjusted and not deteriorated. There should be no protruding nails/screws or splintered wood. Metal fencing may require painting. All hardware may occasionally need lubrication.

Notes

HIRING A CONTRACTOR

Since most people don't deal with contractors on a regular basis, hiring the right one can be a rather daunting task. As the complexity of the job you wish to do increases, so does the complexity of finding the right contractor. We hope the following information will assist you in choosing the contractor that will best meet your needs.

The Starting Point

First and foremost, you should have a clear understanding of what it is you'd like to accomplish and the budget available for the job. Know which parts of the job you may wish to do yourself. This could range from handling a major portion of the job to something relatively minor like sweeping or cleaning up the job site at night. Your participation could save you significant dollars.

How to Find Your Contractor

A good contractor will usually have an excellent reputation, commonly supported by good word of mouth references. Don't be shy, Ask friends, relatives, neighbours, etc, If they know or have had experience with a good contractor, Sometimes a contractor will be working right in your neighbourhood and their trucks or signs will be visible.. Again, don't be shy, go ask the homeowner how the work is going and if they'd recommend the contractor, It is always recommended that you investigate more then one contractor/company before making your final decision.

Once you've narrowed the field to two or three contractors you like, it's time to ask for more references. Call these references, and if they are good, consider asking permission to go over and see the results for yourself. If you're satisfied, sit down with the contractor and discuss your job in detail. Take note of the contract's communication skills and style. If things go smoothly at this stage, there's a better possibility the Job will go smoothly.

The more information you can give the contractor the better he/she will be able to help you. Once you've given your information to them, we would suggest that you be receptive to suggestions or advice the contractor may offer based on their experience. There is often more than one way to achieve your intended result. This is not to say you should feel bound to use the contractor's suggestions, only that they may offer some advantages or ideas you may not have considered.

