Use & Care Guide

HOMEOWNER GUIDE

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Use & Care Guides

Use & Care Guides

These practical guides help you understand, maintain, and troubleshoot the systems and components in your Classic home. Proper care extends the life of your home and helps maintain warranty coverage.

How to Use This Section

Each guide includes:

- **How It Works** - Understanding your system's basics
- **Routine Maintenance** - Tasks you should perform regularly
- **Troubleshooting** - What to check before calling for service
- **What to Avoid** - Actions that can cause damage or void warranty
- **Seasonal Care** - Preparing for weather changes

> **Looking for Warranty Coverage?**
>
> Each Use & Care guide links to its corresponding Standards of Performance page where you can find specific warranty coverage details.

Register Your Product Warranties

Promptly register the manufacturer warranties for the products in your home — by mail or online. Registration ensures you receive recall notices and the full manufacturer warranty coverage. Be sure to register:

- Appliances
- Water heater
- Furnace and air conditioner
- Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors
- Fireplace
- Garbage disposal
- Garage door opener
- Individual smart home components

For step-by-step guidance, see Register Your Appliances.

> **Protect your coverage**
>
> Using non-recommended products, parts, or cleaners can void the manufacturer's warranty. Always follow the manufacturer's recommended care and instructions.

Topics A-Z

A

- Air Conditioning
- Appliances

C

- Cabinets
- Carpet
- Caulking
- Ceramic Tile
- Concrete
- Condensation
- Countertops

D

- Decks
- Doors and Locks
- Drywall

E

- Electrical
- Energy Conservation

F

- Fencing
- Fireplaces
- Fixtures
- Flooring - Hardwood
- Flooring - Resilient
- Foundation
- Framing

G

- Garage Door
- Grading & Drainage
- Gutters & Downspouts

H

- Heating Systems

I

- Insulation

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- Landscaping

M

- Man-Made Stone
- Mirrors
- Mold Prevention

P

- Paint & Stain
- Pests & Wildlife
- Plumbing

R

- Roof

S

- Shower Doors
- Siding & Stucco

V

- Ventilation

W

- Water Heaters
- Windows
- Wood Trim

Related Resources

- **Standards of Performance** - Warranty coverage for each topic
- **I Have a Problem** - Start here if something isn't working
- **Maintenance Schedules** - Complete maintenance calendar

Air Conditioning

Your air conditioning system keeps your home comfortable during warm months. Understanding how it works and providing regular maintenance helps ensure efficient operation and extends the system's life.

> **Heat Pump Systems**
>
> If your home has a heat pump system, refer to Heating Systems (p. 53) instead.

How It Works

Your home air conditioning is a closed system - interior air is continually recycled and cooled until the desired temperature is reached. Warm outside air disrupts the system and makes cooling difficult.

For best results:

- Keep all windows closed while AC is running
- Close window coverings on sun-facing windows
- The sun heating through windows can overcome the cooling effect

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Check/replace air filter	Monthly	5 minutes
Clear debris from outdoor unit	Monthly	10 minutes
Check that vents are open	Seasonally	5 minutes
Professional maintenance	Annually	N/A

Air Filters

A clean filter is essential for proper airflow. Dirty filters cause:

- Reduced cooling efficiency
- Higher energy bills
- Potential system freeze-up
- Shortened equipment life

Outdoor Unit Care

Keep it level: The condensing unit (outside) must stay level for efficient operation. If you suspect it's not level, contact Classic Homes during the first year for inspection.

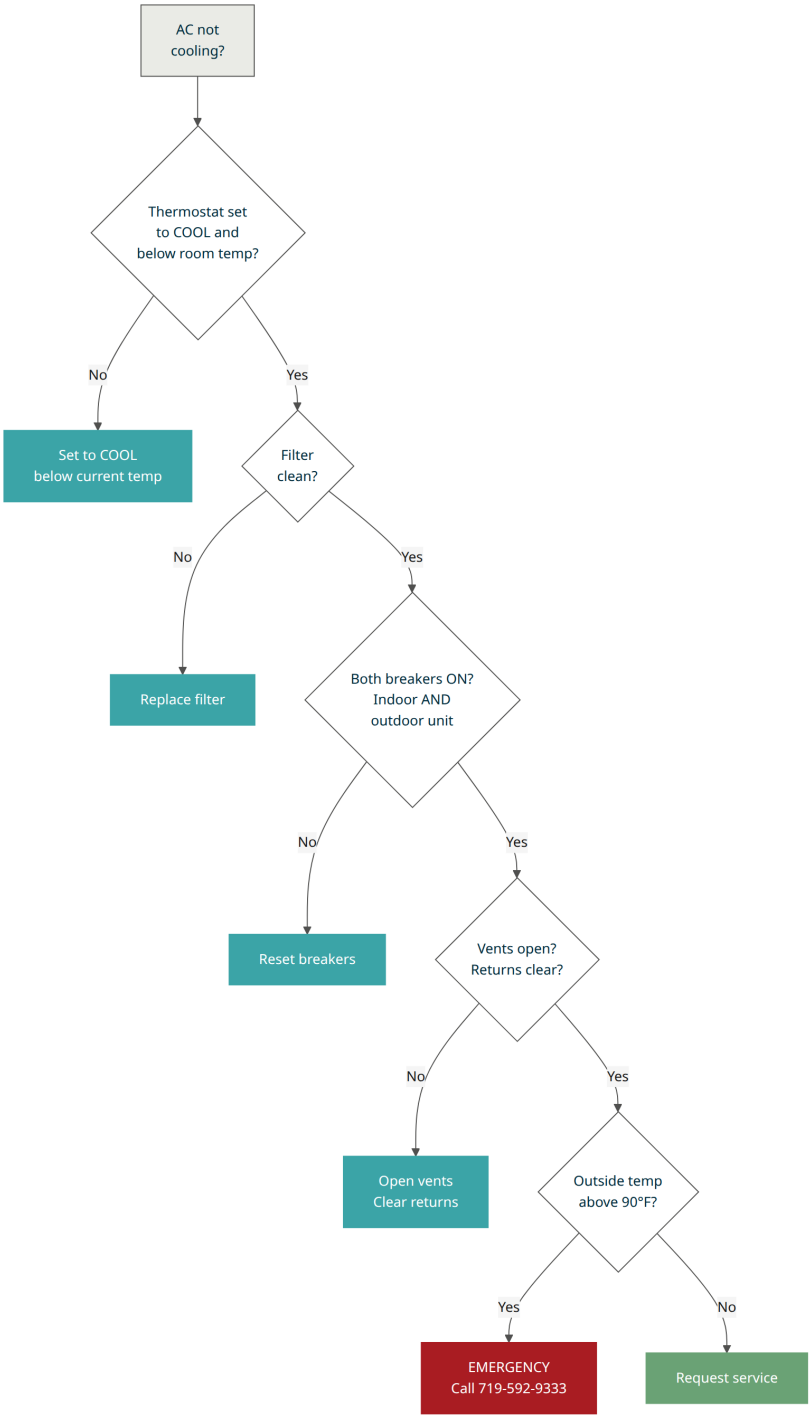
Keep it clear: Remove debris, leaves, and vegetation from around the unit. Maintain clearance on all sides for proper airflow.

Troubleshooting

AC Not Cooling?

Quick Checklist:

1. Thermostat is set to **"cool"** and temperature is set **below** room temperature
2. Blower panel cover is installed correctly on furnace (has safety switch)
3. Breakers are ON - both main panel AND 220 disconnect near outdoor unit
4. Switch on side of furnace is ON
5. Filter is clean and allowing airflow
6. Vents in rooms are open
7. Air returns are unobstructed



Still not working? Check warranty coverage or request service.

Temperature Variations Between Rooms

Temperatures vary from room to room and floor to floor by several degrees. This is normal and due to:

- Floor plan and room orientation
- Sun exposure
- Window size and coverings
- Traffic through the home
- Heat rising to upper floors

Try this:

- Open vents in rooms you use most
- Partially close vents in unused rooms

- Close window coverings on sun-facing windows
- Readjust when seasons change

What to Avoid

> **Warning**
>
> Setting thermostat to 60°F will NOT cool faster - it can freeze the unit and cause damage. Set to your desired temperature (typically 75-78°F).

- **Don't block vents or returns** - Restricts airflow and reduces efficiency
- **Don't run AC with windows open** - Wastes energy and prevents proper cooling
- **Don't ignore dirty filters** - Causes system strain and potential damage
- **Don't forget about humidifiers** - If you have a humidifier on the furnace, turn it OFF when using AC. Additional moisture can freeze the system.

Thermostat Best Practices

Unlike a light bulb that reacts instantly, your AC needs time to cool the home. If you arrive home at 6 PM when it's 90°F and set the thermostat to 75°F, cooling will take time because the sun has heated the walls, carpet, and furniture all day.

For best results:

- Program the thermostat to a moderate temperature in the morning
- Let the system maintain the cooler temperature throughout the day
- Lower slightly when you arrive home

Seasonal Care

Before Summer

- Replace air filter
- Clear debris from outdoor unit
- Open vents in rooms you'll use most
- Schedule professional maintenance if due

Before Winter

- Turn off humidifier if installed
- Clear leaves from outdoor unit
- Consider covering outdoor unit (check manufacturer recommendations)

Related Topics

- Heating Systems (p. 53)
- Ventilation (p. 83)
- Condensation (p. 20)
- Energy Conservation (p. 32)

Warranty Coverage: See Air Conditioning Standards for coverage periods and exclusions.

Appliances

Your home includes various appliances that add convenience and functionality to your daily life. These appliances are covered by their manufacturers' warranties, not by Classic Homes.

> **Manufacturer Warranties**
>
> Classic Homes assigns all appliance warranties to you at closing. Contact the manufacturer directly for warranty service on appliance issues.

How It Works

Appliances operate independently from your home's systems. Each appliance has its own:

- Power requirements (electrical connection)

- Operating instructions
- Maintenance schedule
- Warranty coverage from the manufacturer

Your Design Studio selection sheet and appliance manuals contain model numbers, serial numbers, and manufacturer contact information needed for warranty service.

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Clean appliances per manufacturer guidelines	Weekly/Monthly	Varies
Check connections and hoses	Quarterly	10 minutes
Register products with manufacturers	At move-in	15 minutes each
Organize documentation	At move-in	30 minutes

Keep Documentation Organized

- Keep all appliance manuals and warranty information in a safe, accessible location
- Note the model and serial numbers of your appliances for warranty service
- Store receipts and registration confirmations together
- Create a list of manufacturer contact information

Register Your Appliances

- Register your appliances with the manufacturer when required
- Registration ensures you receive recall notices and warranty coverage
- Many manufacturers offer online registration for convenience
- Keep confirmation of registration with your appliance documents

Follow Manufacturer Guidelines

- Follow manufacturer recommendations for maintenance and cleaning
- Use recommended cleaning products only
- Schedule professional maintenance when recommended
- Never ignore warning lights or unusual sounds

Troubleshooting

Appliance Not Working?

Quick Checklist:

1. **Check power:** Is the appliance plugged in? Check the circuit breaker
2. **Check manual:** Review the troubleshooting section in your appliance manual
3. **Check warranty:** Is this a manufacturer warranty issue? Contact manufacturer directly
4. **Review orientation form:** Was this issue noted at your New Home Presentation?

Common Issues

Problem	Possible Cause	Solution
Won't turn on	No power	Check outlet, breaker, and plug
Making unusual noise	Normal operation or issue	Check manual for normal sounds
Not performing correctly	Settings or maintenance	Review manual, clean filters
Error code displayed	Specific issue	Look up code in manual

Important

Classic Homes does not provide warranty service for appliances. Contact the manufacturer directly using the warranty information that came with your appliance.

What to Avoid

> **Warning**
>
> - **Don't ignore warning lights or error codes** - Address issues promptly
> - **Don't use incorrect cleaning products** - May damage surfaces or void warranty
> - **Don't skip regular maintenance** - Reduces appliance lifespan
> - **Don't attempt repairs yourself** - May void manufacturer warranty
> - **Don't discard documentation** - Keep manuals and warranty info accessible

Related Topics

- Fixtures (p. 38) - Related fixture care
- Electrical System - Electrical connections
- Plumbing System - Plumbing connections

Warranty Coverage: See Appliances Standards for coverage details. Remember: appliance issues are handled by the manufacturer, not Classic Homes.

Cabinets

Your cabinets are designed to provide years of functional storage and aesthetic appeal. Whether wood, wood veneer, or composite, proper care extends their life and maintains their appearance.

> **Wood Variations**
>
> If you selected wood or wood veneer cabinets, expect natural differences in grain patterns and color variations. These are characteristics of natural wood, not defects.

How It Works

Cabinets consist of several components that work together:

- **Cabinet boxes** - The structural frames mounted to walls
- **Doors and drawer fronts** - The visible surfaces
- **Hinges** - Allow doors to open and close smoothly
- **Drawer glides** - Enable smooth drawer operation
- **Hardware** - Handles, knobs, and pulls

Your Design Studio selection sheet records the brand, style, and color of cabinets in your home.

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Wipe down surfaces	Weekly	10 minutes
Clean with lemon oil or polish	Every 3 to 6 months	20 minutes
Lubricate hinges and glides	As needed	15 minutes
Tighten loose hardware	As needed	10 minutes
Check for moisture damage	Seasonally	10 minutes

Cleaning Wood Cabinets

For wood or wood veneer cabinets:

- Use lemon oil or polishes with scratch cover
- Follow container directions
- Use products maximum once every 3 to 6 months to avoid excessive build-up
- Wipe in the direction of the wood grain

Lubricating Hinges and Glides

If hinges catch or drawer glides become sluggish:

- Apply a small amount of silicone lubricant
- Work the door or drawer back and forth to distribute
- Wipe away excess lubricant
- This improves performance immediately

Hardware Tightening

- Check screws on knobs, pulls, and hinges periodically
- Tighten with appropriate screwdriver
- Don't over-tighten, which can strip screw holes

Troubleshooting

Door Not Closing Properly?

Quick Checklist:

1. Check if hinges are loose - tighten screws
2. Look for debris preventing closure
3. Check if door is warped (measure with straight edge)
4. Verify hinges are adjusted correctly - most are adjustable

Common Issues

Problem	Possible Cause	Solution
Door won't close	Loose hinges	Tighten hinge screws
Door misaligned	Hinges need adjustment	Adjust hinge screws
Drawer sticking	Debris in slides	Clean drawer slides
Drawer sluggish	Dry slides	Apply silicone lubricant
Hardware loose	Normal use	Tighten screws
Warping	Heat/moisture exposure	Relocate heat sources

Adjusting Cabinet Hinges

Most modern cabinet hinges have adjustment screws:

- **Side-to-side:** Adjusts door position left or right
- **Up-and-down:** Raises or lowers the door
- **In-and-out:** Moves door closer to or away from cabinet

Make small adjustments, test, and repeat until aligned.

What to Avoid

> **Warning**
>
> - **Don't use paraffin-based spray waxes** - Damages the luster of wood finishes
> - **Don't wash cabinets with water** - Damages luster and can cause swelling
> - **Don't use abrasive cleaners** - Scratches surfaces
> - **Don't place heat/steam appliances under cabinets** - Causes warping and damage
> - **Don't hang on doors or drawers** - Can damage hinges and glides

Protect from Heat and Moisture

Damage to cabinet surfaces and warping can result from appliances that generate moisture or heat near cabinets:

- Crock pots
- Toaster ovens
- Coffee makers
- Other heat/steam producing appliances

Solution: Place such appliances in locations not directly under a cabinet, or use protective barriers.

Related Topics

- Countertops (p. 22) - Countertop care and maintenance
- Caulking (p. 14) - Maintaining caulk seals around cabinets
- Condensation (p. 20) - Managing humidity that affects cabinets

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Warranty Coverage: See Cabinets Standards for coverage periods and exclusions.

Carpet

Carpet adds warmth, comfort, and noise reduction to your home. With regular care, your carpet will maintain its appearance and last for years. Understanding proper maintenance is essential for protecting your investment.

> **Berber/Loop Carpets**
>
> Always disengage the vacuum beater bar on Berber, shag, and cable carpets. Using the beater bar causes permanent damage and is excluded from the Limited Warranty.

How It Works

Carpet consists of several layers:

- **Face fibers** - The visible pile you walk on
- **Primary backing** - Holds the fibers in place
- **Secondary backing** - Provides stability
- **Padding** - Cushioning underneath for comfort and durability

Carpet usually comes in 12-foot widths, making seams necessary in most rooms. Seams are normal and become less visible over time with use and vacuuming.

Your Design Studio selection sheet provides the brand, style, and color of your floor coverings.

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Light vacuuming (3 passes)	Twice weekly	15 minutes
Thorough vacuuming (7 passes)	Weekly	30 minutes
High-traffic area vacuuming	Daily	5 minutes
Spot clean spills	Immediately	10 minutes
Professional cleaning	Annually	N/A

Regular Vacuuming

You can add years to the life of your carpet with regular care:

- Vacuum twice weekly with light passes (3 passes per area)
- Vacuum thoroughly once weekly (7 passes per area)
- High traffic areas may need daily attention
- A vacuum with beater-bar agitates pile and is more effective (except on loop carpets)

Why it matters: Carpet wears out because dirt particles get trampled deep into the pile and wear down fibers like sandpaper.

Professional Cleaning

- Have carpet professionally cleaned at minimum once per year
- More often with pets or heavy traffic
- Hot water extraction (steam cleaning) provides best results
- Allow carpet to dry completely before heavy use

Spill Response

Immediate action is critical:

1. Blot or dab - **never rub**

2. Work from the outside of the spill inward
3. Use clean white cloths or paper towels
4. Test stain removers in an inconspicuous area (closet) first

Important: No carpet is stain-proof. "Stain-resistant" doesn't mean stain-proof.

Troubleshooting

Common Carpet Issues

Problem	Cause	Solution
Visible seam	Normal construction	Will become less visible over time
Loose seam	Installation settling	Request service if coming apart
Rippling	Humidity or stretching	Request re-stretching if persistent
Shedding	New carpet	Normal; vacuum more often initially
Pilling	Fiber type and traffic	Clip off pills
Sprouting tufts	Manufacturing variance	Cut with scissors (don't pull)
Filtration lines	Air filtering at edges	Leave interior doors open when HVAC runs

Substances That Can Cause Permanent Damage

May cause permanent staining:

- Hair dyes
- Shoe polish
- Paints
- Ink

Can change carpet color:

- Bleaches
- Acne medications
- Drain cleaners
- Plant food
- Insecticides
- Some sodas and teas (with strong dyes)

Burns

Take care of burns immediately:

1. Snip off darkened fibers with scissors
2. Use soap-less cleaner
3. Sponge with water
4. For extensive burns, consult a professional

What to Avoid

> **Warning**
>
> - **Don't rub spills** - Always blot; rubbing spreads the stain and damages fibers
> - **Don't use beater bar on loop carpets** - Causes permanent damage (Berber, shag, cable)
> - **Don't skip vacuuming** - Dirt acts like sandpaper on fibers
> - **Don't pull sprouting tufts** - Cut them; pulling removes surrounding fibers
> - **Don't delay spill cleanup** - Quick action prevents permanent staining
> - **Don't use untested cleaners** - Always test in a closet first

Preventing Wear and Crushing

- Use glides or cups under heavy furniture
- Rotate furniture periodically to change traffic patterns
- Heavy traffic areas (halls, stairways) are more susceptible to wear

- No carpet is crush-proof

Fading Prevention

All carpets slowly lose color. Delay fading by:

- Frequently removing soil with vacuuming
- Regularly changing HVAC air filters
- Keeping humidity and temperature moderate
- Reducing sunlight exposure with window coverings

Related Topics

- Ceramic Tile (p. 16) - Alternative flooring care
- Condensation (p. 20) - Managing humidity affecting carpet
- Air Conditioning (p. 5) - HVAC filter maintenance

Warranty Coverage: See Carpet Standards for coverage periods and exclusions.

Caulking

Caulking provides essential seals throughout your home, preventing water infiltration and air leaks. Time and weather cause caulking to shrink and dry, requiring periodic inspection and repair as part of routine home maintenance.

> **Homeowner Maintenance**
>
> Caulking is a homeowner maintenance item. As a courtesy, Classic Homes will touch up caulking once during the first year.

How It Works

Caulking fills gaps between different materials and surfaces, creating flexible seals that:

- Prevent water from penetrating behind surfaces
- Block air infiltration
- Accommodate minor building movement
- Provide a finished appearance at joints

Different types of caulk are designed for specific applications based on the surfaces being sealed and whether the area will be painted.

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Inspect interior caulking	Seasonally	15 minutes
Inspect exterior caulking	Seasonally	20 minutes
Re-caulk as needed	As needed	30 to 60 minutes
Check wet areas (tubs, sinks)	Monthly	5 minutes

Where to Check Caulking

Inspect these areas regularly (at least seasonally):

Interior:

- Around tubs, showers, and sinks
- Where countertops meet backsplash
- Around toilets (at floor)
- Where trim meets walls
- Along stair stringers

Exterior:

- Around windows and doors
- Where siding meets trim
- At penetrations (pipes, vents, cables)

- Along foundation joints

How to Re-Caulk

1. Remove old, cracked, or loose caulking completely
2. Clean the surface thoroughly
3. Let dry completely (critical for adhesion)
4. Apply new caulk in a continuous bead
5. Smooth with a wet finger or caulking tool
6. Allow to cure per manufacturer directions

Caulking Types

Latex Caulk

Best for: Areas that require painting

Common uses:

- Along stair stringers
- Where wood trim meets walls
- Interior joints that will be painted

Advantages:

- Can be painted over
- Easy to apply
- Water cleanup

Silicone Caulk

Best for: Wet areas

Common uses:

- Where tub meets tile
- Where sink meets countertop
- Backsplash areas

Important: Silicone caulk will NOT accept paint. Use only in areas that don't need painting.

Colored Caulk

- Available where larger selections are provided
- Grout-colored caulk available at specialty tile stores
- Dye lots can vary - bring a sample when purchasing replacement caulk to match existing

Troubleshooting

Common Caulking Problems

Problem	Cause	Solution
Cracking	Age, movement, drying	Remove and replace
Peeling	Poor adhesion, moisture	Clean surface, reapply
Mold/mildew	Moisture, poor ventilation	Clean, improve ventilation, replace
Shrinking	Normal curing	May need second application
Yellowing	UV exposure, age	Replace (use UV-resistant for exterior)

When to Replace Caulking

Replace caulking when you notice:

- Visible cracks or gaps
- Separation from surfaces
- Mold or mildew that won't clean
- Hardening or brittleness
- Water leaking past the seal

What to Avoid

> **Warning**
>
> - **Don't apply over old, failed caulk** - Remove old caulk first for proper adhesion
> - **Don't use wrong caulk type** - Silicone in paint areas, latex in wet areas cause problems
> - **Don't apply to wet surfaces** - Caulk won't adhere properly
> - **Don't skip surface cleaning** - Dirt prevents proper bonding
> - **Don't ignore failed caulking** - Water damage can result from neglected seals
> - **Don't use exterior caulk indoors** - May contain chemicals not suitable for interior use

Selecting the Right Caulk

Read the manufacturer's instructions carefully to select an appropriate caulk for the intended purpose:

- **Bathroom/kitchen:** Silicone or silicone-latex blend (mold resistant)
- **Paintable surfaces:** Latex or acrylic latex
- **Exterior:** Exterior-grade silicone or polyurethane
- **High movement areas:** Flexible silicone

Using the wrong type of caulk can lead to premature failure.

Related Topics

- Ceramic Tile (p. 16) - Grout and tile maintenance
- Countertops (p. 22) - Countertop seals
- Cabinets (p. 10) - Cabinet maintenance
- Condensation (p. 20) - Preventing moisture problems

Warranty Coverage: See Caulking Standards for coverage details. Remember: caulking maintenance is a homeowner responsibility.

Ceramic Tile

Ceramic tile is one of the most durable and easy-to-maintain surfaces in your home. Found on floors, walls, and countertops, tile provides lasting beauty with minimal care. Understanding grout maintenance is key to preserving tile installations.

> **Grout Maintenance**
>
> Grout is decorative - it doesn't hold tile in place. Minor grout cracks are normal and maintaining good seals prevents water damage to underlying surfaces.

How It Works

Ceramic tile installations consist of:

- **Tiles** - The glazed or unglazed ceramic pieces
- **Thinset mortar** - Adhesive that bonds tiles to the substrate
- **Grout** - Fills the joints between tiles
- **Caulk** - Used at corners and where tile meets other materials
- **Substrate** - The surface beneath (cement board, concrete, etc.)

Your Design Studio selection sheets include the brand and color of your ceramic tile.

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Wipe down wall/counter tile	Weekly	10 minutes
Vacuum tile floors	As needed	15 minutes
Wet mop tile floors	Occasionally	20 minutes
Clean grout	As needed	30 minutes
Inspect grout for cracks	Seasonally	10 minutes
Re-seal grout (if sealed)	Per manufacturer	1 to 2 hours

Cleaning Ceramic Tile

Wall and countertop tile:

- Wash with any nonabrasive soap, detergent, or tile cleaner
- Avoid abrasive cleaners - they dull the finish
- Rinse thoroughly to prevent residue buildup

Floor tile:

- Vacuum when needed to remove loose dirt and grit
- Occasionally wet mop with warm water
- Avoid adding detergent to water (leaves film)
- If cleaner needed, use mild solution of warm water and dishwasher crystals (won't leave heavy lather on grout)
- Rinse thoroughly

Grout Maintenance

Cleaning discolored grout:

- Use fiber brush, cleanser, and water
- Grout cleansers and whiteners available at home improvement stores
- Work in small sections

Sealing grout:

- Sealing is your decision and responsibility
- Once sealed, requires periodic re-sealing
- Follow manufacturer recommendations for your specific sealer

Repairing Grout Cracks

Expect slight separations in grout between tiles. To repair:

1. Purchase premixed grout from flooring, home improvement, or hardware store
2. Clean out loose material from crack
3. Apply grout per container directions
4. Wipe excess with damp sponge
5. Allow to cure as directed

Important: Maintaining good seals prevents water damage to underlying surfaces.

Troubleshooting

Common Tile Issues

Problem	Cause	Solution
Grout crack	Normal shrinkage/movement	Fill with premixed grout
Grout discoloration	Dirt, mildew	Clean with grout cleaner
Tile appearing to pull away	Grout/caulk shrinkage	Re-caulk or re-grout
Loose tile	Adhesive failure	Professional repair needed
Cracked tile	Impact or settlement	May need replacement
Dull finish	Abrasive cleaners	Use only nonabrasive cleaners

Tile Appearing to Pull Away

Tile around bathtubs or countertops may appear to pull up over time. Causes:

- Normal shrinkage of grout or caulk
- Shrinkage of interior wood members as they dry
- Movement in exterior walls due to temperature variations

Solution:

1. Purchase tub caulk or premixed grout
2. Clean the joint thoroughly
3. Apply new caulk or grout per directions

4. Maintain these seals to prevent water damage

What to Avoid

> **Warning**
>
> - **Don't use abrasive cleaners on tile** - Dulls the glazed finish permanently
> - **Don't use soap on floors** - Leaves film that attracts dirt
> - **Don't ignore grout cracks** - Water can damage substrate underneath
> - **Don't use bleach on colored grout** - May cause discoloration
> - **Don't let standing water remain** - Can seep through grout into substrate
> - **Don't use harsh chemicals** - May damage grout and tile finish

Protecting Tile Surfaces

- Use bath mats in wet areas
- Place rugs at entries to reduce grit
- Use furniture pads under heavy items
- Avoid dropping heavy objects on tile
- Clean spills promptly

Related Topics

- Caulking (p. 14) - Caulk maintenance around tile
- Countertops (p. 22) - Countertop care including tile surfaces
- Carpet (p. 12) - Alternative flooring care
- Condensation (p. 20) - Managing moisture in tile areas

Warranty Coverage: See Ceramic Tile Standards for coverage periods and exclusions.

Concrete

Concrete flatwork includes your driveway, sidewalks, patio, and garage floor. Understanding how concrete behaves and providing proper maintenance helps prevent damage and extends the life of these surfaces.

> **Cracking Is Normal**
>
> Cracking is a natural characteristic of concrete. A 10-foot slab shrinks approximately 5/8 inch as it cures, often resulting in cracks. Seal cracks promptly to prevent further damage.

How It Works

Concrete flatwork in your home includes:

- **Driveway** - Designed for conventional residential vehicles
- **Sidewalks** - Pedestrian walkways
- **Patio** - Outdoor living space
- **Garage floor** - Interior slab

Most concrete slabs are "floating" - not attached to the home's foundation. This allows for natural movement due to:

- Freeze/thaw cycles
- Soil expansion and contraction
- Temperature changes
- Curing shrinkage

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Sweep concrete surfaces	Weekly	10 minutes
Inspect for cracks	Monthly	10 minutes
Seal cracks with concrete caulk	As needed	30 minutes

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Remove snow and ice	After storms	Varies
Clean stains	As needed	30 minutes

Sealing Cracks (Important!)

As cracks occur, seal them promptly with waterproof concrete caulk (available at hardware stores). This prevents:

- Moisture from penetrating to soil beneath
- Frost heaving in winter
- Additional cracking from moisture damage

Expansion joints: If moisture lifts expansion joints, fill the resulting gap with concrete and silicone sealant or caulk.

Cleaning Concrete

Do:

- Sweep regularly to keep exterior concrete clean
- Wash when temperatures are moderate
- Use plain water and washing soda on unpainted concrete
- Apply concrete sealer to help keep floors clean

Don't:

- Wash with cold water when sun has been shining on hot concrete (temperature shock damages surface)
- Repeatedly hose garage floors (water penetrating cracks increases soil movement)
- Use soap on unpainted concrete

Troubleshooting

Common Concrete Issues

Problem	Cause	Solution
Hairline cracks	Normal shrinkage	Monitor; seal if they widen
Larger cracks	Settlement, freeze/thaw	Seal with concrete caulk
Spalling (chipping)	Chemicals, freeze/thaw	Repair compound; avoid chemicals
Settling	Soil movement	Contact Classic if >2" in first year
Heaving	Frost, expansive soil	Contact Classic if >2" in first year
Staining	Oil, chemicals	Clean promptly; use degreaser

Protecting from Heavy Vehicles

Concrete drives are designed for conventional residential vehicles only.

Do not allow on your driveway:

- Moving vans
- Large delivery trucks
- Commercial or heavy vehicles
- Landscaping equipment during installation

Damage from vehicles or equipment is not covered under warranty.

Ice, Snow, and Chemical Protection

Ice and snow:

- Remove promptly after storms
- Driving or parking on snow creates ice that magnifies damage
- Use caution when shoveling to avoid surface damage
- Use plastic shovels rather than metal

Avoid these on concrete:

- Deicing agents (road salt, ice melt products)

- Pet urine
- Fertilizers
- Radiator overflow

All of these can cause spalling/delamination (chipping of the surface).

What to Avoid

> **Warning**
>
> - **Don't use deicing chemicals** - Causes spalling and surface damage
> - **Don't allow heavy vehicles on driveway** - Designed for residential vehicles only
> - **Don't leave snow/ice on concrete** - Increases freeze damage
> - **Don't ignore cracks** - Seal promptly to prevent worsening
> - **Don't repeatedly hose garage floor** - Water increases soil movement
> - **Don't apply cold water to hot concrete** - Temperature shock damages surface bond

Homeowner-Installed Concrete

If you add concrete after closing:

- Test to ensure soil is properly compacted
- Ensure new concrete doesn't negatively impact original drainage
- You assume full responsibility for homeowner-installed concrete

Floating Slabs Explained

Concrete slabs (except select porches and patios) are "floating" - not attached to the foundation walls. Because of this, Classic Homes installs:

- Flexible collars around furnace plenums
- Flexible gas and water line connections
- Slip joints in drain lines
- Stairs that rest on (not attached to) the floor
- Separated support pads under I-beams

Movement is expected. Follow the maintenance guidelines in Special Publications 43, "A Guide to Swelling Soils for Colorado Homebuyers and Homeowners" provided with your purchase contract.

Related Topics

- Decks (p. 25) - Adjacent outdoor surfaces
- Caulking (p. 14) - Sealing concrete cracks
- Condensation (p. 20) - Moisture management

Warranty Coverage: See Concrete Flatwork Standards for coverage periods and exclusions.

Condensation

Modern energy-efficient homes are built to be more airtight than homes built even 10 years ago. While this seals in heating and cooling, it also seals in moisture-laden air. Understanding and managing indoor humidity prevents condensation problems.

> **Window Condensation**
>
> Condensation on interior window surfaces indicates high indoor humidity, not a window defect. Condensation between window panes (inside the sealed unit) is different and may indicate a broken seal.

How It Works

Condensation forms when warm, moist air contacts cooler surfaces:

- **Warm air holds more moisture** than cool air
- **When air cools** (like touching a window), it releases moisture
- **Moisture condenses** as water droplets on the surface

Outside, we see this as dew. Inside, you may see it as moisture on windows and glass doors, especially during cold weather.

Sources of Indoor Moisture

New construction moisture:

- A typical new home contains approximately 50 gallons of water in materials
- Water is part of lumber, concrete, drywall texture, paint, and caulk
- This moisture evaporates into the air over time
- First-year condensation is common and typically decreases

Daily activities that add moisture:

- Cooking (especially boiling water)
- Laundry
- Baths and showers
- Aquariums
- House plants
- Breathing and perspiration

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Run exhaust fans during/after showers	Every use	Duration of activity + 15 min
Run kitchen hood when cooking	Every use	Duration of cooking
Check dryer vent connection	Seasonally	5 minutes
Monitor humidifier settings	During heating season	Ongoing
Air out home	When weather permits	15 to 30 minutes

Reducing Indoor Humidity

Use exhaust fans:

- Run bathroom fans during and after showers
- Run kitchen hood when cooking, especially boiling water
- Let fans run 15 to 20 minutes after activity ends

Check dryer vent:

- Ensure it's connected and venting outside
- Clean lint from hose periodically
- Verify damper opens when dryer runs

Humidifier operation:

- Use low to moderate settings in winter
- Lower setting or turn off if condensation appears
- In extreme cold, you may need to turn it off completely

Open windows:

- When weather permits, air out the home briefly
- Fresh air circulation reduces indoor humidity

Troubleshooting

Seeing Condensation? Check This First

1. **Check your humidifier** - Lower the setting or turn it off
2. **Use exhaust fans** - Run bathroom fans during and after showers
3. **Run kitchen hood** - Use when cooking, especially boiling water
4. **Check dryer vent** - Ensure it's connected and venting outside
5. **Open windows briefly** - When weather permits, air out the home

Common Condensation Locations

Location	Cause	Solution
Windows	High humidity, cold glass	Reduce humidity, improve air circulation
Mirrors	Bathroom humidity	Run exhaust fan longer
Exterior walls	Temperature differential	Improve insulation or air flow
Closets on exterior walls	Poor air circulation	Leave doors open periodically
Behind furniture on exterior walls	Blocked air circulation	Move furniture away from walls

Window Condensation vs. Seal Failure

Surface condensation (humidity issue):

- Moisture on the interior surface of the glass
- Wiped away easily
- Varies with humidity and temperature
- Not a defect

Between-pane condensation (seal failure):

- Moisture trapped between glass panes
- Cannot be wiped away
- Indicates broken thermal seal
- Covered under warranty for 1 year

What to Avoid

> **Warning**
>
> - **Don't set thermostat to extreme temperatures** - Causes materials to dry too fast, increasing moisture release and shrinkage
> - **Don't block ventilation** - Keep exhaust fans functional and use them
> - **Don't ignore condensation** - Persistent moisture can lead to mold and damage
> - **Don't over-humidify** - If condensation appears, reduce humidifier setting
> - **Don't seal the home completely** - Some fresh air exchange is healthy

Temperature Settings

Avoid setting your thermostat at extreme temperatures:

- Heating your home causes materials to dry out faster, generating more moisture into the air
- Drying materials out too fast increases shrinkage cracks and separations
- Moderate, consistent temperatures help minimize both condensation and material movement

Humidifier Guidelines

If you install a humidifier, closely observe the manufacturer's directions:

- Use low to moderate settings in winter
- Experiment to find the right level for your family's lifestyle
- In periods of extreme cold, you may need to turn the humidifier off
- If condensation develops on windows, lower the setting

Classic Homes does not install humidifiers and is not responsible for damages due to installation or improper usage.

Related Topics

- Air Conditioning (p. 5) - HVAC and humidity control
- Caulking (p. 14) - Preventing moisture infiltration
- Carpet (p. 12) - Humidity effects on flooring
- Cabinets (p. 10) - Humidity effects on wood

Warranty Coverage: See Condensation Standards for coverage details. Condensation is a lifestyle and weather issue, not covered under warranty.

Countertops

Your countertops are designed for daily use but benefit from proper care. Whether laminate or natural stone, following simple guidelines protects these surfaces and maintains their appearance.

> **Natural Variations**
>
> Natural stone countertops have inherent variations in color, veining, and texture (pits, fissures, fragmentation). These are characteristics of the natural material, not defects.

How It Works

Countertops in your home may be:

- **Laminate** - Durable surface bonded to substrate
- **Natural stone** - Granite, marble, or other natural materials
- **Engineered stone** - Man-made composite materials

All countertops have seams where pieces join together. Seams are visible and normal. Caulking seals joints between countertops and walls, backsplashes, and sinks.

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Wipe down surfaces	Daily	5 minutes
Clean thoroughly	Weekly	15 minutes
Inspect caulk seals	Monthly	5 minutes
Re-caulk joints	As needed	30 minutes
Seal natural stone	Per manufacturer	1 to 2 hours

Laminate Countertops

Daily care:

- Wipe with damp cloth
- Clean spills promptly
- Use cutting boards for all food prep
- Use trivets for hot items

Cleaning:

- Avoid abrasive cleaners that damage the luster
- Use only cleaners recommended by manufacturer
- Wax is not necessary but can make counters gleam

Protecting the surface:

- **Always use a cutting board** - Never cut directly on laminate
- Protect from heat and extremely hot pans
- **Rule of thumb:** If you can't put your hand on it, don't put it on the countertop
- Don't use countertops as ironing boards

Natural Stone Countertops

Daily care:

- Rinse with warm water and non-abrasive cleaner weekly
- Clean spills immediately - **blot, do not wipe**
- Wiping acidic substances can spread and increase damage

Acidic items to blot (not wipe):

- Soft drinks
- Wine
- Coffee
- Tea

- Fruit juices

Preventive care:

- Always use cutting boards
- Use trivets for hot items
- Preventing stains is easier than removing them

Sealing:

- Unless selected during Design Studio, Classic Homes does not seal natural stone
- If you choose to seal, follow manufacturer recommendations
- Re-seal periodically per product directions

Maintaining Caulk Seals

Caulking may shrink over time, leaving slight gaps at:

- Countertop and wall joints
- Backsplash joints
- Around sinks

Important: Maintaining good seals is critical to prevent moisture from reaching wood under the tops and causing warping.

Troubleshooting

Common Countertop Issues

Problem	Cause	Solution
Gap at wall/backsplash	Normal shrinkage	Re-caulk (homeowner maintenance)
Gap around sink	Normal shrinkage	Re-caulk (homeowner maintenance)
Seam gap >1/16"	Installation issue	Contact Classic (first year)
Stain on stone	Acidic spill	Poultice treatment; contact professional
Scratch on laminate	Cutting without board	May be permanent
Burn mark	Hot pan	May be permanent; use trivets
Warping	Moisture damage	Check for leak; maintain caulk seals

Preventing Moisture Damage

Rubber drain mats can trap moisture beneath them, causing laminated countertops to:

- Warp
- Blister

Solution: Dry the surface under mats regularly.

What to Avoid

> **Warning**
>
> - **Don't cut directly on countertops** - Use cutting boards always
> - **Don't place hot pans directly on surface** - Use trivets
> - **Don't wipe acidic spills on stone** - Blot instead to prevent spreading
> - **Don't use abrasive cleaners** - Damages finish
> - **Don't ignore caulk gaps** - Moisture causes warping and damage
> - **Don't apply heavy weight on unsupported spans** - Can crack stone
> - **Don't use countertops as ironing boards** - Heat damages surface

What Not to Set on Countertops

- Lighted cigarettes (causes burns)
- Hot pots and pans without trivets
- Heavy items on unsupported spans
- Wet items that trap moisture

Related Topics

- Cabinets (p. 10) - Cabinet care and maintenance
- Caulking (p. 14) - Maintaining caulk seals
- Ceramic Tile (p. 16) - Tile countertop care

Warranty Coverage: See Countertops Standards for coverage periods and exclusions.

Decks

Composite decks with wood framing add style and functionality to your home's outdoor living space. While durable, decks are high-maintenance exterior features that require regular care to maintain their appearance and longevity.

> **Wood Characteristics**
>
> Wood framing is subject to natural shrinkage, cracking, splitting, cupping, and twisting. These are natural characteristics that cannot be prevented.

How It Works

Your deck consists of:

- **Composite decking** - The walking surface material
- **Wood framing** - Structural support (joists, beams, posts)
- **Fasteners** - Screws or nails securing components
- **Rails and railing** - Safety barriers and handrails
- **Ledger board** - Connection to the house (if applicable)

Wood framing naturally responds to weather, losing moisture over time and experiencing movement.

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Sweep debris	Weekly	10 minutes
Inspect for loose fasteners	Monthly	15 minutes
Check rail stability	Monthly	5 minutes
Complete inspection	Annually	30 minutes
Treat/seal wood framing	As recommended	2 to 4 hours
Remove snow and ice	After storms	Varies

Annual Inspection (Minimum)

Plan to inspect your deck at least once each year. Check for:

- Loose boards or fasteners
- Excessive warping or cupping
- Rot or decay (especially at connections)
- Rail stability and integrity
- Surface damage needing attention

Prompt attention prevents costly repairs later.

Snow and Ice Removal

Heavy snow or ice remaining on the deck increases wear and tear:

- Remove snow and ice promptly
- Use caution when shoveling to avoid scratching deck boards
- Use plastic shovels rather than metal
- Check manufacturer recommendations before using ice melt products on composite decking

Sealing and Water Repellent

To prolong the life and beauty of your deck:

- Treat periodically with products designed for composite decking and wood framing
- Local home centers and hardware stores offer several products
- Always follow manufacturer directions carefully
- Sealing composite decking is recommended but not required

Protecting the Surface

From foot traffic:

- Abrasives and grit on shoes can scratch or dent the surface
- Regular sweeping helps
- Entry mats can reduce debris tracked onto deck

From furniture:

- Moving grills, furniture, or other items can damage the surface
- Use caution when moving items
- Consider furniture pads under legs
- Lift rather than drag heavy items

Troubleshooting

Common Deck Issues

Problem	Cause	Solution
Loose boards	Normal fastener movement	Tighten screws/nails
Warping/cupping	Natural wood movement	Often normal; monitor severity
Cracking along grain	Natural wood characteristic	Normal; monitor for safety
Splitting	Natural stress relief	Normal; monitor for safety
Stains	Spills, leaves, debris	Clean per manufacturer directions
Scratches	Furniture, foot traffic	May be permanent
Loose rails	Normal movement	Tighten fasteners; check for damage

Understanding Wood Behavior

The wood framing for decks is subject to:

- **Shrinkage** - Wood loses moisture over time
- **Cracking** - Especially along the grain
- **Splitting** - Natural stress relief
- **Cupping** - Boards curve across their width
- **Twisting** - Boards rotate along their length

These are natural characteristics and cannot be prevented. Nails or screws may work loose and need routine tightening.

Staining Wood Framing

If you choose to stain exposed wood framing:

- Staining is a homeowner decision - Classic Homes does not stain deck framing
- Exposed wood that has been stained will show noticeable color variation
- Each board takes stain differently
- Color variation increases with exposure to weather and use
- Be careful not to drip or spill on composite decking or concrete below
- Oil stains on composite decking are difficult or impossible to remove

What to Avoid

> **Warning**
>
> - **Don't drag furniture across decking** - Lift to move; use furniture pads
> - **Don't use metal shovels** - Use plastic to avoid scratching
> - **Don't ignore loose fasteners** - Tighten promptly to prevent damage
> - **Don't neglect annual inspections** - Early detection prevents costly repairs
> - **Don't skip snow removal** - Heavy snow increases wear
> - **Don't spill stain on composite decking** - Oil stains may be permanent
> - **Don't apply ice melt without checking** - Some products damage composite

Protecting the Investment

- Follow manufacturer care guidelines for composite decking
- Address issues promptly before they worsen
- Keep debris cleared to prevent staining and moisture retention
- Maintain proper drainage around deck
- Trim vegetation away from deck structure

Related Topics

- Concrete (p. 18) - Adjacent patio care
- Caulking (p. 14) - Sealing connections
- Condensation (p. 20) - Moisture management

Warranty Coverage: See Decks Standards for coverage periods and exclusions.

Doors and Locks

Doors in your home are wood or composite products subject to natural characteristics like shrinkage and warpage. Humidity changes and normal use may occasionally require minor adjustments. Understanding door behavior and maintenance keeps them functioning properly.

> **Seasonal Movement**
>
> Doors that stick only during humid weather or have gaps only during dry weather are experiencing normal wood movement - this is not a defect.

How It Works

Doors consist of several components:

- **Door panel** - The door itself (solid, hollow core, or panel design)
- **Frame/jamb** - The surrounding structure the door hangs in
- **Hinges** - Allow the door to swing open and closed
- **Hardware** - Knobs, handles, locks, and latches
- **Strike plate** - Metal plate the latch engages
- **Weatherstripping** - Seals around exterior doors
- **Threshold** - Bottom seal on exterior doors

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Check door operation	Monthly	5 minutes
Lubricate hinges	As needed	5 minutes
Lubricate locks	Annually	10 minutes
Tighten hardware	As needed	10 minutes
Check weatherstripping	Annually	10 minutes
Check thresholds	Annually	5 minutes

Hardware Care

Doorknobs and locks should operate correctly with little attention. Over time, they may need slight adjustments due to normal shrinkage of the framing.

Door locks: Lubricate with graphite or other waterproof lubricant. Avoid oil, as it will gum up the locks.

Hinges: Remove the hinge pin and apply silicone lubricant. Avoid oil, as it can gum up or attract dirt.

> **Helpful Hint**
>
> For squeaky hinges: Remove the pin, color it with a lead pencil, then re-insert. The graphite lubricates without dripping onto flooring.

Bi-fold and Bypass Doors

Interior bi-folds and bypass doors sometimes stick or warp because of weather conditions:

- Apply silicone lubricant to the tracks
- Check that rollers are properly seated in tracks
- Adjust as needed for smooth operation

Weather Stripping and Thresholds

Weather stripping and exterior door thresholds occasionally require adjustment or replacement:

- Check annually for wear and gaps
- Replace as needed for energy efficiency
- Adjust threshold height if light is visible underneath

Troubleshooting

Door Not Working Right? Check This First

Problem	Quick Fix
Sticking door	Apply paste wax, paraffin, or candle wax to sticking surface
Won't latch	Check strike plate alignment - look for wear marks
Loose hardware	Tighten hinge screws and door knob screws
Squeaky hinge	Remove pin, apply silicone or graphite lubricant
Bi-fold sticking	Apply silicone lubricant to tracks
Warped door	Keep closed; often returns to normal

Common Door Issues

Problem	Cause	Solution
Door won't latch	Settling shifted strike plate	Adjust or re-mortise strike plate
Sticking seasonally	Normal wood expansion	Wait for weather change; wax if persistent
Gaps around door	Normal wood contraction	Usually returns in humid weather
Warping	Humidity, one side exposed	Keep closed; may self-correct
Loose hinges	Normal use	Tighten screws; use longer screws if stripped
Squeaking	Dry hinges	Lubricate with graphite or silicone

Fixing a Door That Won't Latch

If a door won't latch due to minor settling:

1. Look for wear marks on the strike plate to see where the latch is hitting
2. You can make a new opening in the jamb for the latch plate (re-mortising)
3. Raise or lower the strike plate accordingly
4. File the strike plate opening slightly if close to alignment

Preventing Door Damage

Slamming: Slamming doors can damage both doors and jambs and can cause cracking in walls. Teach children not to hang on the doorknob and swing back and forth.

Before planing a sticking door, try:

1. Apply paste wax, light coat of paraffin, or candle wax to the sticking surface
2. Tighten the screws that hold the door jamb or door frame
3. Wait for seasonal weather change

If planing is necessary, use sandpaper to smooth the door and paint the sanded area to seal against moisture.

What to Avoid

> **Warning**
>
> - **Don't plane doors for seasonal sticking** - Wait for weather change; may resolve naturally
> - **Don't use oil on locks** - Gums up mechanism; use graphite instead
> - **Don't slam doors** - Damages doors, jambs, and can crack walls
> - **Don't hang on doorknobs** - Causes loose hardware and sagging
> - **Don't ignore weatherstripping gaps** - Causes energy loss
> - **Don't force stuck doors** - May damage door or frame

Door Panel Shrinkage

Panels of wood doors shrink and expand with temperature and humidity changes:

- Unpainted edges may become visible
- Touch up paint or stain is homeowner maintenance
- This is normal behavior, not a defect

Trim Separations

Use putty, filler, or latex caulk to fill minor separations that develop at mitered joints in door trim. Follow with painting to match.

Related Topics

- Cabinets (p. 10) - Similar hardware maintenance
- Caulking (p. 14) - Filling trim separations
- Condensation (p. 20) - Humidity effects on doors
- Air Conditioning (p. 5) - Humidity control

Warranty Coverage: See Doors and Locks Standards for coverage periods and exclusions.

Drywall

Your home's drywall walls and ceilings are durable and easy to maintain. Understanding how wood framing shrinks and settles will help you know what to expect and how to address minor imperfections that naturally occur over time.

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Dust/vacuum ceilings and walls	As needed	10 minutes
Inspect for nail pops or cracks	Seasonally	5 minutes
Touch up paint	As needed	15 minutes
Schedule one-time courtesy repair	After 10 months	N/A

Ceiling Care

Your ceilings require minimal maintenance:

- Periodically remove dust or cobwebs as part of normal cleaning
- Repaint as needed
- Avoid hanging heavy items without proper anchors

Nail Pop Prevention

Nail pops occur when wood framing shrinks, pushing nails outward. This is most common in the first year as your home settles.

Troubleshooting

Repairing Nail Pops

1. Reset the nail with a hammer and nail punch
2. Cover with spackle (available at hardware stores)
3. Apply 2-3 thin coats, letting each dry
4. Sand smooth with fine-grain sandpaper
5. Touch up with paint

Repairing Cracks

Minor cracks are caused by wood shrinkage and normal deflection:

Hairline cracks: Simply apply a coat of paint

Larger cracks:

1. Fill with spackle or caulk
2. Let dry completely
3. Sand smooth if using spackle
4. Paint to match

Filling Indentations

Dents from sharp objects can be repaired:

1. Apply spackle in thin coats
2. Allow to dry between coats
3. Sand smooth with fine-grain sandpaper
4. Paint to match

What to Avoid

> **Warning**
>
> - **Don't hang heavy items without anchors** - Use appropriate wall anchors for heavier pictures and shelves
> - **Don't ignore water stains** - Water stains indicate a leak that should be addressed immediately
> - **Don't use excessive force** - Doorknobs without stops can punch holes in walls
> - **Don't delay repairs** - Small cracks can grow if left unaddressed

Best Timing for Repairs

To allow your home to settle, we recommend scheduling one-time courtesy repairs after living in the home for 10 months. This gives wood framing time to dry and settle, minimizing the chance of new nail pops or cracks appearing after repairs.

Related Topics

- Paint and Stain (p. 69)
- Expansion and Contraction (p. 45)
- Cracks and Damage

Warranty Coverage: See Drywall Standards for coverage periods and exclusions.

Electrical System

Your home's electrical system is designed for safety and convenience. Understanding how it works helps you troubleshoot common issues and maintain electrical safety.

How It Works

Main Panel & Breakers

Your main electrical box includes:

- **Main shut-off** - Controls all power to home
- **Individual breakers** - Control separate circuits
- **Labels** - Identify which breaker serves which area

Know where this is located before you need it!

Breaker Positions

Breakers have three positions:

1. **ON** - Normal operation
2. **OFF** - Manually turned off
3. **TRIPPED** - Automatically shut off due to overload

To reset a tripped breaker: Must turn to OFF first, then to ON. Going directly from TRIPPED to ON won't work.

GFCI Outlets

GFCI outlets have TEST and RESET buttons. They protect you from electrical shock in wet areas like bathrooms, kitchens, outdoors, basements, and garages.

How they work: Sense power fluctuations and trip instantly to protect you.

One GFCI can protect multiple outlets - A tripped GFCI in one location may affect outlets elsewhere.

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Test GFCI outlets	Monthly	2 minutes
Test smoke/CO detectors	Monthly	2 minutes
Replace detector batteries	Annually or when chirping	5 minutes
Clean smoke detectors	Annually	5 minutes
Check surge protector	Annually	2 minutes

Testing GFCI Outlets

1. Press TEST button - outlet should lose power
2. Press RESET button - power should return
3. If it doesn't work properly, contact an electrician

Testing Smoke/CO Detectors

1. Press TEST button
2. Alarm should sound
3. If not, replace battery and retest
4. If still not working, replace detector

Chirping sound: Battery needs replacement (usually 9-volt)

Cleaning: Periodically blow out dust with compressed air to prevent false alarms

Troubleshooting

No Power Anywhere in Home

1. **Check for area outage** - Contact utility company first
2. **Check main breaker** - Must be in ON position
3. **Check individual breakers** - All should be ON
4. **Check outdoor meter disconnect** - Must be in proper position

No Power to One or More Outlets

1. **Check breaker** - Look for tripped breaker (middle position)
   - To reset: Turn fully OFF first, then back ON
2. **Check wall switch** - Some outlets are switch-controlled
3. **Check GFCI** - Press RESET button on GFCI outlets
4. **Test the device** - Try it in another outlet to confirm it works
5. **Check light bulbs** - Replace if burned out

Breaker Keeps Tripping

1. Unplug everything on that circuit
2. Reset breaker
3. If it trips with nothing connected → call electrician
4. If it stays on → one of your devices is defective

Common causes:

- Too many devices on one circuit (overload)
- Worn cord or defective appliance
- Appliance exceeds circuit capacity
- Electric motor starting
- Short circuit

What to Avoid

> **Warning**
>
> - **Never remove the ground wire** - Your home has a three-wire grounded electrical system. Never remove the bare ground wire.
> - **Don't overload circuits** - Distribute high-draw appliances across different circuits
> - **Don't ignore tripping breakers** - Repeated tripping indicates a problem
> - **Don't disable smoke/CO detectors** - They're required for safety
> - **Don't dig without calling 811** - Underground cables can be dangerous and expensive to repair

Heavy Appliances on GFCI

Refrigerators, freezers, and power tools may trip GFCI outlets. Classic Homes is not responsible for food spoilage from appliances on GFCI circuits. Consider adding an alarm to notify you of power loss.

Power Surges

A whole-house surge protector is installed per code. However:

- Power surges from lightning or utility issues can damage electronics
- Use additional surge protectors on sensitive equipment (TVs, computers)
- Periodically check the breaker panel surge protector is functional

Safety Tips

- Keep a flashlight handy for power outages
- Know where your main breaker is located
- Label circuit breakers if not already labeled
- Never use water on an electrical fire
- Install tamper-resistant outlets where children are present

Related Topics

- Energy Conservation (p. 32)
- Heating Systems (p. 53)
- Air Conditioning (p. 5)
- Electrical Issues

Warranty Coverage: See Electrical System Standards for coverage periods and exclusions.

Energy & Water Conservation

A home built with respect for our environment is even more effective when your daily use of features and products is well-informed. In the process of conserving, you also save money as an additional benefit.

Heating and Cooling

HVAC Maintenance

- Maintain heating and cooling systems in clean and good working order
- Arrange for professional service a minimum of once every two years
- Keep filters clean or replace them regularly
- Learn how to use your programmable thermostat for comfort and efficient energy use
- If you have a zoned system, think through operating schedules and temperature settings to maximize comfort and minimize energy consumption

Landscaping for Efficiency

Plan landscaping elements that support efficient energy use:

- **Deciduous trees** provide shade during summer and permit solar warming in winter
- **Evergreen trees and shrubs** can create a windbreak and reduce heating costs
- **Position trees** to shade the roof while still allowing good air flow around the home
- **Plant shrubs/trees** to shade the air conditioner without obstructing air flow around it

Seasonal Tips

Winter:

- Open window coverings during cold days to allow the sun to warm your home. Close them when the sun begins to set.
- Humidifying the air allows it to retain more heat and provides general health benefits.
- Keep garage overhead doors closed.

> **Humidifier Settings**
>
> If condensation develops on your windows, you have taken a good thing too far—lower the setting on the humidifier. Setting requirements change with outside temperature; your manufacturer's manual contains a table defining these.

Summer:

- Ceiling fans use only 1/10th the electricity of an air conditioner, and the moving air allows you to feel comfortable at temperatures several degrees higher.
- Close all windows and window coverings on panes facing the sun to minimize solar heating.
- Turn off the humidifier when using air conditioning—additional moisture can freeze the evaporator coils.

General Tips

- Keep garage overhead doors closed
- If expecting a house full of guests, turn the heat down a few degrees—body heat will make up the difference

Water and Water Heater

Water Heater Efficiency

Tank-style water heaters:

- Set temperature at "normal" or 120°F
- Follow manufacturer's directions for draining to remove accumulated hard-water scale
- Timing depends on your water supply

Tankless or heat pump water heaters:

- Follow manufacturer instructions for timing and steps to clean the unit

Water Conservation

- Correct plumbing leaks, running toilets, or dripping faucets as soon as possible
- Keep aerators clean

- Front-loading washing machines require less than half the water of top-loaders, cause less wear on clothing, and wring more water out in the spin cycle so laundry dries faster

Appliances

General Appliance Tips

- When selecting appliances, compare the information on the Energy Guide sticker—spending more up front can reduce operating costs over the appliance's life
- Use cold water when operating your disposal (conserves hot water and protects the motor)

Oven and Cooking

- Don't preheat your oven longer than necessary
- When possible, bake several items at the same time or consecutively
- Turn the oven off a few minutes before baking time is done
- If your oven includes a convection setting, use it regularly—it can save time and energy, allowing you to set the temperature 25 degrees lower for most recipes

Dishwasher

- Scrape food into the garbage rather than rinsing down the drain
- Run the dishwasher when it has a full load and allow dishes to air-dry
- A full dishwasher uses ½ of the energy and 1/6th the water vs. washing dishes by hand
- Avoid regular use of the rinse and hold cycle
- Use a phosphate-free detergent

Refrigerator

- Select an appropriate size for your needs—two small refrigerators use more energy than one large one
- Refrigerators with the freezer on top use significantly less energy than side-by-side models; bottom freezer models are most energy efficient
- Shelves are warmer near the door; keep meats and dairy products toward the bottom and back
- Keep refrigerator moderately full (works less to keep cool), but don't overpack—proper air circulation is important
- Keep your freezer full
- Allow hot food to cool before placing in refrigerator
- Regularly check seals—if a dollar bill slides out without a tug, you may need to replace them
- Clean the condenser coils every three months or as needed using a coil cleaning brush

Electrical Efficiency

Lighting

- Use LED bulbs where possible—they are the most efficient and longest-lasting option
- Incandescent bulbs are the least efficient source of light
- Keep light fixtures and bulbs clean to maximize light output
- LED bulbs last approximately 50,000 hours (5 times longer than CFL and 65 times longer than incandescent)
- LEDs do not contain mercury
- LEDs work best for task lighting such as desk lamps and under-counter lights

Related Topics

- Air Conditioning (p. 5)
- Heating Systems (p. 53)
- Ventilation (p. 83)
- Condensation (p. 20)
- Temperature Issues

Note: Energy conservation is guidance for efficient living, not a warranty item.

Fencing

Depending on your community, fencing may be included with your home. If you're planning to add fencing after moving in, understanding proper planning and installation is essential for protecting your investment and maintaining good drainage.

Planning and Installation

Before You Begin

If you choose to add fencing after moving in:

1. Review fencing requirements for your community
2. Obtain approval from your District or Homeowners Association
3. Depending on your municipality, you may need a fence permit
4. **Call 811** for utility locates before any digging

Get all approvals BEFORE installation begins.

Professional Installation

Classic Homes recommends:

- Engage professional services to install your fence
- Inform the installer of all design review requirements
- Provide the location of your property lines

Property Lines (Critical!)

> **Warning**
>
> Owners are solely responsible to ensure that any fencing they install is on their property.

If fencing is not installed on your property:

- You will be responsible for all costs to correct
- Adjacent fences that may be affected are your responsibility
- This includes any removal and reinstallation required

Verify property lines before installation begins.

Protecting Drainage

When planning, installing, and maintaining fencing:

- Allow existing drainage patterns to function unimpeded
- Use caution when distributing soil removed for posts
- Don't block drainage swales with excavated soil
- Plan enough space under wood fences for water to pass through

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Inspect for damage	Seasonally	15 minutes
Check drainage around fence	After heavy rain	10 minutes
Clean and treat wood fencing	Annually	Varies
Tighten loose hardware	As needed	15 minutes

Wood Fence Care

- Apply wood treatment or stain as recommended by manufacturer
- Check for rot, especially at ground level
- Replace damaged boards promptly
- Keep vegetation trimmed away from fence

Metal Fence Care

- Check for rust and treat promptly
- Touch up paint as needed
- Lubricate hinges and latches

Troubleshooting

Fence Leaning

Common causes:

- Wind damage
- Soil movement
- Post rot
- Improper installation

Solution: Reset or replace posts as needed. Consider concrete footings for stability.

Gate Not Closing

- Check hinges for wear or damage
- Verify posts haven't shifted
- Adjust latch alignment
- Lubricate moving parts

What to Avoid

> **Warning**
>
> - **Don't block drainage** - Fences that block water flow can cause flooding and foundation issues
> - **Don't assume property lines** - Always verify before installing
> - **Don't skip permits** - Unpermitted fences may need to be removed
> - **Don't ignore HOA rules** - Violations can result in fines
> - **Don't forget utility locates** - Hitting underground lines is dangerous and expensive

Cost Sharing with Neighbors

Since fence installation can be costly, consider:

- Talking to neighbors about sharing installation costs
- Coordinating timing and design choices
- Agreeing on maintenance responsibilities
- Documenting any cost-sharing agreements in writing

Related Topics

- Grading and Drainage (p. 49)
- Landscaping (p. 59)
- Exterior Issues

Warranty Coverage: See Fencing Standards for coverage periods and exclusions.

Fireplaces

A gas fireplace is an excellent way to create a warm, cozy atmosphere. Classic Homes offers direct-vent gas fireplace appliances that add ambiance to your home.

How It Works

Your gas fireplace is a direct-vent appliance that:

- Uses natural gas or propane for fuel
- Vents combustion gases directly outside
- Draws combustion air from outside
- Operates with a wall switch or remote control

Understanding Your Fireplace's Purpose:

Look upon your gas fireplace as a luxury that adds to the atmosphere or ambiance of the home:

- Gas fireplaces are **not designed to heat the home**
- They do **not create a "roaring" fire**

- They should not be used as the sole heat source
- Your HVAC system is designed to heat and cool your home

Use the fireplace for ambiance and supplemental comfort, not primary heating.

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Visual inspection	Before each use	2 minutes
Check for obstructions at vent	Seasonally	5 minutes
Professional inspection	Annually	N/A
Clean glass (when cool)	As needed	10 minutes

Normal Operation

What to expect during normal operation:

- A slight delay between turning the switch on and flame ignition is normal
- The flames should ignite gently and silently
- Flames will be moderate—not a "roaring" fire
- The exterior vent will become extremely hot

Initial Use

During the initial operation of the fireplace, you may experience odors associated with the burning off of the new components. This is:

- A common occurrence
- Normal for new fireplaces
- Will dissipate with time and use

Allow adequate ventilation during initial use periods.

Wind and Weather

Wind noise:

- Wind noise through the vent is normal during excessive winds
- This is due to the direct-vent design
- Not a defect or safety concern

Weather-related water intrusion:

- In unusually heavy or prolonged precipitation, especially with high winds, some water can enter through the chimney
- Consider professional inspection if this occurs frequently

Troubleshooting

Fireplace Won't Ignite

Before requesting service:

1. **Check the wall switch** - Is it in the ON position?
2. **Check pilot light** - May need to be relit per manufacturer instructions
3. **Check gas supply** - Is gas turned on at the valve?
4. **Allow time** - A slight delay before ignition is normal

Unusual Odors

- **New fireplace smell:** Normal during first few uses as components burn off
- **Persistent gas smell:** Turn off immediately and contact gas company

Flames Look Different

- Flames may appear different at various times due to:
  - Gas pressure variations
  - Weather conditions
  - Normal wear of components

What to Avoid

Gas Safety

If you smell gas, immediately shut off the switch, leave your home, and report it to the gas company. Do not operate any electrical switches.

Hot Surfaces

The exterior vent cover for a direct-vent gas fireplace becomes extremely hot when the fireplace is operating. Please use caution when approaching the fireplace and direct vent while the fireplace is in operation.

Safety tips:

- Keep children and pets away from hot surfaces
- Do not place combustibles near the fireplace or vent
- Never leave the fireplace unattended for extended periods
- Ensure smoke and CO detectors are functioning
- Never use the fireplace with the glass front removed
- Follow all manufacturer instructions

Related Topics

- Heating Systems (p. 53)
- Ventilation (p. 83)
- Temperature Issues

Warranty Coverage: See Fireplaces Standards for coverage periods and exclusions.

Electrical & Plumbing Fixtures

The electrical and plumbing fixtures in your home add both functionality and style. Understanding how to care for them properly will help maintain their appearance and extend their life.

How It Works

Understanding Fixture Coatings

The manufacturer typically treats fixtures with a clear protective coating, electro-statically applied, to provide beauty and durability. This coating is not impervious to wear and tear.

What can damage the coating:

- Atmospheric conditions
- Sunlight exposure
- Caustic agents such as paints
- Scratches from sharp objects
- Abrasive cleaning products

These can cause the protective coating to crack or peel, resulting in spotting and discoloration.

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Wipe fixtures dry after use	Daily	1 minute
Clean with mild soap	Weekly	5 minutes
Inspect for corrosion	Monthly	5 minutes
Polish metal fixtures	As needed	10 minutes

Proper Cleaning

Initial care of these products requires only:

- Periodic cleaning with a mild, nonabrasive soap

- Buffing with a soft cloth
- Avoiding harsh chemicals or abrasive scrubbers

Products to avoid:

- Abrasive cleaners (scrubbing powders)
- Harsh chemical cleaners
- Steel wool or abrasive pads
- Acidic cleaners (vinegar-based products on some finishes)

Dealing with Corrosion

It is very likely that your fixtures have a coating on top of a base metal. Water having a high mineral content is corrosive to any metal-coated or solid metal fixture.

To minimize corrosion:

- Wipe fixtures dry after use
- Address dripping faucets promptly
- Consider water treatment if you have very hard water

Restoring Appearance

When peeling, spotting, or discoloration occurs:

- You can sometimes restore the beauty of the metal by hand-polishing the item with a suitable polish
- Applying a light coat of wax and buffing with a soft cloth helps maintain the gloss
- Use polish appropriate for your fixture's finish type

Troubleshooting

Tarnishing or Discoloration

Like sterling silver, metals will gradually tarnish and eventually take on an antique appearance. This is:

- A natural process
- Not preventable
- Not covered under warranty

Regular polishing can slow this process but not eliminate it entirely.

Fixture Dripping

- Check for worn washers or seals
- Tighten connections if loose
- Contact a plumber if problem persists

Low Water Pressure at Faucet

- Clean the aerator (unscrew from faucet tip)
- Check supply valves are fully open
- Compare with other faucets to isolate the issue

What to Avoid

> **Warning**
>
> - **Don't use abrasive cleaners** - They scratch and damage protective coatings
> - **Don't let water sit on fixtures** - Standing water accelerates corrosion
> - **Don't use harsh chemicals** - They can damage finishes
> - **Don't force handles** - Over-tightening can damage valves
> - **Don't ignore leaks** - Small drips waste water and cause damage over time

Manufacturer Warranties

Many of the fixtures and appliances in your home carry a manufacturer's warranty above and beyond the Limited Warranty offered by Classic Homes. Check your product documentation for:

- Warranty registration requirements

- Coverage periods
- Claim procedures

Related Topics

- Plumbing (p. 73)
- Electrical System (p. 30)
- Cabinets (p. 10)
- Water Issues

Warranty Coverage: See Fixtures Standards for coverage periods and exclusions.

LVP, Laminate & Hardwood Flooring

Hardwood flooring including natural, engineered and laminates are a beautiful addition to your home. While beautiful, it is important to understand the unique characteristics of the wood you selected and the maintenance requirements.

> **Humidity is Key**
>
> Maintain 35-55% humidity year-round. Wood floors respond noticeably to humidity changes, especially in winter when gaps between boards are normal.

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Sweep or vacuum	Daily or as needed	5 minutes
Damp mop (minimal water)	Weekly	10 minutes
Check floor protectors	Monthly	5 minutes
Inspect for damage	Seasonally	10 minutes
Professional recoating	Every 3 to 5 years	N/A

Daily & Weekly Cleaning

Preventive maintenance is the primary goal:

- **Daily:** Sweep or vacuum as needed
- **Never wet-mop** - excessive water causes wood to expand and damages floor
- **For stubborn soiling:** Damp-mop with 1 cup vinegar to 1 gallon warm water
- When damp-mopping, remove all excess water from mop
- Use only manufacturer-recommended cleaning products

Protecting from Furniture

- Install proper floor protectors on all furniture
- Protectors allow chairs to move without scuffing
- Regularly clean protectors to remove accumulated grit
- Heavy furniture or dropped objects can cause dimples

Protective Mats

- Use protective mats at exterior doors to prevent sand and grit
- Gritty sand is wood flooring's worst enemy
- **Warning:** Rubber backing on area rugs or mats can cause yellowing and warping

Troubleshooting

Gaps Between Boards

Gaps appearing during dry/winter months are normal. Wood floors respond to humidity changes:

- Planks expand and contract as moisture content changes
- Most noticeable during winter months
- A humidifier may help but doesn't eliminate this reaction

Scratches

Minor surface scratches are common:

- High heels with exposed fastening nails exert over 8,000 pounds of pressure per square inch
- Keep heels in good repair
- Use furniture protectors consistently
- Consider area rugs in high-traffic areas

Cupping or Warping

Cupping occurs when edges of boards are higher than the center. Causes include:

- Repeated wetting or single thorough soaking
- High humidity below the floor
- Spills not cleaned promptly

Prevention:

- Clean up spills immediately with dry cloth
- Maintain consistent humidity levels
- Address any plumbing leaks immediately

Dull Finish

Dulling of finish in heavy traffic areas is expected:

- Consider having an extra coat applied by a qualified contractor after one year
- For protective finishes, recoating extends floor life significantly

What to Avoid

> **Warning**
>
> - **Don't wet-mop** - Excessive water damages wood flooring
> - **Don't use wax or oil soap** - Once applied, new finish won't bond properly
> - **Don't expose to direct sunlight** - Causes irreparable damage; use window coverings
> - **Don't drag furniture** - Always lift furniture or use proper sliders
> - **Don't use rubber-backed rugs** - Can cause yellowing and warping
> - **Don't ignore spills** - Clean immediately with dry cloth

About Wax

- Waxing and oil soap products are **not recommended**
- Once you wax a polyurethane finish, recoating is difficult (new finish won't bond to wax)
- Preferred maintenance: preventive cleaning and recoating as needed

Humidity Control

Wood floors respond noticeably to humidity changes:

- Maintain 35-55% relative humidity year-round
- Use a hygrometer to monitor humidity levels
- A humidifier in winter can help reduce gaps

> **Note**
>
> Classic Homes does not install humidifiers and is not responsible for damages associated with the installation or improper usage of a humidifier.

Related Topics

- Resilient Flooring (p. 42)
- Carpet (p. 12)
- Ceramic Tile (p. 16)
- Surface Damage

Warranty Coverage: See Hardwood Flooring Standards for coverage periods and exclusions.

Resilient Flooring

Resilient flooring (vinyl, linoleum, and similar materials) is durable and easy to maintain. Understanding proper care techniques will help keep your floors looking great for years.

> **First 2 Weeks**
>
> Avoid using cleaning or finishing agents on new flooring until the adhesive has thoroughly set—approximately two weeks.

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Sweep debris	Daily or as needed	5 minutes
Wipe up spills	Immediately	2 minutes
Damp mop (minimal water)	Weekly	10 minutes
Apply floor finish	As needed	30 minutes
Check furniture coasters	Monthly	5 minutes

Daily Care and Cleaning

Follow manufacturer's specific recommendations for your flooring type.

General guidelines:

- Wipe up spills promptly
- Sweep debris and crumbs instead of frequent water washing
- Limit mopping with water—excessive water can penetrate seams and edges
- Water under flooring causes lifting and curling

No-wax flooring: Has a clear, tough coating providing shiny appearance and durable surface. Even this surface will scuff or mark. Follow manufacturer recommendations for maintaining finish.

Protecting from Furniture

- Install coasters on furniture legs to prevent permanent damage
- **Never drag appliances** across resilient flooring—causes tears and wrinkles
- Moving heavy items can cause permanent damage

Leftover scraps: If installation scraps remain, we leave them for potential repairs. Matching dye lot makes repairs less apparent.

Preventing Seam Damage

Seams can lift or curl if excessive moisture penetrates them:

- Use special caulking at tub or floor joints to seal seams
- Avoid getting large amounts of water on floor from baths and showers
- Limit water when mopping

Any brand or type of linoleum flooring may separate slightly due to shrinkage.

Troubleshooting

Seams Lifting or Curling

Common causes:

- Excessive water penetration
- Improper cleaning methods
- Subfloor moisture

Prevention:

- Seal seams at wet areas
- Use minimal water when cleaning
- Address spills immediately

Raised Nail Heads

Raised nail heads result from floor joist movement caused by natural shrinkage and deflection.

To fix:

1. Place a block of wood over the raised area
2. Hit the block with a hammer to reset the nail

Ridges Showing

Ridges from underlayment joints may show through flooring:

- Minor ridges are normal
- Significant ridges (more than 1/8" high) should be reported during warranty period

Scuffs and Marks

Even no-wax flooring will scuff or mark over time:

- Try manufacturer-recommended cleaners
- Some scuffs can be buffed out
- May require floor finish application

What to Avoid

> **Warning**
>
> - **Don't drag appliances** - Causes tears and wrinkles that cannot be repaired
> - **Don't use excessive water** - Water under flooring causes lifting and curling
> - **Don't skip furniture coasters** - Heavy furniture without coasters causes permanent indentations
> - **Don't use abrasive cleaners** - Can damage the floor surface
> - **Don't clean new floors for 2 weeks** - Allow adhesive to fully set

Flooring Information

Your color selection sheet provides a record of the brand, style, and color of floor coverings in your home. Retain this for future reference.

Regular Finish Maintenance

Some resilient floors require regular application of an approved floor finish to retain their appearance. Check your manufacturer's recommendations for:

- Type of finish recommended
- Application frequency
- Cleaning products to use

Related Topics

- Hardwood Flooring (p. 40)
- Carpet (p. 12)
- Ceramic Tile (p. 16)
- Surface Damage

Warranty Coverage: See Resilient Flooring Standards for coverage periods and exclusions.

Foundation

Your home's foundation is designed and installed according to the recommendations of a state-registered structural engineer. Proper maintenance, especially of drainage, is essential to protect this critical component.

How It Works

The foundation of your home includes:

- **Poured concrete walls** with engineered reinforcing rods
- **Footer system** that distributes the home's weight
- **Waterproofing** to prevent water infiltration

- **Drainage systems** to direct water away from the foundation

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Clean gutters and downspouts	Seasonally	30 minutes
Check splash blocks	Monthly	5 minutes
Inspect grading around home	Seasonally	15 minutes
Monitor cracks	Annually	10 minutes
Check sump pump (if present)	Monthly	5 minutes

Drainage Maintenance (Critical!)

Proper drainage is essential for foundation protection. You must:

1. **Maintain positive grade** - soil should slope away from foundation
2. **Keep gutters clear** - clean seasonally
3. **Use splash blocks** - direct downspout water away from home
4. **Monitor swales** - don't block drainage paths with landscaping
5. **Follow landscaping guidelines** - see Grading and Drainage (p. 49)

> **Warning**
>
> If you or your landscaper alter the drainage patterns established by Classic Homes, warranty coverage for water entry may be voided.

Basement Dampness

Due to the amount of water in new concrete, basements may be damp initially. This typically improves as the concrete cures (can take 1 to 2 years).

Normal conditions:

- Some dampness in new construction
- Moisture during extended wet periods

Not normal:

- Standing water
- Active water entry through walls

To help reduce dampness:

- Use a dehumidifier
- Ensure good ventilation
- Maintain exterior drainage

Crawl Space Care

Important notes:

- Crawl spaces are NOT intended for storage
- Wood stored in crawl spaces can attract termites
- Some dampness is normal

What to monitor:

- Should not have standing water
- Ventilation openings should remain clear
- Items that could be damaged by moisture should not be stored here

Troubleshooting

Water in Basement

Before calling for service:

1. Check gutters and downspouts—clear of debris?

2. Are splash blocks in place directing water away?
3. Has landscaping or grading been changed since closing?
4. Is soil sloped away from foundation on all sides?
5. If sump pump present, is it operating?

If you've maintained proper drainage and water is entering, contact Classic Homes.

Understanding Foundation Cracks

Cracks due to expansion or settlement are common in foundation walls, especially at corners of basement windows. This is normal and not a structural concern unless:

- The crack allows water to enter
- The crack is growing significantly

What to do:

- Photograph and measure cracks
- Monitor for changes over time
- Note if any water is entering through the crack
- Report cracks that allow water entry to Classic Homes

Cosmetic Imperfections

The following are normal and do not require repair:

- **Visible seams** where two concrete pours meet
- **Slight honeycombing** (rough texture areas)
- **Hairline cracks** that don't allow water entry
- **Minor surface variations**

These only require attention if they allow water to enter.

What to Avoid

> **Warning**
>
> - **Don't alter grading** - Maintain original drainage patterns
> - **Don't block drainage swales** - Water must flow away from home
> - **Don't plant near foundation** - Keep shrubs at least 2 feet from foundation walls
> - **Don't store wood in crawl space** - Attracts termites
> - **Don't ignore gutters** - Clogged gutters overflow near foundation
> - **Don't pave over drainage areas** - Water needs somewhere to go

Resources

See Special Publication 43 "A Guide to Swelling Soils for Colorado Homebuyers and Homeowners" for detailed information about Colorado soil conditions.

Related Topics

- Grading and Drainage (p. 49)
- Sump Pump (p. 73)
- Landscaping (p. 59)
- Cracks and Damage
- Water Issues

Warranty Coverage: See Foundation Standards for coverage periods and exclusions.

Framing

The structural framing of your home includes floors, walls, railings, and window openings. Understanding how these components behave will help you know what to expect as your home settles.

How It Works

Your home's framing consists of:

- **Floor joists** that support the flooring
- **Wall studs** that create the wall structure
- **Ceiling joists and rafters** that support the roof
- **Railings** for safety at stairs and elevated areas

As wood naturally dries and your home settles, minor movement is normal and expected.

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Inspect railings for stability	Annually	5 minutes
Check for new squeaks	Seasonally	5 minutes
Dust/polish railings	As needed	10 minutes
Protect railings during moves	As needed	N/A

Railing Care

Stained or wrought iron railings require minimal maintenance:

Regular care:

- Occasional dusting
- Polishing as needed

Protection:

- Cover railings during move-in
- Protect from sharp objects
- Avoid exposing to moisture

What to expect:

- Stained railings will have variations in color due to wood grain
- Some railings have seams from combining components
- Railings are installed per building codes and cannot be relocated

Troubleshooting

Floor and Stair Squeaks

Some floor and stair squeaks are unavoidable due to:

- Natural wood movement
- Humidity changes
- Temperature variations
- Normal settling

What to expect:

- Squeaks may recur even after repair
- Some squeaking is considered normal
- Not all squeaks can be eliminated

Tips to reduce squeaking:

- Maintain consistent humidity (35-55%)
- Note specific locations for service requests
- Some squeaks diminish over time as home settles

Floor Deflection (Bouncy Floors)

Floors will deflect (bend) when walked on, especially in large open spaces. This is:

- **Normal structural behavior**
- **Not a defect**

- **Part of the engineering design**

This deflection is designed into the structure and does not indicate a problem.

Walls Appearing Uneven

Walls may vary slightly from perfectly plumb due to natural characteristics of construction materials. Minor variations are normal and expected.

What to Avoid

> **Warning**
>
> - **Don't damage railings during move-in** - Cover and protect them
> - **Don't modify structural elements** - Cutting or notching framing can compromise structure
> - **Don't hang extremely heavy items** - Use proper anchors and distribute weight
> - **Don't ignore significant changes** - Report major cracks or shifting to Classic Homes
> - **Don't alter party walls** - Changes can affect noise transmission and fire resistance

Party Walls (Multi-Family Homes)

If your home shares a wall, floor, or ceiling with a neighbor:

Construction:

- Built to meet or exceed noise and fire protection standards

Your responsibility:

- Avoid damage or changes to these assemblies
- Changes can increase noise transmission and reduce fire resistance

What to expect:

- Some sound transmission is normal
- Loud music or high-impact noise may be noticed

Window Openings

Due to the natural wood used in construction, there will be slight variations (out of plumb) in window openings. This is:

- Normal
- Expected
- Not a defect

Understanding Settling

Your home will continue to settle and adjust during the first year and beyond:

- Wood naturally dries and shrinks
- Nail pops may appear in drywall
- Minor cracks may develop
- Squeaks may come and go

This is all part of normal home behavior and not cause for concern unless changes are dramatic.

Related Topics

- Foundation (p. 43)
- Drywall (p. 29)
- Expansion and Contraction (p. 45)
- Cracks and Damage
- Noise Issues

Warranty Coverage: See Framing Standards for coverage periods and exclusions.

Garage Door

Your garage door is one of the largest moving parts of your home. Regular maintenance keeps it operating smoothly and safely for years to come.

> **Garage Door Openers**
>
> Garage door openers are consumer products with their own manufacturer warranty. Classic Homes does not cover opener equipment, only installation-related door issues during the first year.

How It Works

The garage overhead door operates on a track and roller system with counterbalancing springs. When activated (manually or by opener), the springs assist in lifting or lowering the heavy door panel along the tracks.

Key components:

- **Tracks** - Guide the door up and down
- **Rollers** - Allow smooth movement along tracks
- **Springs** - Counterbalance the door's weight (under extreme tension)
- **Safety sensors** - Photo-eye sensors that stop/reverse the door if obstructed
- **Emergency release** - Allows manual operation during power outages

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Lubricate moving parts	Every 6 months	15 minutes
Test safety reverse	Monthly	2 minutes
Check hardware tightness	Every 6 months	10 minutes
Replace opener remote battery	Annually	2 minutes
Professional inspection	Annually	N/A

Lubrication Schedule

Every 6 months, apply silicone spray lubricant to:

- Track surfaces
- Metal rollers (do not lubricate vinyl rollers)
- Hinges
- Pulleys
- Springs

Tips:

- Avoid over-lubricating to prevent drips on vehicles or concrete
- Check that all hardware is tight and operating without binding or scraping
- Use silicone or graphite lubricant on locks (never oil, which stiffens in winter)

Safety Feature Testing

Test the safety reverse monthly:

1. Place a 2x4 flat on the ground under the door
2. Close the door using the opener
3. The door should reverse when contacting the board
4. If it doesn't reverse, contact a professional immediately

Troubleshooting

Door Won't Move with Opener

Quick Checklist:

1. Door is fully unlocked (manual lock not engaged)
2. Emergency release cord hasn't been pulled
3. Power to opener verified (check outlet/breaker)

4. Remote battery is fresh

Door Reverses When Closing

1. Clean photo-eye sensors (small boxes at bottom of each side)
2. Check sensor alignment (indicator lights should be steady)
3. Remove any obstructions in door path

Door Doesn't Close Completely

1. Check for debris in tracks
2. Look for damaged weather seal at bottom
3. Opener limit switch may need professional adjustment

Manual Operation is Difficult

1. Tracks may need cleaning or lubrication
2. Check for binding or damaged rollers
3. Springs may need professional adjustment

What to Avoid

> **Spring Danger**
>
> Garage door springs are under extreme tension. **Never** attempt to adjust or repair springs yourself - this is dangerous and should only be done by professionals.

- **Don't operate with lock engaged** - Can damage the opener
- **Don't allow children near moving door** - Serious injury risk
- **Don't ignore unusual sounds** - Grinding or scraping indicates problems
- **Don't block photo-eye sensors** - Keep tools and stored items clear
- **Don't use oil on locks** - Use silicone or graphite lubricant only

Understanding Normal Conditions

Light around edges: Garage doors cannot be airtight. Expect:

- Sunlight visible around edges and across the top
- Some precipitation entering in weather conditions
- Some dust entry, especially before community landscaping matures

Minor sag: The door may sag slightly due to its weight and span - this is normal.

Power Failure Operation

Know how to operate your door manually:

1. Pull the emergency release cord (usually red)
2. Lift door manually by the handle
3. To reconnect, pull release cord toward the door and operate the opener

Related Topics

- Doors and Locks (p. 27)
- Electrical System (p. 30)
- Energy Conservation (p. 32)

Warranty Coverage: See Garage Door Standards for coverage periods and exclusions.

Grading & Drainage

Proper drainage protects your home's foundation from water damage. Understanding and maintaining the grading around your home is one of the most important responsibilities of homeownership.

> **Critical Homeowner Responsibility**
>
> Maintaining drainage patterns is YOUR responsibility. Altering the original grading may void your warranty coverage for drainage-related issues.

How It Works

Classic Homes establishes grading to ensure water flows away from your foundation and concrete slabs. Key concepts:

- **Site drainage** is limited to grades and swales within 5-10 feet of the foundation
- **Drainage swales** may follow property boundaries and direct water between sites
- **Water transfer** between sites is normal - your site may receive water from or pass water to adjacent sites
- **Standing water** should not remain near your home longer than 24 hours after rain
- **Swale drainage** should clear within 72 hours

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Inspect perimeter grading	Monthly	15 minutes
Check splash blocks/extensions	Monthly	5 minutes
Clear drainage swales	As needed	Varies
Fill settling areas	As needed	Varies
Verify soil level below siding	Seasonally	5 minutes

Maintaining Soil Levels

Maintain soil levels at least **6 inches below** siding, stucco, brick, or other exterior finish materials.

Why this matters:

- Soil contact can deteriorate exterior finishes
- Ground-level soil encourages pest infestations
- Moisture transfer into walls causes damage

Roof Drainage and Splash Blocks

Critical: Do not remove splash blocks or downspout extensions.

- Keep them in place at all times
- Ensure they slope so water drains away from home
- Extensions should discharge outside of rock or bark beds
- Don't let landscape edging dam water behind it

Settling and Backfill Areas

The excavated area around your foundation was backfilled, but this soil doesn't return to original density.

Expect:

- Some settling, especially after heavy rain or snowmelt
- Settling can continue for several years
- More settling in backfilled areas than undisturbed ground

Your responsibility:

- Inspect the perimeter regularly
- Fill settling areas as needed to maintain grade
- Don't let settling create negative drainage toward the house

Troubleshooting

Standing Water Near Foundation

1. **Check duration** - Is water standing more than 24 hours?
2. **Check for alterations** - Has the grade been changed?
3. **Check splash blocks** - Are they directing water away?

4. **Check settling** - Has the ground settled toward the house?

Standing Water in Swales

1. **Check for debris** - Clear any obstructions
2. **Check duration** - Should drain within 72 hours
3. **Check for alterations** - Has anyone modified the swale?

Settling Around Foundation

1. **Measure the depth** - More than 4 inches warrants attention
2. **Add soil** - Fill to restore positive drainage
3. **Compact lightly** - Prevent future rapid settling
4. **Monitor** - Recheck after rain events

What to Avoid

> **Warning**
>
> Water features (fountains, ponds, etc.) must NOT be installed within 10 feet of the foundation. Installing water features too close may void your Limited Warranty.

- **Don't alter the grade** - Changes void warranty coverage
- **Don't block swales** - Water must flow freely
- **Don't remove splash blocks** - Essential for foundation protection
- **Don't let edging dam water** - Ensure water can escape
- **Don't ignore settling** - Fill depressions promptly

Your Grading Inspection Certificate (GIC)

Classic Homes documents the final grade at delivery of your home.

The GIC is important because:

- It records the original drainage patterns
- It's used to evaluate warranty claims
- Claims are compared against the original documented grade

Keep your GIC in a safe place with your home documents.

Working with Landscapers

When hiring landscape contractors:

- Discuss drainage with any company you hire
- You are responsible for any changes they make
- Ensure they understand the importance of maintaining grades
- Have them review your GIC before starting work

Related Topics

- Gutters & Downspouts (p. 51)
- Landscaping (p. 59)
- Foundation (p. 43)
- Sump Pump (p. 73)

Warranty Coverage: See Grading and Drainage Standards for coverage periods and exclusions.

Gutters & Downspouts

Your gutters and downspouts protect your home by directing roof water away from the foundation. Regular cleaning and maintenance prevent water damage, foundation issues, and ice buildup.

How It Works

Gutters collect rainwater and snowmelt from your roof and channel it to downspouts. Downspouts carry water to the ground level, where extensions or splash blocks direct it away from your foundation.

Key components:

- **Gutters** - Horizontal channels along roof edges
- **Downspouts** - Vertical pipes carrying water down
- **Extensions** - Direct water away from foundation
- **Splash blocks** - Prevent erosion at discharge points

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Clean gutters	Spring and Fall	1 to 2 hours
Check extensions/splash blocks	Monthly	5 minutes
Inspect for leaks	Seasonally	15 minutes
Remove ice buildup	As needed (winter)	Varies

Gutter Cleaning (Critical!)

Check gutters periodically and clean as needed. Debris in gutters causes:

- Slow water drainage from roof
- Overflow onto siding and foundation
- Freezing and clogging of downspouts
- Potential fire hazard in wooded areas

Recommended cleaning schedule:

- Spring (after tree debris)
- Fall (after leaves drop)
- After major storms
- More often if surrounded by trees

Extensions and Splash Blocks

Downspout extensions and splash blocks are essential for directing water away from your foundation.

Important:

- Keep extensions in the down position at all times
- Position splash blocks so water flows away from home
- Extensions should discharge **outside** of rock or bark beds
- Don't let landscape edging dam water behind it

Snow and Ice Management

Ice buildup can develop during extended cold periods as snow melts off the roof.

What can happen:

- Ice forms in gutters and downspouts
- Overflow creates ice on walkways below
- Gutters can be damaged by heavy ice

> **Homeowner Responsibility**
>
> You are responsible for removing ice that accumulates in gutters and downspouts, and on walkways from gutter overflow.

Troubleshooting

Gutters Overflowing

1. **Check for clogs** - Remove debris from gutters
2. **Check downspouts** - Ensure not blocked
3. **Check slope** - Water should flow toward downspouts
4. **Note conditions** - Overflow during excessive rain is normal

Water Not Reaching Downspouts

1. **Check for debris** - Clear the gutter path
2. **Check slope** - Gutters over 3 feet should slope toward downspouts
3. **Check for sags** - May indicate loose brackets

Leaks at Joints

1. **Identify location** - Mark where leak occurs
2. **Check seal** - Joint may need resealing
3. **During first year** - Contact Classic Homes for installation-related leaks

Standing Water in Gutters

Small amounts (up to 1 inch) standing briefly after rain is normal. Persistent standing water indicates:

- Improper slope
- Clogged outlet
- Damaged gutter section

What to Avoid

- **Don't ignore debris buildup** - Leads to overflow and damage
- **Don't remove extensions** - Essential for foundation protection
- **Don't position splash blocks incorrectly** - Water must flow away from house
- **Don't let ice accumulate** - Can damage gutters and create hazards
- **Don't walk on roof to access gutters** - Use proper ladder safety

Checking Gutter Slope

Gutters over 3 feet long should have a slight slope toward downspouts. Signs of improper slope:

- Water pools in certain sections
- One area always has standing water
- Water doesn't reach the downspout

If you notice persistent slope issues during the first year, contact Classic Homes.

Seasonal Care

Before Winter

- Clean gutters thoroughly
- Check that downspouts are clear
- Ensure extensions are in place
- Consider gutter guards if debris is heavy

During Winter

- Monitor for ice buildup
- Remove ice from walkways promptly
- Clear snow from downspout discharge areas

Before Spring

- Inspect for winter damage
- Clean out any remaining debris
- Check all connections and seals

Related Topics

- Grading & Drainage (p. 49)
- Roof (p. 76)
- Landscaping (p. 59)

Warranty Coverage: See Gutters and Downspouts Standards for coverage periods and exclusions.

Heating Systems

Your heating system keeps your home comfortable during cold months. Whether you have a gas forced air furnace or a heat pump, understanding how it works and providing regular maintenance ensures efficient operation and extends equipment life.

> **Identify Your System**
>
> Check your thermostat or equipment to determine which type of heating system you have - maintenance requirements differ between gas furnaces and heat pumps.

How It Works

Gas Forced Air Systems

A gas furnace burns natural gas to heat air, which is then distributed through ductwork to your rooms. The thermostat controls when the furnace cycles on and off.

Key components:

- **Furnace** - Burns gas to heat air
- **Blower** - Circulates air through ducts
- **Thermostat** - Controls temperature
- **Filter** - Cleans circulating air
- **Ductwork** - Distributes heated air

Heat Pump Systems

A heat pump uses refrigerant to transfer heat from outside air into your home. The same unit provides both heating AND cooling. An auxiliary (backup) heat system supplements during extremely cold weather.

Key difference: Air from vents feels cooler than with a gas furnace - this is normal. Heat pumps operate at lower temperatures but run longer cycles.

Key components:

- **Outdoor unit** - Extracts heat from outside air
- **Indoor unit** - Distributes heated air
- **Reversing valve** - Switches between heating and cooling
- **Auxiliary heat** - Electric backup for cold weather
- **Defrost cycle** - Removes ice from outdoor coils

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Check/replace air filter	Monthly	5 minutes
Clear debris from outdoor unit (heat pump)	Monthly	10 minutes
Check that vents are open	Seasonally	5 minutes
Test system before heating season	Annually (fall)	15 minutes
Professional maintenance	Annually	N/A

Air Filters (Critical!)

A clean filter is one of the most important maintenance tasks.

Frequency: Monthly during heating season (year-round if you have AC too)

Why it matters:

- Dirty filter reduces airflow and efficiency
- Can cause cold spots in your home
- Can freeze air conditioning coils
- Reduces equipment lifespan

Permanent filters: If you have a washable filter, clean monthly following manufacturer instructions.

Outdoor Unit Care (Heat Pump)

Keep the outdoor unit clear of:

- Snow and ice
- Leaves and debris
- Landscaping materials
- Trash or stored items

Snow or ice blocking the unit causes serious efficiency problems.

Vent Adjustments

Experiment with adjustable registers for best heat flow:

- Reduce heat to seldom-used or interior rooms
- Keep vents near windows unobstructed to minimize condensation
- Keep window coverings slightly open in cold weather
- Ensure return air vents are not blocked by furniture

Troubleshooting

Gas Furnace Not Heating?

Quick Checklist:

1. Thermostat is set to **"heat"** and temperature is set **above** room temperature
2. Blower panel cover is installed correctly (has safety switch)
3. Breaker on electrical panel is ON
4. On/off switch on side of furnace is ON
5. Gas line is open at main meter AND at furnace
6. Filter is clean and allowing airflow
7. Vents in rooms are open
8. Air returns are unobstructed
9. Exterior exhaust vents are not blocked by snow or ice

> **Gas Smell?**
>
> If you smell gas, leave the home immediately and call the gas company. Do not flip switches or create sparks.

Heat Pump Not Heating?

Quick Checklist:

1. Thermostat is set to **"heat"** and temperature is set **above** room temperature
2. Breaker on main electrical panel is ON
3. Filter is clean and allowing airflow
4. Vents in rooms are open
5. Air returns are unobstructed
6. Outside unit is not blocked by snow, ice, or debris
7. Outside coil is not clogged with snow or ice

Auxiliary heat stays on? If the auxiliary heat light stays on when outside temperature is above 30°F, contact a service technician.

Temperature Variations Between Rooms

Temperatures vary from room to room and floor to floor by several degrees. This is normal and due to:

- Floor plan and room orientation
- Number and size of windows
- Window coverings usage
- Open or closed interior doors
- Heat rising to upper floors

Try this:

- Open vents in rooms you use most

- Partially close vents in unused rooms
- Run furnace fan continuously for better air mixing
- Readjust when seasons change

What to Avoid

> **Warning**
>
> Do not overheat your new home, especially in the first year. Overheating causes excessive shrinkage of framing lumber and may damage the home.

- **Don't block vents or returns** - Restricts airflow and reduces efficiency
- **Don't set thermostat extremely high** - Won't heat faster, wastes energy
- **Don't ignore dirty filters** - Causes system strain and potential damage
- **Don't close more than one vent completely** (heat pump) - Restricts airflow too much

Heat Pump Specific

- **Don't make large thermostat changes** - Adjust no more than 2°F at a time
- **Don't turn down thermostat at night** (unless you have a heat pump-specific setback thermostat)
- **Don't have another firm modify the system** during warranty - voids that portion of warranty

Understanding Normal Behaviors

Initial odor: A new furnace may emit an odor when first used, or after being unused. This is from manufacturing oils and dust in the ducts and passes quickly.

Duct noise: Some popping or pinging sounds are normal as ductwork heats and cools during operation.

Defrost cycle (heat pump): During heating, outdoor coils can freeze. The system automatically defrosts:

- Outside fan stops temporarily
- Airflow may feel slightly cooler
- Cycle lasts up to 10 minutes
- Can only occur once every 90 minutes

This is completely normal automatic operation.

Programmable Thermostat Settings

Your home may include a smart thermostat with features designed to optimize comfort and efficiency. Understanding these settings helps you get the most from your heating system.

Heat Pump Systems

Heat pumps require different thermostat strategies than gas furnaces. If your home has a heat pump, follow these guidelines.

Temperature Setback Guidelines

Unlike gas furnaces, heat pumps work most efficiently with consistent temperatures. Large setbacks trigger expensive auxiliary heat when recovering.

Best practice: Keep temperature adjustments within **2-4°F** of your normal setting. This maintains comfort while avoiding auxiliary heat activation.

Recommended Nest Settings

If your home has a Nest thermostat, it includes Heat Pump Balance modes. We recommend keeping the default settings:

Setting	Recommended Value	Purpose
Heat Pump Balance	**Balanced** (default)	Optimizes comfort and efficiency
Auxiliary Lockout Temperature	**40°F**	Prevents aux heat above this outdoor temp
Compressor Lockout Temperature	**0°F**	Prevents compressor damage in extreme cold

What these settings achieve:

- Heat pump handles most heating needs efficiently

- Auxiliary heat activates only when necessary (below 40°F outdoors)
- System protected from damage in extreme cold

Alternative Balance Modes

Your Nest offers two other modes depending on your priorities:

Max Savings Mode

- Prioritizes electric efficiency over comfort
- Heat pump runs longer before auxiliary heat activates
- Best for: Households focused on minimizing electric bills
- Trade-off: Slower temperature recovery on very cold days

Max Comfort Mode

- Prioritizes reaching set temperature quickly
- Auxiliary heat activates sooner
- Best for: Households that need higher temperatures or faster recovery
- Trade-off: Higher electric bills during cold weather

Understanding Backup Heat Costs

> **Auxiliary Heat Is Expensive**
>
> Electric resistance backup heat costs significantly more than heat pump operation. If you notice the "Aux Heat" indicator frequently active when outdoor temperatures are above 40°F, contact warranty service.

The auxiliary heat light on your thermostat indicates when backup heat is running. This is normal in very cold weather but should not activate frequently on mild days.

Additional Thermostat Features

Farsight Display: When connected to WiFi, your Nest can display the current temperature, weather, or time when you approach it. This feature requires an active WiFi connection.

Defrost Management: Your Nest automatically manages defrost cycles - no adjustment needed. See "Understanding Normal Behaviors" above for what to expect during defrost.

Seasonal Care

Before Winter

- Replace air filter
- Test system on a mild day
- Clear debris from outdoor unit (heat pump)
- Check that all vents are open
- Schedule professional maintenance if due

During Winter

- Check filter monthly
- Keep outdoor unit clear of snow (heat pump)
- Monitor for unusual sounds or odors
- Keep exterior exhaust vents clear

Related Topics

- Air Conditioning (p. 5)
- Ventilation (p. 83)
- Energy Conservation (p. 32)
- Condensation (p. 20)

Warranty Coverage: See Heating: Gas Forced Air Standards or Heating: Heat Pump Standards for coverage periods and exclusions.

Insulation

Your home's insulation helps maintain comfortable temperatures and reduce energy costs. While insulation requires minimal maintenance, understanding how it works helps you preserve its effectiveness.

How It Works

Insulation resists heat flow, keeping your home warmer in winter and cooler in summer. Different areas of your home have different insulation types and amounts:

- **Attic** - Typically blown-in insulation
- **Walls** - Batt or blown-in insulation
- **Floors** - Insulation over unheated spaces

Insulation effectiveness is measured by **R-value** - resistance to heat flow. Higher R-values mean better insulating performance. Your home's insulation meets or exceeds building codes at the time of construction.

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Visual inspection of attic insulation	Annually	15 minutes
Check for disturbed insulation after attic work	After any attic entry	5 minutes
Inspect weatherstripping	Annually	10 minutes

Attic Insulation Care

The effectiveness of blown insulation depends on it being smooth and even.

After any attic work:

- Installing speaker wire
- Adding storage
- Running cable/network lines
- HVAC inspection

Always: Confirm the insulation lays smooth and even before leaving the attic.

> **Safety Warning**
>
> Do not step on drywall ceilings. This can result in personal injury from falling through and damage to the drywall below.

Natural Settling

Attic insulation will settle over time. This is:

- **Normal and expected**
- **Accounted for** in the original installation amount
- **Not a defect**

The insulation installed exceeds what's needed after settling to ensure ongoing performance.

Troubleshooting

Drafts or Cold Spots

Before calling for service:

1. **Check if insulation was disturbed** - After attic work, speaker installation, etc.
2. **Feel around electrical outlets** - Some cold air from exterior wall outlets is normal
3. **Check weatherstripping** - On doors and windows
4. **Ensure vents are open** - And unobstructed

Cold Air from Outlets

Electrical outlets on exterior walls may emit cold air when outside temperatures are low.

Why this happens:

- Air convection occurs naturally in wall cavities
- Cold exterior air creates temperature differential

- Air movement is felt at outlet openings

This is normal and not a sign of missing or inadequate insulation.

To reduce drafts:

- Install foam gaskets behind outlet covers (available at hardware stores)
- Use child safety plugs in unused outlets

Uneven Room Temperatures

If some rooms feel colder than others:

1. Check that vents are open
2. Check that return air is unobstructed
3. Verify attic insulation is even (if accessible)
4. Consider running furnace fan continuously

What to Avoid

- **Don't compress insulation** - Reduces effectiveness significantly
- **Don't move insulation without replacing it** - Must remain even
- **Don't step on ceiling drywall** - Injury and damage risk
- **Don't block soffit vents** - Attic needs ventilation
- **Don't store items directly on insulation** - Compresses and reduces R-value

Understanding R-Values

Location	Purpose
Attic	Highest R-value needed - most heat loss/gain occurs here
Walls	Moderate R-value for thermal envelope
Floors	Insulates over unheated spaces like garages

For optimal energy efficiency:

- Maintain insulation integrity
- Don't compress insulation
- Keep even coverage throughout

Energy Efficiency Tips

To maximize your insulation's effectiveness:

1. **Seal air leaks** - Around windows, doors, and penetrations
2. **Maintain weatherstripping** - Replace when worn
3. **Use window coverings** - Close at night in winter, during day in summer
4. **Check attic access** - Ensure hatch or door is insulated and sealed
5. **Inspect after work** - Verify insulation wasn't disturbed

Related Topics

- Energy Conservation (p. 32)
- Heating Systems (p. 53)
- Air Conditioning (p. 5)
- Ventilation (p. 83)

Warranty Coverage: See Insulation Standards for coverage periods and exclusions.

Landscaping

Landscaping enhances the beauty and value of your home. Proper planning, installation, and maintenance are essential for a healthy yard and to protect your home's foundation.

> **Foundation Protection**
>
> The area within 5 feet of your foundation requires special attention. Improper landscaping near your foundation can cause serious structural damage.

How It Works

Your landscaping works together with your home's drainage system to manage water and protect your foundation. Key concepts:

- **Positive drainage** - Ground slopes away from foundation
- **Backfill areas** - Soil around foundation is less compact than undisturbed ground
- **Drainage swales** - Direct water away from structures
- **Sprinkler zones** - Deliver water to specific areas

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Check sprinkler heads and coverage	Monthly (season)	15 minutes
Verify drainage patterns	After heavy rain	10 minutes
Check downspout extensions	Monthly	5 minutes
Monitor backfill settling	Monthly	10 minutes
Winterize sprinkler system	Before first freeze	30 minutes or professional

The First 5 Feet: Foundation Protection Zone

The area within 5 feet of your foundation requires special attention:

Sprinklers:

- Do not install sprinkler heads within 5 feet of foundation
- Sprinklers should not deposit moisture within 5 feet of foundation

Plants:

- Install only plants requiring minimal hand watering
- Avoid plants needing regular irrigation

Why it matters:

- Excess moisture near the foundation causes settling and movement
- Water can penetrate to lower foundation areas
- Can cause wet basements, foundation cracks, and floor slab movement

Sprinkler System Management

If your home has a sprinkler system:

Your ongoing responsibilities:

- Routine cleaning of sprinkler heads
- Adjusting coverage as needed
- Repairing damaged heads
- **Shutting down and draining the system before freezing temperatures**

> **Warning**
>
> Failure to drain the system before freezing can result in broken lines. Damage from failure to winterize is excluded from warranty.

Automatic timers allow:

- Watering at optimum times (ideally before sunrise)
- Accurate, consistent water control per zone
- Easy seasonal adjustments

New Sod Care

Newly placed sod requires extra water for several weeks:

- Water in the cool part of the day (ideally before sunrise)
- Water at regular intervals for first three weeks
- Be aware that extra watering can create temporary drainage concerns

Temporary drainage issues from new sod watering will resolve when the yard is established.

Tree Care

Trees add value but require ongoing attention:

Your responsibilities:

- Caring for existing trees
- Pruning dead branches
- Removing damaged trees if necessary
- Watering during summer and warm dry winter periods
- Mulching around trees
- Avoiding tilling or planting flower beds around tree roots

Note: Trees existing before construction may suffer delayed damage from soil compaction, changed water flow, or disturbed roots during construction.

Troubleshooting

Standing Water After Rain

1. **Check duration** - Should drain within 24 hours near foundation
2. **Check swales** - Clear any obstructions
3. **Check splash blocks** - Ensure water flows away
4. **Check for settling** - Fill any depressions

Sprinkler Not Working

1. **Check controller** - Verify programming and power
2. **Check for clogs** - Clean sprinkler heads
3. **Check for leaks** - Look for wet spots or sunken areas
4. **Check valves** - May need cleaning or replacement

Plants Struggling

1. **Check watering** - Too much or too little?
2. **Check drainage** - Standing water damages roots
3. **Check sunlight** - Is the plant suited to the location?
4. **Check soil** - May need amendments

Settling in Yard

1. **Utility trenches** - May settle; roll back sod, add soil, relay
2. **Backfill areas** - Normal; add soil to maintain grade
3. **Swales** - Must remain clear for drainage

What to Avoid

- **Don't install sprinklers within 5 feet of foundation** - Causes structural damage
- **Don't alter drainage patterns** - Voids warranty coverage
- **Don't block drainage swales** - Water must flow freely
- **Don't forget to winterize** - Frozen pipes cause expensive damage
- **Don't install edging that dams water** - Must allow water to flow away

Landscape Edging Warning

Do not install edging around decorative rock or bark beds that obstructs water flow away from the home. Water dammed behind edging can:

- Cause foundation issues

- Create settling and drainage problems
- Damage landscaping

Working with Contractors

When hiring landscape, concrete, or other contractors:

- You are responsible for any changes they make to drainage patterns
- Discuss drainage with any company you hire
- Have them review your Grading Inspection Certificate before starting work
- Classic Homes recommends hiring local companies in good standing with The Better Business Bureau

HOA Requirements

Depending on your community, you may need HOA or district approval before:

- Designing landscaping
- Installing landscaping
- Making changes to existing landscaping

Check your community requirements first.

Plant Selection Tips

When choosing plants:

- Select species suitable to local climate
- Favor native species over exotic
- Consider ultimate size, shape, and growth
- Consider water requirements
- Plan for mature size, not nursery size

Related Topics

- Grading & Drainage (p. 49)
- Gutters & Downspouts (p. 51)
- Foundation (p. 43)
- Fencing (p. 34)

Warranty Coverage: See Landscaping Standards for coverage periods and exclusions.

Man-Made Stone

Man-made stone is a popular, durable, low-maintenance exterior finish. The type and color of stone for your home is listed on your Design Studio selection sheets. With minimal care, your stone exterior will maintain its beauty for years.

How It Works

Man-made stone (also called manufactured stone or stone veneer) is a concrete-based product molded to look like natural stone. It's applied over a weather barrier and attached with mortar.

Key features:

- **Mortar joints** - Hold stones in place
- **Weep holes** - Small openings at the base for moisture drainage
- **Weather barrier** - Behind the stone for moisture protection

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Visual inspection for cracks	Annually	10 minutes
Check weep holes are clear	Annually	5 minutes
Clean as needed	As needed	Varies
Check mortar joints	After several years	15 minutes

General Care

Man-made stone requires minimal maintenance:

1. **Inspect periodically** for cracks or loose mortar
2. **Clean as needed** with water and mild soap
3. **Keep weep holes clear** of debris and landscaping materials
4. **Monitor for efflorescence** - clean if desired, but it's not harmful
5. **Check mortar joints** after several years for tuck-pointing needs

Cleaning

For general cleaning:

- Use water and mild soap
- Avoid pressure washing at close range
- Rinse thoroughly
- Allow to dry naturally

Troubleshooting

White Powdery Substance (Efflorescence)

The white, powdery substance that sometimes appears on stone surfaces is called efflorescence.

What to know:

- Efflorescence is cosmetic and is not a defect
- It's a natural occurrence from minerals in the stone
- In some cases, it can be removed with soap and water
- It may reappear periodically

Cleaning efflorescence:

1. Try water and mild soap first
2. For stubborn deposits, use efflorescence cleaner from hardware store
3. Follow product instructions carefully
4. Rinse thoroughly

Cracks in Stone or Mortar

1. **Small hairline cracks** - Monitor but typically not concerning
2. **Cracks over 3/16"** - May warrant repair
3. **Loose mortar** - May need tuck-pointing

Weep Holes Blocked

If weep holes are blocked:

1. Clear debris carefully
2. Ensure landscaping materials aren't covering them
3. Check that mulch or soil isn't too high

What to Avoid

> **Important - Weep Holes**
>
> You may notice small holes in the mortar along the lower row of stone. These are weep holes that allow moisture to escape from behind the stone.
>
> - **Do not** fill these weep holes
> - **Do not** allow landscaping materials to cover them
>
> Blocking weep holes can lead to moisture damage behind the stone.

- **Don't use harsh chemicals** - Can damage stone surface
- **Don't pressure wash too close** - Can damage mortar joints
- **Don't ignore loose stones** - Can lead to water intrusion
- **Don't pile mulch or soil against stone** - Traps moisture and blocks weep holes

Understanding Tuck-Pointing

After several years, the stone may require tuck-pointing (repairing the mortar between stones).

When needed:

- When mortar becomes loose or crumbles
- When gaps appear between stones
- When water intrusion becomes a concern

Process:

1. Remove damaged mortar
2. Apply new mortar to joints
3. Tool joints to match existing
4. Allow to cure properly

This is typically a job for a professional mason.

Related Topics

- Siding & Stucco (p. 81)
- Caulking (p. 14)
- Exterior Paint (p. 69)

Warranty Coverage: See Man-Made Stone Standards for coverage periods and exclusions.

Mirrors

Mirrors add light and dimension to your home's interior spaces. Proper care will help maintain their appearance and longevity. The reflective coating (silvering) on mirrors can be damaged by certain cleaning products and moisture.

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Clean mirrors	As needed	5 minutes
Check for black spots	Occasionally	2 minutes
Verify secure mounting	Annually	2 minutes

Cleaning Mirrors

Recommended method:

1. Use any reliable liquid glass cleaner or polisher
2. Spray cleaner on cloth, not directly on mirror
3. Wipe in circular or straight strokes
4. Buff dry with clean cloth

Why spray on cloth, not mirror:

- Prevents moisture from reaching edges
- Protects silvering from cleaner damage
- Provides more even coverage

Protecting the Silvering

The reflective coating on mirrors can be damaged by:

Acidic cleaners:

- Avoid cleaners containing ammonia
- Avoid cleaners containing vinegar
- These can cause the silvering to deteriorate over time

Moisture:

- Avoid splashing water under or around mirror edges
- Moisture can damage the silvering, causing black spots

- Keep bathroom mirrors well-ventilated after showers

Troubleshooting

Black Spots on Mirror

Black spots indicate damage to the silvering, usually from moisture exposure.

Causes:

- Water splashing under edges
- High bathroom humidity over time
- Moisture-containing cleaners

Prevention:

- Use exhaust fans during and after showers
- Spray cleaner on cloth, not directly on mirror
- Wipe up water splashes promptly

Note: Black spots that develop after closing from moisture or improper cleaning are not covered under warranty.

Mirror Feels Loose

If a mirror feels loose or is separating from the wall:

1. Do not attempt to remove or reattach
2. Contact a professional or Classic Homes (if within first year)
3. Keep area clear in case mirror falls

Scratches or Chips

Minor surface marks:

- Usually cannot be repaired
- Replacement may be the only option for significant damage
- Document any damage at orientation for warranty coverage

What to Avoid

- **Don't use ammonia-based cleaners** - Damages silvering
- **Don't use vinegar** - Also damages silvering
- **Don't spray cleaner directly on mirror** - Liquid seeps under edges
- **Don't splash water around mirror edges** - Causes black spots
- **Don't use abrasive cloths** - Can scratch surface
- **Don't get glass cleaner on nearby fixtures** - Some formulas can damage fixture finishes

Cleaning Tips by Location

Bathroom Mirrors

- Run exhaust fan during and after showers
- Wipe condensation from mirror surface
- Be extra careful with water near edges
- Consider anti-fog products for frequently steamed mirrors

Vanity and Decorative Mirrors

- Dust frame regularly
- Clean glass as needed with proper technique
- Check mounting periodically

Protecting Nearby Fixtures

When cleaning mirrors near plumbing fixtures:

- Avoid getting glass cleaners on plumbing fixtures
- Some glass cleaner formulas can deteriorate fixture finishes
- Wipe any overspray immediately

Related Topics

- Bathroom Fixtures (p. 38)
- Paint & Stain (p. 69)
- Ventilation (p. 83)

Warranty Coverage: See Mirrors Standards for coverage periods and exclusions.

Mold Prevention

Mold can potentially cause serious side effects, such as allergic reactions and infections. The good news is that **moisture is the only mold growth factor you can control** in your home. By minimizing moisture, you reduce or eliminate mold growth.

> **Important**
>
> Mold requires moisture to grow. If moisture is present and remains on a mold food source, mold can develop within 24 to 48 hours.

How Mold Grows

Mold is a type of fungus that spreads through microscopic spores in the air. It requires four things to grow:

Requirement	In Your Home	Can You Control It?
Food	Wood, carpet, drywall, fabric, insulation	No - present in all homes
Air	Present everywhere	No - essential for living
Temperature	40°F to 100°F	No - typical home range
Moisture	Various sources	**Yes - the key to prevention**

Since moisture is the only controllable factor, mold prevention focuses entirely on moisture management.

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Run exhaust fans during/after bathing	Daily	N/A
Run hood fan when cooking	Daily	N/A
Check under sinks for leaks	Monthly	5 minutes
Inspect caulking around tubs/showers	Monthly	5 minutes
Clean/replace furnace filter	Monthly	5 minutes
Check for condensation on windows	As needed	2 minutes

Daily Habits

Ventilation:

- Do not cover or interfere with fresh air supply to furnace
- Run the hood fan when cooking
- Turn bath fans on when bathrooms are in use
- Connect clothes dryer to vent pipe and clean exhaust tube as needed
- Air your house by opening windows when weather permits

Cleaning:

- Mold grows well on dust and dirt - vacuum and dust regularly
- Use bath tile cleaners that contain mold-fighting chemicals
- Wipe up any spills immediately

Regular Inspections

Check your home regularly for signs of water intrusion:

Signs to look for:

- Musty odor
- Staining

- Actual standing moisture

Areas to inspect:

- Inside cabinets under all sinks
- Behind toilets
- Seldom-used closets
- Refrigerator drip pan
- Air conditioning condensate line, coils, and condenser pan

Systems to verify:

- Sump pump functions correctly (if applicable)
- Weather stripping condition
- Caulking integrity
- Grout condition
- Weep holes clear

Moisture Management

Caulking Maintenance

Maintain all caulking around:

- Windows and doors
- Sinks, tubs, and showers

Caulk prevents water from getting behind surfaces where mold can grow undetected.

Condensation Control

Condensation on surfaces inside your home is a sign of high humidity.

If you notice condensation:

- Wipe it up immediately
- Take steps to reduce humidity
- Run exhaust fans more frequently
- Consider a dehumidifier in problem areas

Humidifier Operation

If your home includes a humidifier:

- Operate according to manufacturer's instructions
- Clean as recommended
- If condensation develops, turn the humidifier down or off

> **Warning**
>
> Classic Homes does not install humidifiers and is not responsible for damages associated with humidifier installation or usage.

Landscaping and Drainage

Maintain positive drainage around your home:

- Avoid changes to grade that interfere with drainage
- Avoid exterior additions that dam water near the home
- Regularly inspect sprinkler systems
- Adjust sprinkler heads to avoid spraying the home
- Correct any leaks immediately
- Keep splash blocks and downspout extensions in place
- Clean gutters as needed to prevent overflow

Troubleshooting

Found Moisture or Musty Odor

1. **Locate the source** - Check likely areas

2. **Clean up immediately** - Don't let moisture sit
3. **Find the cause** - Leak, condensation, or spill?
4. **Fix the problem** - Repair leaks, improve ventilation
5. **Monitor the area** - Check regularly for recurrence

Found Visible Mold

Small area (less than 10 sq ft):

1. Clean with mold-killing cleaner
2. Allow to dry completely
3. Find and fix moisture source
4. Monitor for recurrence

Large or extensive area:

1. Consider professional remediation
2. Find and fix moisture source
3. May need professional assessment

Active Water Leak

1. **Shut off water at source** if plumbing
2. **Contain water** and protect belongings
3. **Report to Classic Homes** during warranty period
4. **Clean up immediately** - time is critical
5. **Document damage** for insurance if applicable

> **Important**
>
> Failure to report leaks promptly increases your risk and responsibility for repairs.

What to Avoid

- **Don't ignore moisture** - Address immediately
- **Don't cover up musty odors** - Find the source
- **Don't let water stand** - Clean up spills and leaks right away
- **Don't block ventilation** - Keep exhaust fans functional
- **Don't over-humidify** - Watch for condensation
- **Don't neglect caulking** - Maintain seals around wet areas

Water Shut-Off Valves

Be familiar with shut-off valves for all water supply lines in your home.

In the event of a leak:

1. Immediately shut off water at the appropriate valve
2. This minimizes the amount of water released
3. Clean up the water immediately

Knowing valve locations before an emergency saves critical time.

Prevention Checklist

Use this checklist to maintain a mold-resistant home:

- ☐ Exhaust fans run during and after bathing/cooking
- ☐ No condensation on windows or walls
- ☐ Under-sink areas dry with no leaks
- ☐ Caulking intact around tubs, showers, sinks
- ☐ Grout in good condition
- ☐ No musty odors anywhere in home
- ☐ Gutters clean and draining properly
- ☐ Downspout extensions in place
- ☐ Positive drainage away from foundation

- ☐ Sump pump working (if applicable)

Related Topics

- Condensation (p. 20)
- Ventilation (p. 83)
- Caulking (p. 14)
- Grading & Drainage (p. 49)
- Plumbing (p. 73)

Warranty Coverage: See Mold Standards for coverage information. During the warranty period, Classic Homes will respond to and repair water leaks that comply with the Standards of Performance.

Paint & Stain

Paint and stain finishes protect and beautify your home's surfaces. All touch-up and maintenance after closing is your responsibility. With the right techniques and your stored paint samples, you can keep your home looking great.

> **Your Paint Samples**
>
> Paint samples were provided at closing. Store them with lids tightly sealed, away from extreme temperatures. Your Design Studio selection sheet lists all paint and stain colors used in your home.

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Inspect exterior paint	Annually	15 minutes
Touch up minor damage	As needed	Varies
Clean painted surfaces	As needed	Varies
Check exterior wood trim	Annually	10 minutes

Cleaning Painted Surfaces

Interior walls:

- Wash gently with mild soap and as little water as possible
- Avoid abrasive cleaners, scouring pads, or scrub brushes
- Flat paints show washing marks more easily than gloss
- Often better results come from touching up rather than washing

Exterior surfaces:

- Rinse with garden hose to remove dirt
- Use mild soap for stubborn areas
- Avoid pressure washing painted wood (can force water under paint)

Paint Touch-Up

When doing paint touch-ups:

1. Use a small brush
2. Apply paint only to the damaged spot
3. Feather edges to blend
4. Allow to dry before judging the match

Important: Touch-up may not match exactly, even with the same paint mix. Paint ages and the touch-up will be fresher. This is normal and unavoidable.

> **Helpful Hint**
>
> A Q-tip works well for touching up small scratches and smudges.

Stain Touch-Up

For minor interior stain touch-ups on wood:

- Use furniture polish with scratch cover (inexpensive and easy)
- Follow directions on the bottle
- Product blends in with wood grain
- Works well for minor scratches and wear

For larger stain repairs:

- Use matching stain from your samples
- Test in inconspicuous area first
- Apply thin coats, building up as needed

Troubleshooting

Touch-Up Doesn't Match

This is normal. Paint fades and ages over time, and fresh touch-up will always look slightly different.

Options:

- Accept the slight variation (usually less visible over time)
- Repaint the entire wall from corner to corner
- For larger areas, repaint the entire room

Exterior Paint Peeling

1. **Check the area** - Is it wood trim?
2. **Look for moisture** - Peeling often indicates moisture problems
3. **Scrape loose paint** - Remove all loose material
4. **Prime bare wood** - Prevents future peeling
5. **Repaint** - Use quality exterior paint

Note: Wood trim develops minor cracks and raised grain in the first year. Raised grain can allow moisture under paint, causing peeling. This is not a defect.

Marks Won't Come Off

1. **Try gentle cleaning first** - Mild soap, minimal water
2. **Test in hidden area** - Before using stronger methods
3. **Touch up if needed** - Often better than scrubbing flat paint

Wood Grain Showing Through Paint

Today's water-based paints often make wood grain visible on painted trim. This is a characteristic of the paint and wood, not a defect.

What to Avoid

- **Don't use abrasive cleaners** - Damages paint finish
- **Don't scrub flat paint** - Shows marks easily
- **Don't ignore exterior damage** - Leads to moisture problems
- **Don't store paint in extreme temperatures** - Ruins the paint
- **Don't expect perfect matches** - Touch-ups will always be visible under certain lighting

Exterior Paint Maintenance

Regular care:

- Inspect after severe weather (hail, wind)
- Report weather damage to homeowners' insurance promptly
- Expect fading due to weather conditions
- Degree of fading depends on climate and paint shade

Wood trim:

- Will develop minor cracks and raised grain in first year
- Paint maintenance of wood trim and gutters is your responsibility

- Touch up as needed to prevent moisture damage

Understanding Paint Characteristics

Flat paint:

- Hides imperfections well
- Shows washing marks easily
- Best touched up rather than washed

Semi-gloss/Gloss:

- More durable and washable
- Shows imperfections more readily
- Used in kitchens, bathrooms, on trim

Stain:

- Color variations are natural due to wood grain
- Each piece of wood absorbs stain differently
- Variations are a feature, not a defect

Repainting Tips

When it's time to repaint:

1. Clean walls with mild soap and water
2. Allow to dry completely
3. Fill any holes or cracks with spackling
4. Sand smooth when dry
5. Prime repaired areas
6. Apply paint in thin, even coats
7. Use quality brushes and rollers

Related Topics

- Drywall (p. 29)
- Wood Trim (p. 92)
- Cabinets (p. 10)
- Caulking (p. 14)

Warranty Coverage: See Paint and Stain Standards for coverage periods and exclusions.

Pests and Wildlife

Insects and wildlife are a natural part of Colorado's environment. While no home can be built completely pest or wildlife proof, understanding prevention strategies and knowing when to call professionals will help you manage these challenges effectively.

> **Warranty Note**
>
> Pest and wildlife issues are excluded from warranty coverage. Prevention and treatment are homeowner responsibilities.

Common Pests and Wildlife

Insects

- **Ants** - Often enter seeking food or water
- **Spiders** - Common in garages and basements
- **Wasps and bees** - May build nests under eaves or in landscaping
- **Other insects** - Flies, moths, beetles

Wildlife

- **Mice and rodents** - Seek shelter especially in cold months
- **Squirrels** - May attempt to nest in attics or soffits
- **Woodpeckers** - Can damage wood siding and trim

- **Snakes** - Usually harmless, seeking shelter or prey

Prevention Tips

Area	Prevention Steps
Kitchen	Store food in sealed containers; clean up crumbs promptly
Exterior	Trim vegetation away from home; seal visible gaps
Garage	Keep doors closed; store pet food in sealed containers
Yard	Remove standing water; keep garbage sealed
Foundation	Address moisture issues; keep mulch away from siding

Routine Prevention

Interior Prevention

- Store food (including pet food) in sealed containers
- Clean up crumbs and spills promptly
- Don't leave dirty dishes out overnight
- Empty garbage regularly
- Fix dripping faucets (water sources attract pests)
- Seal gaps around pipes and utility entries where accessible

Exterior Prevention

- Keep vegetation trimmed away from the home
- Remove standing water sources
- Store firewood away from the house
- Keep garbage in sealed containers
- Clear debris from around foundation
- Ensure downspouts direct water away from home

Garage and Storage Areas

- Keep garage doors closed when not in use
- Store items in sealed plastic containers rather than cardboard
- Don't store pet food in garage unless in sealed containers
- Remove clutter that provides hiding places
- Check for entry points around doors and windows

Troubleshooting

Seeing Ants Inside?

1. **Identify entry point** - Follow ant trail to find where they're entering
2. **Clean the area** - Remove food sources and clean surfaces
3. **Seal entry** - Caulk gaps where practical
4. **Consider treatment** - Ant baits or professional service

Hearing Noises in Walls or Attic?

1. **Determine timing** - Dawn/dusk activity often indicates wildlife
2. **Check exterior** - Look for entry points (gaps, damaged soffits)
3. **Don't trap inside** - Ensure animals can exit before sealing
4. **Call professionals** - For wildlife in walls or attic

Woodpecker Damage?

1. **Inspect damage** - May indicate insect infestation in wood
2. **Address underlying issue** - Treat for insects if present
3. **Deter woodpeckers** - Visual deterrents, reflective tape
4. **Repair damage** - Fill holes, repaint

What to Avoid

> **Warning**
>
> - **Don't ignore early signs** - Small problems become large infestations
> - **Don't seal animals inside** - Ensure wildlife can exit before sealing entry points
> - **Don't use outdoor pesticides indoors** - Use products as labeled
> - **Don't disturb wasp/bee nests** - Call professionals for removal

Professional Resources

When prevention isn't enough, contact appropriate professionals:

- **Pest control companies** - For insect infestations
- **Wildlife removal services** - For animals in or around home
- **County extension service** - For identification and advice
- **Animal control** - For aggressive or injured wildlife

Related Topics

- Ventilation (p. 83) - Keeping vents screened
- Landscaping (p. 59) - Yard maintenance
- Roof (p. 76) - Preventing roof entry points

Warranty Coverage: Pest and wildlife issues are excluded from warranty. See Pests and Wildlife Standards for details.

Plumbing

Your home's plumbing system delivers clean water and removes waste efficiently. Understanding how it works and maintaining it properly prevents costly repairs and water damage.

> **Gas Smell?**
>
> If you smell gas, **leave the home immediately** and call the gas company. Do not flip switches or create sparks.

Know Your Shut-Offs

Knowing where to turn off water quickly can prevent major damage.

Location	Type	When to Use
Mechanical room (near meter)	Main water shut-off	Emergencies, extended absences
Behind/below toilets	Individual fixture	Toilet repairs
Under sinks	Hot and cold valves	Faucet repairs
Near meter	Main gas shut-off	Gas emergencies (requires tool)
Near each appliance	Individual gas shut-off	Appliance service

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Clean faucet aerators	Every 3 to 4 months	5 minutes each
Test sump pump (if applicable)	Seasonally	10 minutes
Check for leaks under sinks	Monthly	2 minutes
Disconnect outdoor hoses	Before first freeze	5 minutes
Run unused fixtures	Monthly	1 minute each

Aerator Cleaning

Clogged aerators cause reduced water flow and dripping. To clean:

1. Unscrew aerator from faucet tip
2. Rinse screen and remove mineral deposits

3. Reinstall

Preventing Clogs

Toilets

Avoid flushing:

- Excessive toilet paper
- Diapers, sanitary supplies
- Q-tips, dental floss
- "Flushable" wipes (they're not really flushable)
- Paper towels

Garbage Disposal

- Always run **cold water** when using (helps solidify grease for grinding)
- Never pour grease down (it solidifies in pipes)
- Run water for 15 seconds after grinding stops
- Avoid fibrous foods (celery, corn husks)
- Don't overload - process small amounts at a time

Drains

- Use strainers to catch hair
- Don't pour grease or oil down drains
- Periodically clean pop-up stoppers
- Run hot water after dishes to help clear residue

Exterior Faucets (Critical!)

Your exterior faucets (sill cocks) are freeze-proof, **BUT only if hoses are disconnected**.

> **Winter Preparation**
>
> **You MUST remove hoses before freezing weather**
>
> If a hose stays attached:
>
> - Water in hose freezes and expands
> - Expansion travels back into pipe
> - Pipe breaks (often inside wall)
> - Damage not discovered until spring

Running Toilet Fix

Check these common causes:

1. **Float too high** - Adjust so valve shuts off completely
2. **Float rubbing** - Should move freely, not touch tank sides
3. **Chain too tight** - Prevents rubber stopper from sealing
4. **Worn flapper** - Replace if deteriorated

Dripping Faucet Repair

1. Shut off water at valve under sink
2. Remove faucet stem
3. Change the insert or cartridge
4. Reinstall stem
5. Use same type/size replacement parts

Sump Pump Care

If applicable to your home - Not all homes have sump pumps.

How It Works

1. Perimeter drain runs around foundation
2. Collects water and channels it to sump pit

3. When water reaches a certain level, pump activates
4. Pump removes water via discharge line

Testing Your Sump Pump

Test periodically, especially before rainy season:

1. Pour 5 gallons of water into the sump pit
2. Pump should turn on automatically
3. Water should be pumped out
4. Pump should shut off when water level drops

Sump Pump Maintenance

- **Keep discharge clear** - Remove debris, don't plant near discharge line
- **Check during storms** - Pump may run frequently (normal)
- **Consider backup** - Battery backup protects during power outages
- **Know your limits** - Pump cannot operate without power

Troubleshooting

No Water Anywhere

1. Check main shut-off at meter - must be OPEN
2. Check individual shut-offs - must be OPEN
3. Contact water department for area outages

One Fixture Leaking

1. Check caulking and grout around fixture
2. Confirm shower door/tub enclosure closed properly
3. Turn off water supply to that fixture
4. Use other facilities and report during business hours

Toilet Backup (One Toilet)

1. Shut off water supply (valve behind toilet)
2. Use plunger to clear blockage
3. If needed, use a drain snake
4. Within 30 days: contact Classic Homes. After 30 days: contact rooter service

Sewer Backup (Entire Home)

1. Within 30 days: contact Classic Homes
2. After 30 days: contact rooter service
3. Move belongings to prevent damage
4. Contact homeowner insurance if items are soiled

Sump Pump Not Working

1. Confirm it's plugged in
2. Check circuit breaker - must be ON
3. Test operation with 5 gallons of water
4. If it doesn't activate, contact service professional

What to Avoid

> **Warning**
>
> - **Don't use chemical drain cleaners regularly** - Can damage pipes over time
> - **Don't ignore small leaks** - They become big problems
> - **Don't pour grease down drains** - Causes clogs deep in pipes
> - **Don't use tank cleaning tablets** - Products like Tidy Bowl damage seals and gaskets
> - **Don't leave pressurized hoses attached** - Even in summer, can damage faucets

Extended Absence Preparation

When away for extended periods:

1. Shut off main water supply
2. Open faucets to relieve pressure
3. Consider draining water heater (see manufacturer instructions)
4. Keep heat at minimum 62°F in winter
5. Have someone check periodically

Cleaning Fixtures

Fixture Type	Cleaning Method	Avoid
All fixtures	Non-abrasive cleaners	Scouring pads, steel wool
Stainless steel sinks	Soap and water, dry to prevent spots	Bleach, leaving produce on surface
Fiberglass (tubs, shower pans)	Non-abrasive cleanser, sponge	Steel wool, scrapers
Chrome/brass fixtures	Soft cloth, mild soap	Abrasive cleaners

Related Topics

- Water Heaters (p. 86)
- Fixtures (p. 38)
- Caulking (p. 14)
- Grading and Drainage (p. 49)

Warranty Coverage: See Plumbing System Standards and Sump Pump Standards for coverage periods and exclusions.

Roof

Your roof protects your home from the elements. Proper care extends its life and prevents costly water damage. Most roof maintenance is observational - knowing what to look for and when to call professionals.

> **Warning**
>
> Roof repairs can only be made when the roof is dry. Report leaks promptly to get on the schedule.

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Visual inspection from ground	After major storms	10 minutes
Check gutters for debris	Seasonally (especially fall)	30 minutes
Verify downspouts attached and directing water away	Seasonally	10 minutes
Check attic for signs of leaks	Annually	15 minutes

What to Look For (From Ground)

During your visual inspections, look for:

- Missing or damaged shingles
- Debris on roof
- Damaged or loose flashing
- Gutter damage or separation
- Downspout connections

Shingle Care

Protect Your Shingles

Do not:

- Walk on the roof unless absolutely necessary
- Apply treatments or sealers (may void manufacturer warranty)

- Allow heavy foot traffic
- Mount equipment without professional guidance

Why this matters:

- Walking can damage shingles
- Damage from foot traffic is not covered under warranty
- Less activity = fewer problems

Gutter Maintenance

Regular Gutter Care

Regularly:

- Clear debris from gutters (especially in fall)
- Check that downspouts are attached and directing water away
- Verify splash blocks are in place

After storms:

- Check for damage or separation
- Clear any accumulated debris
- Ensure water flows freely

Ice Dam Prevention

What Is an Ice Dam?

An ice dam is ice build-up at the roof edge (eaves) during extended cold and snow periods. It can cause water to back up under shingles and into your home.

Prevention

Action	Why It Helps
Keep gutters clear	Allows meltwater to drain
Ensure adequate attic ventilation	Keeps roof surface cold
Maintain proper insulation	Prevents heat loss through roof

If an Ice Dam Forms

- Do not attempt to remove with sharp tools (damages shingles)
- Professional removal may be needed
- Water entry from ice dams is not covered under warranty

Understanding Roof Vents

Your roof has vents required by building code for proper attic ventilation:

- **Soffit vents** - Underside of roof overhangs
- **Gable end vents** - In gable walls
- **Ridge vents** - Along roof peak

> **Note**
>
> During severe weather, rain and snow may enter through these vents. This is normal and expected - not a defect. These vents are essential for preventing moisture buildup and extending roof life.

Troubleshooting

Water Stain on Ceiling?

Before assuming roof leak, check:

1. **Plumbing** - Leak from above (bathroom, HVAC condensate)
2. **Windows** - Open window on higher floor
3. **Ice dam** - Ice buildup at roof edge
4. **Gutters** - Clogged or overflowing

5. **Vents** - Blowing rain/snow through roof vents
6. **Caulking** - Gap in exterior caulking

Confirmed Roof Leak

1. Place a container under dripping water
2. Move personal belongings to prevent damage
3. Document with photos
4. Contact your homeowner insurance if damage occurs
5. Report to Classic Homes immediately (during warranty period)

After Severe Weather

1. **Visual inspection from ground** - Don't climb on roof
2. **Document damage** - Take photos if safe
3. **Contact insurance** - Severe weather damage is an insurance matter
4. **Don't attempt repairs** - Let professionals assess

What to Avoid

> **Warning**
>
> - **Don't walk on roof** - Damages shingles, safety risk
> - **Don't apply roof coatings/sealers** - May void manufacturer warranty
> - **Don't cover attic vents** - Essential for roof health even if some weather enters
> - **Don't use sharp tools on ice dams** - Damages shingles
> - **Don't ignore small issues** - Small leaks become big problems

Seasonal Care

Before Winter

- Clear gutters of leaves and debris
- Verify downspouts are secure
- Check attic insulation levels
- Ensure attic ventilation is unobstructed

After Winter

- Inspect for ice dam damage
- Check for missing or damaged shingles
- Clear any remaining debris
- Check gutters for winter damage

After Major Storms

- Visual inspection from ground
- Document any visible damage
- Contact insurance if damage found
- Don't delay - some insurance policies have reporting deadlines

Related Topics

- Gutters and Downspouts (p. 51)
- Ventilation (p. 83)
- Insulation (p. 57)

Warranty Coverage: See Roof Standards for coverage periods and exclusions. Weather-related damage is excluded and should be reported to your homeowner insurance.

Shower Doors and Tub Enclosures

Shower doors and tub enclosures provide functional separation in your bathroom while adding to its appearance. With minimal care, they'll operate smoothly and look great for years.

How It Works

Shower doors typically operate on a track system with rollers. The door slides or swings to create a water-tight seal when properly positioned. Key components include:

- **Track** - Guides door movement
- **Rollers** - Allow smooth sliding
- **Seals/sweeps** - Prevent water escape
- **Hardware** - Handles, hinges, clips

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Squeegee after use	Daily	30 seconds
Clean tracks	Monthly	10 minutes
Inspect caulking	Monthly	2 minutes
Deep clean glass	Weekly	15 minutes

Daily Care

Using a squeegee to remove water after each bath or shower keeps mineral residue and soap film to a minimum. This simple habit:

- Prevents hard water buildup
- Reduces cleaning effort
- Keeps glass clear and sparkling

A coating of wax can also help prevent buildup of minerals and soap.

Cleaning

Glass Cleaning

- Use products recommended by manufacturer
- Avoid abrasive cleaners that could scratch glass
- For hard water spots, use white vinegar solution
- Wipe dry to prevent new water spots

Track Cleaning

Soap buildup in tracks causes doors to stick. To clean:

1. Remove loose debris with old toothbrush
2. Spray with bathroom cleaner or vinegar solution
3. Let sit 5 to 10 minutes
4. Scrub with brush
5. Rinse thoroughly
6. Dry tracks

Hardware Care

- Clean handles and fixtures with mild soap
- Avoid harsh chemicals on finishes
- Dry after cleaning to prevent water spots
- Check screws periodically for tightness

Caulking Maintenance

Check caulking regularly and re-caulk as needed. Signs you need to re-caulk:

- Visible gaps or cracks
- Caulk pulling away from surfaces
- Discoloration or mold in caulk
- Water escaping where caulk should seal

See Caulking (p. 14) for detailed re-caulking instructions.

Troubleshooting

Door Sticks or Hard to Move

1. **Clean the track** - Soap buildup is the most common cause
2. **Check rollers** - Ensure they're seated properly in track
3. **Lubricate** - Use silicone spray on track (not petroleum-based)
4. **Check for debris** - Remove anything blocking track

Door Leaks Water

1. **Position correctly** - Door should be inside tub/shower, not outside
2. **Check seal** - Look for worn or damaged sweeps
3. **Verify closure** - Door may not be fully seated on track
4. **Inspect caulking** - Gaps allow water escape

Door Misaligned

1. **Check rollers** - May have come out of track
2. **Inspect hardware** - Screws may need tightening
3. **Natural movement** - Homes settle, affecting alignment
4. **Request adjustment** - One courtesy adjustment in first year

Seals Look Worn

Worn seals are a maintenance item:

1. Note seal type and size
2. Purchase replacement at hardware store
3. Remove old seal
4. Install new seal per instructions
5. Or contact glass company for service

What to Avoid

> **Warning**
>
> - **Don't hang items on door** - Weight pulls door out of alignment and causes leaks
> - **Don't slam door** - Stresses hardware and can crack glass
> - **Don't use abrasive cleaners** - Scratches glass permanently
> - **Don't neglect caulking** - Water damage can result
> - **Don't force stuck doors** - Identify and fix the cause

Understanding Natural Movement

Due to the natural movement of your home (settling, expansion/contraction), shower doors may require periodic adjustments. This is normal.

First year: Classic Homes will adjust shower doors one time as a courtesy.

After first year: Adjustments become homeowner maintenance responsibility. Most adjustments involve:

- Repositioning rollers
- Tightening hardware
- Realigning tracks

Proper Use Tips

Do	Don't
Close door gently	Slam or force door
Position door inside tub when showering	Leave door open while water running
Dry door and tracks after use	Hang towels on door corners
Clean regularly	Let soap buildup accumulate

Related Topics

- Caulking (p. 14)
- Plumbing (p. 73)
- Ceramic Tile (p. 16)
- Fixtures (p. 38)

Warranty Coverage: See Shower Doors Standards for coverage periods and exclusions.

Siding and Stucco

Your home's exterior siding and stucco protect against weather while providing curb appeal. Different materials require different care, but all benefit from regular attention to caulking and finish maintenance.

Understanding Your Materials

Expansion and Contraction

All siding materials expand and contract with temperature and humidity changes. You may notice:

- Slight waves visible under certain light conditions
- More visible shrinkage and separations in dry conditions
- Gaps that appear and disappear seasonally

These behaviors are normal characteristics of exterior materials and cannot be entirely eliminated.

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Visual inspection	Seasonally	15 minutes
Check caulking at joints	Annually	30 minutes
Clean siding	Annually	2 to 4 hours
Check for damage after storms	As needed	15 minutes
Repaint/restain (wood/cement)	Every 3 to 7 years	Varies

Wood and Wood Product Siding

Care Requirements

Wood or wood-product siding requires routine refinishing. The timing varies with climatic conditions.

Maintenance tips:

- Maintain caulking to minimize moisture entry
- Some paint colors require more maintenance than others
- Sun-facing sides may show wear sooner
- Cedar siding is more prone to cracking and requires more maintenance

Signs refinishing is needed:

- Paint peeling or flaking
- Wood showing through finish
- Discoloration or fading
- Cracking or checking

Cement-Based Products

Care Requirements

Cement-based siding (fiber cement, HardiePlank, etc.) is more durable than wood but still needs attention:

- Periodic repainting (typically every 7 to 10 years)
- Caulking maintenance at joints and transitions
- Prompt repair of any damaged sections

Advantages:

- More resistant to rot and insects

- Holds paint longer than wood
- Dimensionally stable

Stucco

Care Requirements

Stucco is a cementitious product that does not require regular maintenance. However:

To prevent discoloration:

- Adjust splash blocks so water doesn't splash on stucco
- Direct sprinklers away from stucco walls
- Clean gutters to prevent overflow onto walls

Painted stucco (pop outs and bands):

- Will require touch-up and repainting as needed
- Color match may not be exact

Understanding stucco cracks:

- Small cracks are normal (stucco is rigid)
- Cracks under 1/8" are cosmetic
- Large cracks may indicate structural issues

Caulking Maintenance

Caulking at joints and transitions is critical for preventing water intrusion. Check and re-caulk as needed:

Where to Check

- Where siding meets trim
- Around windows and doors
- At corner joints
- Where different materials meet
- At penetrations (vents, fixtures)

When to Re-caulk

- Visible gaps or cracks in existing caulk
- Caulk pulling away from surfaces
- Dried, brittle, or crumbling caulk
- Water staining near joints

See Caulking (p. 14) for detailed instructions.

Troubleshooting

Joint Gaps Appearing

1. **Measure the gap** - Coverage applies only if >3/8" during first year
2. **Note the season** - Gaps may close in humid weather
3. **Check caulk** - Re-caulk if caulk has failed (your responsibility)
4. **Document** - Photo with measurement for service request if warranted

Stucco Cracks

1. **Measure width** - Coverage applies only if >1/8" during first year
2. **Monitor** - Some cracks are seasonal
3. **Note location** - Diagonal cracks from window corners may indicate settling
4. **Repairs** - Will show color variation from original (normal)

Paint Peeling

1. **Check for moisture** - May indicate water intrusion
2. **Assess cause** - Normal wear vs. moisture problem
3. **Address moisture first** - Fix any water issues before repainting
4. **Repaint** - Proper prep is essential for adhesion

Sprinkler Damage

If sprinklers have stained stucco:

1. **Redirect sprinklers** - Prevent further damage
2. **Clean stucco** - Mild detergent, soft brush
3. **Accept limitations** - Some staining may be permanent

What to Avoid

> **Warning**
>
> - **Don't ignore caulk failures** - Water intrusion causes serious damage
> - **Don't let sprinklers hit stucco** - Causes staining and damage
> - **Don't place items on stucco wall caps** - Traps moisture, causes damage
> - **Don't delay repainting wood siding** - Exposed wood deteriorates quickly
> - **Don't pressure wash at high settings** - Can damage siding and force water behind it

Protecting Wall Caps

The tops of stucco deck walls and posts are finished with stucco. To prevent damage:

- Do not set plants or decorative items on wall caps
- Do not place heavy objects that trap moisture
- Clear debris promptly
- Check for cracks and seal as needed

Cleaning Guidelines

Material	Cleaning Method	Cautions
Wood siding	Mild soap, soft brush	Don't soak; avoid high pressure
Cement siding	Garden hose, soft brush	Low pressure only
Stucco	Gentle spray, mild detergent	Avoid aggressive scrubbing
All materials	Annual cleaning	Test cleaners in hidden area first

Related Topics

- Caulking (p. 14)
- Paint and Stain (p. 69)
- Wood Trim (p. 92)
- Grading and Drainage (p. 49)

Warranty Coverage: See Siding and Stucco Standards for coverage periods and exclusions.

Ventilation

Modern homes are built tighter than ever, saving energy but requiring attention to ventilation. Proper ventilation prevents condensation, removes cooking odors, reduces indoor pollutants, and helps maintain healthy indoor air quality.

How It Works

Your home has several ventilation systems working together:

System	Purpose	Your Role
Exhaust fans (bath/kitchen)	Remove moisture and odors	Use during and after cooking/bathing
Mechanical ventilation	Fresh air circulation	Set to run minimum 15 min/hour
Attic vents	Prevent moisture buildup, extend roof life	Never block or cover
Dryer vent	Remove moisture from laundry	Keep clean and connected

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Run exhaust fans during/after use	Daily	N/A
Clean exhaust fan covers	Quarterly	10 minutes
Check dryer vent connection	Quarterly	5 minutes
Clean dryer vent duct	Annually	30 minutes or professional
Verify mechanical ventilation running	Monthly	2 minutes

Daily Habits for Good Ventilation

Simple daily habits keep your home properly ventilated:

- **Run hood fan when cooking** - Removes moisture and odors
- **Run bath fans during and after bathroom use** - Removes moisture (run 15 to 20 minutes after showering)
- **Open windows when weather permits** - Fresh air circulation
- **Never block fresh air supply to furnace** - Safety critical
- **Keep dryer vent clean and connected** - Prevents moisture buildup and fire hazard

Mechanical Ventilation System

Your home's mechanical ventilation system should be:

- Set to operate a **minimum of 15 minutes per hour**
- Used to balance temperature variations throughout the home
- Providing fresh air from outside to all registers

Proper ventilation prevents excessive moisture from forming on windows.

Exhaust Fan Care

Cleaning Exhaust Fans

1. Turn off power to fan
2. Remove cover (usually clips or screws)
3. Wash cover in warm soapy water
4. Vacuum fan blades carefully
5. Wipe housing with damp cloth
6. Allow to dry completely
7. Reinstall cover

Clean fans run more efficiently and quietly.

Attic Ventilation

Your attic is ventilated through:

- **Soffit vents** - Underside of roof overhangs
- **Gable end vents** - In gable walls
- **Ridge vents** - Along roof peak

> **Important**
>
> **Do not cover or block attic vents.** During driving rain or snow, some moisture may enter through these vents. This is normal. Proper attic ventilation is essential for:
>
> - Preventing ice dams
> - Removing moisture
> - Extending roof life
> - Preventing mold growth

Why Ventilation Matters

Indoor Air Quality

Without proper ventilation, these can accumulate:

- Cooking odors and grease particles
- Bathroom moisture
- Indoor pollutants from cleaning products, furniture, etc.
- Radon (a natural radioactive gas)
- Carbon monoxide from combustion appliances

Moisture Control

Excess indoor moisture leads to:

- Condensation on windows
- Mold and mildew growth
- Damage to building materials
- Poor indoor air quality
- Musty odors

Troubleshooting

Condensation on Windows

1. **Check humidity levels** - Should be 30-50%
2. **Run exhaust fans** - During and after moisture-producing activities
3. **Verify mechanical ventilation** - Should run 15 min/hour minimum
4. **Allow air circulation** - Don't block registers, keep window coverings slightly open
5. **See Condensation** (p. 20) - For detailed guidance

Exhaust Fan Not Working

1. **Check power** - Flip switch, check breaker
2. **Listen for motor** - Running but not moving air may indicate blockage
3. **Check exterior vent** - May be blocked by debris or bird nest
4. **Clean fan** - Dust buildup can slow or stop fan

Musty or Stale Odors

1. **Increase ventilation** - Run fans more frequently
2. **Open windows** - When weather permits
3. **Check for moisture problems** - Leaks, high humidity
4. **Clean exhaust fans** - Dirty fans don't work well
5. **Check dryer vent** - May be disconnected or blocked

Bath Fan Dripping Water

During extreme cold, condensation can form inside bath exhaust fan venting and drip into the bathroom.

This is normal during very cold weather because of temperature differential between warm moist air and cold vent pipe.

To minimize:

- Run fan during and for several minutes after bathing
- Ensure vent damper operates properly
- Keep bathroom door open slightly during use

What to Avoid

> **Warning**
>
> - **Don't block attic vents** - Even if rain/snow occasionally enters
> - **Don't block fresh air supply to furnace** - Safety hazard
> - **Don't skip exhaust fan use** - Moisture damage is expensive
> - **Don't ignore musty odors** - Often indicates moisture problems
> - **Don't disconnect dryer vent** - Fire hazard and moisture damage

Ventilation and Energy Efficiency

Proper ventilation doesn't mean wasting energy:

Strategy	Benefit
Use exhaust fans only when needed	Reduces heat/cool loss
Set mechanical ventilation appropriately	Balanced fresh air without excess
Seal unintended air leaks	Control where air enters/exits
Use range hood on low when possible	Still effective, less air loss

Related Topics

- Air Conditioning (p. 5)
- Heating Systems (p. 53)
- Condensation (p. 20)
- Energy Conservation (p. 32)

Warranty Coverage: See Ventilation Standards for coverage details. Exhaust fan components are covered under Electrical System.

Water Heaters

Your water heater provides hot water for bathing, cleaning, and cooking. Whether you have an electric or gas unit, regular maintenance extends its life and keeps it running efficiently.

> **Gas Smell?**
>
> If you smell gas, **leave the home immediately** and call the gas company. Do not flip switches or create sparks.

Identify Your Water Heater Type

Type	Characteristics	Key Maintenance
Electric	No pilot light, breaker controls power	Check breaker, annual tank drain
Gas	Pilot light (some models), gas line connection	Check pilot, keep area dust-free

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Applies To
Drain tank to remove sediment	Annually	Both
Test pressure relief valve	Annually	Both
Check temperature setting	As needed	Both
Vacuum around unit	Quarterly	Gas (dust affects combustion)
Check pilot light	As needed	Gas (if applicable)
Clean heating elements	Per manufacturer	Electric

Draining the Tank (Annual)

Draining removes sediment buildup from the bottom of the tank.

Benefits:

- Prolongs tank life
- Improves efficiency
- Saves energy
- Reduces noise from sediment

Process: Follow manufacturer's timetable and instructions carefully.

Also drain if: Shutting down during freezing temperatures or extended absence.

Testing Pressure Relief Valve (Annual)

The pressure relief valve is a safety device. Test at least once per year.

> **Warning**
>
> Stay clear of the discharge line when testing - hot water will release.

See manufacturer's literature for detailed instructions.

Element Cleaning (Electric)

Heating elements require periodic cleaning. Frequency depends on your water quality (mineral content).

Refer to manufacturer's literature for step-by-step instructions, or contact an authorized service company.

Keeping Area Clean (Gas)

- **Vacuum around water heater** regularly
- Dust can interfere with proper flame combustion
- Never store items on or around the heater
- Don't use the top as a storage shelf
- Ensure proper ventilation around unit

Temperature Settings

Electric Water Heaters

Setting	Approximate Temperature
Hot	120°F
A	130°F
B	140°F
C	150°F
Very Hot	160°F

Gas Water Heaters

The recommended setting for normal use is **"Normal"** (typically around 120°F).

Recommendations

- **120°F** is typically sufficient for most households
- Check dishwasher requirements (some need 140°F)
- Higher settings waste energy
- Higher settings increase scalding risk
- Hot water takes longer to reach distant fixtures

Troubleshooting

No Hot Water (Electric)

1. **Check breaker** - Water heater breaker on main panel must be ON
    - If tripped: turn fully OFF first, then back ON
2. **Check temperature setting** - Not on "vacation mode" or too low
3. **Check water supply valve** - Must be OPEN
4. **Wait** - Recovery time after heavy use is normal

Refer to manufacturer's literature for additional troubleshooting.

No Hot Water (Gas)

1. **Check pilot light** - If your unit has a standing pilot, confirm it's lit
   - Relighting instructions are on the side of the tank
2. **Check temperature setting** - Not on "vacation" or too low
3. **Check water supply valve** - Must be OPEN
4. **Check gas supply** - Valve should be open

> **Pilot Light**
>
> Many newer gas water heaters have electronic ignition rather than a standing pilot light. Check your unit's documentation.

Not Enough Hot Water

1. **Check temperature setting** - May be too low
2. **Consider usage** - Multiple showers, laundry, dishwasher running simultaneously
3. **Check for leaks** - Hot water leaks waste capacity
4. **Sediment buildup** - May need tank draining
5. **Recovery time** - Tank needs time to reheat after heavy use

Strange Noises

- **Popping/rumbling** - Often sediment buildup; drain tank
- **Sizzling (gas)** - Condensation on burner (normal for new units)
- **Whining (electric)** - May indicate element issue

Water Too Hot

1. **Check setting** - Lower temperature
2. **Test at faucet** - Use thermometer to verify actual temperature
3. **Faulty thermostat** - May need professional service if setting doesn't match output

Safety Guidelines

Safety Item	Details
Clearance	Keep area clear of stored items
Storage	Never use top as a shelf
Combustibles	Keep away from gas units
CO detectors	Have working detectors near gas units
Know shut-offs	Both water and gas (for gas units)
Ventilation	Ensure adequate airflow around gas units

Extended Absence

When leaving for extended periods:

If Keeping Tank Full

- Set to "vacation" mode or lowest setting
- Keep pilot on (gas) to prevent issues

If Draining Tank

- Follow manufacturer's draining instructions
- Turn off power (breaker for electric, gas valve for gas)
- Open hot water faucets to relieve pressure
- Recommended if freezing temperatures possible

What to Avoid

> **Warning**
>
> - **Don't set temperature too high** - Scalding risk and wasted energy
> - **Don't skip annual maintenance** - Shortens equipment life significantly
> - **Don't ignore strange noises** - Often indicates needed maintenance
> - **Don't store items around unit** - Safety hazard, especially gas units
> - **Don't block ventilation** - Gas units need airflow for safe operation
> - **Don't ignore leaks** - Small leaks become big problems

New Water Heater Notes

Gas Units - Condensation

New gas water heaters may have condensation inside that drips onto the burner flame.

- This causes no harm
- Usually disappears within a short time
- Part of the normal break-in period

Warranty Information

Water heaters are classified as an appliance/consumer product.

- **Classic Homes coverage:** First year only (installation defects)
- **Extended coverage:** Refer to manufacturer's warranty
- **Keep documentation:** Registration and purchase records

> **Tip**
>
> Register your water heater with the manufacturer to ensure warranty coverage after the first year.

Related Topics

- Plumbing (p. 73)
- Energy Conservation (p. 32)
- Electrical Systems (p. 30)

Warranty Coverage: See Water Heaters Standards for coverage periods and exclusions.

Windows, Screens, and Sliding Glass Doors

Your windows provide natural light, ventilation, and views while protecting against weather. Proper care keeps them operating smoothly and looking great.

> **Glass Replacement**
>
> Contact a glass company for reglazing of any windows that break. Glass is difficult to install without special tools.

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Clean glass	As needed	Varies
Clean tracks	Quarterly	15 minutes
Check weep holes	Quarterly	5 minutes
Inspect weatherstripping	Annually	15 minutes
Lubricate tracks/hardware	Annually	15 minutes

Track Cleaning

Dirt in tracks causes sticking and can damage frames. To clean:

1. Vacuum loose debris from tracks

2. Wipe with damp cloth
3. Clean corners with old toothbrush
4. Dry thoroughly
5. Apply silicone lubricant (avoid petroleum-based products)

Weep Hole Maintenance

In heavy rains, water may collect in the bottom channel of window frames. Weep holes allow excess water to escape to the outside.

Keep weep holes clear:

- Check quarterly for dirt and debris
- Clean gently with small brush or pipe cleaner
- Ensure water can drain freely

Window Cleaning

Cleaning Tips

- Use approved cleaning products
- Never use a razor, knife, or blade on dry glass (causes scratches)
- Clean frames with mild soap and water
- Dry thoroughly to prevent water spots
- Clean on cloudy days to prevent streaking

Screen Care

Screen Maintenance

Many homeowners remove and store screens for winter to allow more light into the home.

Tips:

- Label each screen as you remove it for easy reinstallation
- Handle with care - screens perforate easily and frames bend
- Clean with gentle spray of water before reinstalling
- Store flat or hanging, not leaning (prevents warping)

Sliding Glass Doors

Care and Maintenance

Sliding glass doors use tempered glass that's more difficult to break than ordinary glass. If broken, it breaks into small circular pieces rather than dangerous splinters.

Maintenance:

- Keep tracks clean for smooth operation
- Clean tracks prevent frame damage
- Silicone lubricants work well
- Familiarize yourself with lock/security hardware

Troubleshooting

Window Sticks or Hard to Open

1. **Clean track** - Dirt buildup is the most common cause
2. **Lubricate** - Apply silicone lubricant (avoid petroleum-based)
3. **Check for obstructions** - Remove anything blocking track
4. **Verify it's unlocked** - Latches must be released

Note: Most sliding windows are designed for a 10-pound pull. If more force is needed, lubrication usually helps.

Window Won't Lock

1. **Fully close window** - Lock won't engage unless window is completely closed
2. **Clean track** - Debris may prevent full closure
3. **Check alignment** - Window may have shifted
4. **Inspect hardware** - Lock mechanism may be damaged

Drafty Window

1. **Verify window is latched** - Latching pulls window tight to create seal
2. **Check weatherstripping** - May be worn or damaged
3. **Inspect for gaps** - Around frame or in caulking
4. **Note conditions** - Some air infiltration is normal, especially before landscaping is established

Water in Window Track

1. **Check weep holes** - Must be clear to drain water
2. **Clean track** - Debris can block drainage
3. **This is normal** - Weep holes are designed to drain accumulated water

Condensation Issues

Interior surface condensation (on inside of window):

- Result of high humidity inside and low temperature outside
- Not a defect - controlled by indoor humidity
- To minimize: run exhaust fans, keep coverings slightly open, reduce humidity sources

Condensation between panes:

- Indicates broken seal
- Covered during first year by Classic Homes
- After first year, refer to manufacturer's warranty

See Condensation (p. 20) for detailed guidance.

Window Sill Care

Window sills may be made of drywall, wood, wood product, man-made products, or marble.

To protect:

- Keep wood sills dry - moisture causes damage
- Use plastic trays under plants
- Wipe up water promptly
- Don't let condensation pool on sills

What to Avoid

> **Warning**
>
> - **Don't add window tinting** - Voids all warranties; can cause condensation or heat damage between panes
> - **Don't use razor blades on dry glass** - Causes scratches
> - **Don't force stuck windows** - Identify and fix cause
> - **Don't use petroleum-based lubricants** - Can damage weatherstripping
> - **Don't neglect weep holes** - Blocked holes cause water damage
> - **Don't lean on or hang items from windows** - Can damage frames and hardware

Understanding Normal Behavior

Some Air Infiltration

Some air and dust will infiltrate around windows, especially before landscaping is installed in the area. This is normal and not a defect.

Expected Operation Force

Most sliding windows are designed for approximately 10 pounds of pull force. If yours requires more, lubrication usually resolves the issue.

Condensation

Interior condensation is controlled by your indoor humidity level and is not a warranty item. Proper ventilation minimizes condensation.

Seasonal Care

Before Winter

- Clean tracks and weep holes
- Check weatherstripping condition
- Consider removing and storing screens
- Verify all windows close and lock securely

Before Summer

- Reinstall screens
- Clean windows inside and out
- Lubricate tracks and hardware
- Check that weep holes are clear

Related Topics

- Doors and Locks (p. 27)
- Condensation (p. 20)
- Energy Conservation (p. 32)

Warranty Coverage: See Windows Standards for coverage periods and exclusions.

Wood Trim

Wood trim adds character and finish to your home, both inside and out. Understanding how wood behaves and providing simple maintenance keeps trim looking great for years.

Understanding Wood Behavior

Wood is a natural material that responds to its environment. This is normal and expected.

Interior Trim Shrinkage

Shrinkage occurs during the first two years or longer, depending on temperature and humidity.

Key factors:

- All lumber is more vulnerable to shrinkage during heating season
- Maintaining moderate, stable temperature helps minimize effects
- Wood shrinks less lengthwise than across the grain

What you may see:

- Separation at joints of trim pieces
- Trim pulling away from wall
- Gaps at mitered corners
- Nail pops

Exterior Trim Behavior

Exterior trim is exposed to weather and shows more movement than interior trim.

Normal occurrences:

- Cracks (especially in cedar)
- Twisting
- Shrinking
- Raised grain developing over time

These are functions of natural wood's expansion and contraction with weather and are not defects.

Routine Maintenance

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Visual inspection	Seasonally	15 minutes
Touch up interior caulk/paint	As needed	Varies

Task	Frequency	Time Required
Check exterior trim condition	Annually	30 minutes
Repaint/restain exterior	Every 3 to 5 years	Varies

Interior Trim Maintenance

Fixing Gaps and Separation

In most cases, caulk and paint are all that's needed to conceal minor evidence of shrinkage.

For gaps at joints:

1. Apply appropriate caulk (paintable caulk for painted trim)
2. Smooth with wet finger or caulking tool
3. Allow to dry completely
4. Touch up with matching paint

For trim pulling away from wall:

1. Drive in a nail close to, but not exactly in, the existing nail hole
2. Set the nail slightly below surface
3. Fill the old nail hole and new nail hole with wood putty
4. Allow to dry
5. Touch up with matching paint

When to Act

- **Heating season:** Gaps appear or worsen as humidity drops
- **Humid season:** Gaps may close naturally
- **Best time to repair:** After the second heating season when most shrinkage has occurred

Exterior Trim Maintenance

It is the homeowner's responsibility to maintain exterior trim areas.

Regular Care

Inspection

Check regularly for:

- Cracking or splitting
- Paint peeling or flaking
- Caulk failure at joints
- Signs of rot (soft spots, discoloration)
- Raised grain

Caulking

Re-caulk gaps as needed, especially:

- Where trim meets siding
- At corner joints
- Around windows and doors
- At any visible gaps

Use exterior-grade, paintable caulk.

Painting/Staining

- Repaint or re-stain as needed to protect wood
- Sun-facing sides need more frequent attention
- Address rot promptly before it spreads
- Proper prep (scraping, sanding, priming) is essential

Wood Rot

Since exterior wood is exposed to the elements, even when protected, it will eventually rot. This includes decking, railings, and trim.

To slow rot:

- Keep paint/stain in good condition
- Maintain caulking
- Address water intrusion sources
- Allow wood to dry (don't trap moisture)

If rot is found:

- Remove and replace rotted section
- Or use wood hardener and filler for minor damage
- Address cause of moisture

Troubleshooting

Gaps at Mitered Corners

1. **Wait** - Gaps may close seasonally
2. **Caulk** - Fill with paintable caulk
3. **Touch up** - Paint to match
4. **Accept** - Some movement is permanent and normal

Nail Pops

1. **Drive nail back** - Or set slightly below surface
2. **Add new nail** - Nearby if needed for holding power
3. **Fill** - Wood putty over nail heads
4. **Paint** - Touch up to match

Trim Pulling Away from Wall

1. **Re-nail** - Drive nail near (not in) existing hole
2. **Fill holes** - Both old and new
3. **Paint** - Touch up to match

Raised Grain (Exterior)

Raised grain is normal on exterior wood exposed to weather.

Options:

- Sand smooth before repainting
- Use grain filler
- Accept as natural weathering characteristic

Exterior Paint Peeling

1. **Check for moisture** - May indicate water intrusion
2. **Scrape loose paint** - Down to solid surface
3. **Sand smooth** - Feather edges
4. **Prime bare wood** - Essential for adhesion
5. **Repaint** - Quality exterior paint

What to Avoid

> **Warning**
>
> - **Don't ignore gaps** - Especially exterior (allows water entry)
> - **Don't skip priming** - Essential for exterior paint adhesion
> - **Don't trap moisture** - Allow wood to breathe
> - **Don't delay rot repair** - Spreads quickly
> - **Don't expect perfection** - Wood movement is natural
> - **Don't fill gaps during humid season** - They'll reappear when dry

Material Characteristics

Understanding that these are normal helps set expectations:

Characteristic	Normal?	Notes
Gaps at joints	Yes	Most noticeable in heating season
Nail pops	Yes	From shrinkage
Raised grain (exterior)	Yes	Weather effect on natural wood
Cracks in cedar	Yes	More prone than other woods
Color variation	Yes	Natural wood characteristic
Knots showing	Yes	Natural feature

Related Topics

- Paint and Stain (p. 69)
- Caulking (p. 14)
- Expansion and Contraction (p. 45)
- Siding and Stucco (p. 81)

Warranty Coverage: See Wood Trim Standards for coverage details. Construction damage must be noted on orientation form. Shrinkage and normal wood behavior are excluded.