

Home Improvement Blog Reference Guide



We've curated a list of our most informative online articles to guide you through any aspect of home improvement—from a simple repair to a large renovation.

Visit this reference guide online at bestpickreports.com/blog-guide to read the following articles.



Air Conditioning & Heating Articles

3 Things Every Homeowner Should Know About HVAC

Learn three basic but key components about your HVAC system that will help you avoid unnecessary and expensive repairs down the line.

Maintenance Tips for an Energy-Efficient HVAC System

Find out how to best maintain your HVAC system to improve its efficiency and simultaneously combat high energy bills.

What to Do When Your Home's A/C Is Not Blowing Cold Air

Solve your warm-air blues with tips from this blog. It addresses the most common reasons why your A/C is blowing warm air instead of cold air.

Heater Won't Turn On? Find Out Answers to Common Problems

Troubleshoot your heater problems with help from this blog. It walks you through the most common things that could be causing your heater to go on the fritz.

The Benefits of Having an HVAC Maintenance Program

Learn how a maintenance program can extend the life of your HVAC system and provide you with peace of mind.



Electrical Articles

Ditch the Power Strips with Whole-House Surge Protection

Protect your home by investing in a whole-house surge protector. This blog will help you choose the right device as well as explain the benefits of adding it to your home.

3 Reasons Why You Shouldn't Moonlight as an Electrician

Gain some insight on why doing your own electrical work might not be the best or safest idea. This blog details the importance of electrical codes and the danger of performing amateur electrical work.

 **Fall****INSIDE**

- Inspect and clean fireplace and chimney
- Pest-proof home in anticipation of colder weather
- Inspect and clean furnace
- Check air filters for cleaning or replacement
- Set ceiling fan blades to run clockwise
- Check insulation levels in attic and basement or crawl space
- Organize closets and garage

OUTSIDE

- Seed lawn, fertilize cool-season grass, and apply pre-emergent herbicide
- Check windows and doors for gaps; caulk or weatherstrip as needed
- Prune trees and remove dead branches
- Check roof for missing, loose, or damaged shingles
- Clean gutters and downspouts
- Wash windows
- Shut down pool and sprinkler system
- Remove leaves from and clean outside structures such as awnings, walkways, and storage sheds

 **Winter****INSIDE**

- Lubricate garage door and check door alignment
- Check bathrooms and basements for mold and moisture
- Check air filters for cleaning or replacement
- Inspect electrical system
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors
- Clean refrigerator coils
- Make sure family members know winter storm plan

OUTSIDE

- Insulate exposed pipes and spigots
- Check for cracks in driveway, home foundation, and patio
- Check for leaning trees near home
- Inspect landscaping and prepare for spring
- Inspect fence and replace loose or rotten boards as well as rusty or worn gate hardware

Seasonal Maintenance Checklist



Spring

INSIDE

- Clean out junk and debris from house and yard
- Clean carpets and upholstery
- Clean air ducts
- Check air filters for cleaning or replacement
- Set ceiling fan blades to run counterclockwise

OUTSIDE

- Scalp lawn
- Aerate lawn, fertilize cool-season grass, and apply pre-emergent herbicide
- Mow lawn at least once a week
- Plant trees
- Inspect for termites
- Check roof for leaks and damaged shingles
- Clean gutters and downspouts
- Start up sprinkler system and pool
- Clean outside structures such as awnings, walkways, and storage sheds
- Wash windows
- Clean HVAC condenser



Summer

INSIDE

- Lubricate garage door and check door alignment
- Inspect basement or crawl space for leaks, standing water, and mold
- Check plumbing for leaks, rust, and damaged pipes
- Drain and refill water heater
- Check air filters for cleaning or replacement
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors
- Test GFCI outlets
- Clean refrigerator coils

OUTSIDE

- Fertilize warm-season grass
- Water lawn—average one inch of water per week
- Mow lawn every seven to ten days
- Inspect trees for dead branches as well as pest and disease issues
- Pressure wash siding and fence
- Touch up paint
- Restain or reseal deck

Homeowner Protection Tips



Prices that seem too good to be true usually are. Cutting corners is a great way for a company to make more money while charging you less.



Be wary of a company selling door-to-door. Reputable contractors rely more on referrals than door-to-door sales.



Resist high-pressure sales. A company that tries to rush you into a decision may not want to be researched too thoroughly.



Avoid moonlighters. A moonlighter is an employee who steals a customer from his or her employer. They often offer a lower price by avoiding overhead such as insurance and licenses.



Check for licenses and insurance. Research the company to make sure that they have the required trade licenses and insurance for their line of work.



Make sure you're on the same page with the contractor. All project details should be in writing along with any verbal commitments before signing a contract.



Only compare apples to apples. Educate yourself about the quality of what you are buying, or taking the lowest price may cost you more in the end.



Avoid business on a handshake. Reliable companies use contracts to clarify terms and set mutual expectations.



Avoid paying for everything up front. You'll lose the money if the company goes out of business or fails to complete the job. If you must pay up front, use a credit card.



Never open an account in your name for a contractor. If a contractor's credit is not good enough to open an account, you should probably stay away.



Thoroughly check references. Before hiring a contractor, ask multiple references questions about quality, schedule adherence, cleanup, communication, and disagreement resolution.



Avoid cash payments. Checks and other non-cash payment forms leave a paper trail, which is very useful if you ever need to prove you actually paid a bill.



Be wary of the vocal minority. The small percentage of customers who submit online reviews tends to skew to extremes and therefore is not representative of a company's overall performance.



Never make the final payment until you are completely happy. Contractors could be less interested in making you happy after they have been paid in full.



Request lien releases. To avoid a lien on your house, make the receipt of lien releases from the contractor and all subcontractors a condition of payment.