



Home Maintenance Guide



The Architect Centre Home Maintenance Guide is designed to help you look after that most important asset - your home.

Architect Centre wishes you many years of trouble-free ownership. However, deterioration will occur quickly in homes that are not looked after, so it is imperative that you undertake a regular home maintenance program to ensure that your home remains in good condition.

As a guide, in addition to any faults noted by the Architect Centre inspector, home buyers should budget for spending around 5% of the value of the home on maintenance and repairs over the first few years.

It is important that faults needing urgent attention noted by your inspecting architect are attended to quickly. If you are in doubt about any aspect of your report, contact your architect.

MAINTENANCE OUTSIDE THE HOUSE

Your garden

It is important that fast growing trees are not planted close to the house, as equally fast root growth may cause footing failure and brickwork cracking in all soils.

Where large trees already exist, tree pruning is advisable and in severe cases, erecting root barriers. Refer to Architect Centre's Technical Information Sheet on "Cracking in Brickwork" for further details.

Clay soils can swell in wet conditions and shrink in dry weather, uncompacted soil can subside and any of these conditions may cause house walls and structure to crack. In extreme wet conditions concrete floor slabs can become damp if not properly waterproofed.

In addition, to alleviate effects of a waterlogged garden during the wet season, it may be necessary to import sandy loam to raise the garden's surface above the water table. Filling against walls should be lower than 150mm beneath floor level and should not be above the damp-proof course. Drain should surround and fall away from the house at all times to decrease sub-floor dampness. In older brick homes, wet soils along with faulty damp-proof courses are a major factor contributing to rising dampness.

MAINTAINING FENCES

Most fences between houses will be of masonry infill on strip footings. Where there is a difference of levels between neighbouring houses, ensure that your side is properly drained if you are at the higher level in order to prevent seepage at your lower level neighbour's side of the wall. Constant seepage may damage the foundations of your fence which may eventually collapse.

Chain link fences should be checked for rust and deterioration especially when in contact with the ground.

MAINTAINING THE ROOF

You should regularly check the roof, especially after high winds and storms. The best way to examine the roof is by climbing into the roofspace. Newly dislodged tiles will permit increased light to filter through, and the timber frame may show white powder or dark water stains which can be traced back up to cracked tiles.

When replacing, repositioning or mortaring defective tiles and ridges, be careful not to crack more of them



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whilst walking on the roof. A professional may need to be called in if your tiles are too brittle. Professionals should have spare tiles to replace any cracked ones. Lichen growth does not indicate deterioration, and can be removed if required. Ask for Architect Centre's Technical Information Sheet "Roofing and Guttering". Metal roofs can rust quickly once their protective coating is scratched. Pinprick rust holes will show up like stars at night, from your vantage point in the roofspace. If access to the roofspace was restricted during the Home Inspection, remedy the situation if possible, so you can perform a roof and framing check yourself.

MAINTAINING GUTTERS

Examine your gutters regularly.

Gutters can rust extremely quickly especially when leaves accumulate. Leaves will pond water in your gutters, which accelerates rusting, and the action of the leaves decaying may accelerate the rusting still further. A property with overhanging trees may need its gutters cleared of decomposing leaves every few weeks especially during the wet season to prevent rusting.. So cutting back is recommended.

Additionally, you can wedge mesh into the tops of gutters to minimise leaf build-up permitting better drainage into the downpipes.

As with roofs, you should check gutters after stormy weather, to see that none of the tiles overhanging the gutters have dislodged, creating a gap. This is a favourite entry point for birds, musang and rats.

Underneath the guttering (the eaves lining) is another popular spot for animal entry. The eaves linings should be checked regularly for deterioration, because animals can peck and chew their way in very quickly. The eaves material can of course deteriorate over time but often the decay is due to water leaking from the roof, or from overflowing or leaking gutters.

Localised rusting of gutters can be remedied by patching, puttying, or painting with bituminous products from hardware stores, but these are temporary measures.

THE HOUSE CLADDING

Severe cracks in brickwork especially along structural members can often be a sign of impending failure. Obtain professional advice before taking remedial action. Application of a good, durable and weather resisting paint is advisable for external surfaces. Exposed timberwork requires a good protective paint or stain coating to prevent deterioration such as splitting and rotting and damage caused by pests.

MAINTAINING OUTBUILDINGS

Structural maintenance will be the same as for the main house. However, wiring to outbuildings is often of a lower standard and may have been installed illegally. Often wiring is buried underground, hidden from the inspecting architect's view. Be careful when digging in the garden, or you may hit an unprotected wire.

If you are in doubt about the electrical system, have an electrician check it for you.

MAINTENANCE INSIDE THE HOUSE

MAINTAINING THE ROOF SPACE

Your roof frame and ceiling rafters can warp and deflect over time, but unless the inspector draws attention to a framing fault in the Inspection Report, there is little chance of a serious fault developing. However, if roofs are reroofed with a material heavier than the original covering, serious damage can occur unless the roof is strengthened.

It is advisable to regularly examine the roof space. By doing this you may notice unusual smells, which may indicate the intrusion of animals or water. Don't delay in removing intruding animals, because they can cause damage such as staining ceilings and chewed wiring.

If contracting the services of professionals enquire as to their membership of the relevant professional association, and what follow-up service or guarantees this body provides its members' clients.

MAINTAINING CEILINGS AND WALLS

Most plaster walls will crack in time, but provided your footings and foundations are sound, generally all that is required is to patch cracks when re-painting.

Recurring cracks may indicate a structural problem and warrant further investigation.

The walls and ceilings in old homes may eventually bulge, or sag, as the plaster gets older or deteriorates due to condensation and roof leaks. These should be replaced.

If your house is brick, check the walls regularly for rising damp, which is caused by a breakdown of the damp-proof course, compounded by damp external conditions. Ask for Architect Centre's Technical Information Sheet on "Treatment of Dampness in the Home".

MAINTAINING LIVING CONDITIONS INSIDE THE HOUSE

You should aim to maintain a reasonable circulation of air in the house, to prevent stale air, excessive humidity and condensation all of which may affect your health and cause materials to deteriorate.

Vapour-producing items such as stoves, clothes driers and showers should all be well vented to the outside of the house.

Long periods of stagnant, moist conditions in your house will encourage mould, which can be hard to eradicate completely once it appears. Chloride-based cleaners will scrub most of it off, followed by an application of fungicidal paint for future protection.

If outside vegetation is allowed to encroach on the house, it may also encourage damp, dark, moist conditions: so it should be trimmed back. Mouldy conditions are also caused by sub-floor dampness.

MAINTAINING SERVICES

Make sure services are in good order. Have gas leaks fixed immediately. Fuses which blow with increasing regularity indicate a fundamental wiring problem and should be attended to immediately. In older homes, blowing fuses may indicate a wiring system which has come to the end of its working life. They may also occur after the replacement of light fittings, or after recent renovations and extensions, because wiring which is intact when left alone, can disintegrate when touched. Also the total load on the system may increase as a result. Do not attempt any re-wiring work yourself, always contact a licensed electrician.

Cold water systems in older homes can deteriorate very rapidly, sometimes rendering the system useless within a few months.

Many old homes have galvanised iron pipes which have a limited life expectancy.

If cold water pressure drops significantly, it is worthwhile having a plumber replace the main supply pipe.



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MAINTAINING TIMBER FLOORS

Floors may squeak in time, particularly during dry conditions. Floorboards can easily be “packed” with fibrocement pieces or wedges of wood, and there is generally no structural problem - the timbers are simply warping or shrinking as they dry.

MAINTAINENCE AGAINST TERMITES AND OTHER PESTS

Periodically examine the ground floor especial under stairs and store rooms which provide a warm and moist environment for signs of termites. They build mud tunnels under concrete slabs and base walls and via timber skirtings and architraves to get into the house. Again, for both termites and borers (which are harder to find) the first line of defence is to keep long enclosed areas as dry and as well ventilated as possible. One indication of borer damage is the gritty dust residue they leave behind. A simple way to test for the presence of termites in your location is to leave pieces of timber debris in the garden and wait for signs of infestation activity. If present, your house may also be affected. Call a reputable pest control company if you suspect infestation.

Traces of fine sawdust from hardwoods often indicates the presence of lyctid borer, but this species does not

usually do any significant structural damage. You may have to replace a skirting board or architrave because of them, but little else.

GIVE YOUR HOME A CHECK-UP

Most people give their cars and themselves regular checkups, but tend to leave maintenance of their homes until a problem becomes so obvious that is simply has to be attended to. This approach is bad for the house and more expensive on the pocket.

Archictect Centre recommends this guide to you, and recommends an architect’s inspection every five years, to keep the house in tip top condition.

Our architects can also be called upon to help plan the renovations for your home.

TECHNICAL SHEETS

As a valued client, if you require any further technical sheets which are not enclosed with your original Inspection Report, we will be pleased to send them to you at no charge. For technical sheets or further information, contact your nearest Architect Centre office.

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This information sheet has been amended with permission from the original pamphlet published by Archicentre Ltd. May 2008

