

Maintain Your Home's Appliances

& Avoid the Repairman



The Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers reports that Americans spend more than \$15 billion per year on home appliances—that's more than the GDP of 54 countries according to the International Monetary Fund.










It is a certainty that your household appliances will not outlive the life span of your home. Sooner or later, they will need to be replaced. However, you can extend their longevity and prevent replacement costs with regular do-it-yourself maintenance.

Proper care and maintenance can make a difference in the life span of your home appliances. Well maintained appliances will save you

money in the long run, not only in replacement costs but also in energy costs. Appliances can account for up to 20 percent of your household energy bills, so it's well worth it to ensure they are running at maximum efficiency.

The table on the left provides life span estimates for common home appliances.

Approximate Life Spans of Home Appliances

	Air conditioner	10 yrs.
	Dishwasher	10 yrs.
	Dryer	14 yrs.
	Electric range	17 yrs.
	Garbage disposer	10 yrs.
	Gas range	19 yrs.
	Microwave	11 yrs.
	Refrigerator	14-17 yrs.
	Washer	13 yrs.

With a little maintenance and some elbow grease, you can keep your appliances running longer and more efficiently. Follow the tips below, and you'll keep that repairman off your speed dial list:

- Clean up all spills immediately to prevent grime, odors, rust, and worn-down enamel. Use either the self-cleaning feature on your oven or an oven cleaner to prevent grease from building up on the interior.
- Install a water softener and water filtration system to eliminate chemicals and minerals and prolong the life of appliances that use water.
- Clean the condenser coils on refrigerators once a year.
- Change air-conditioner filters monthly, when in use.
- Replace washer fill hoses every five years and turn off the water supply when you go on vacation.
- Clean the exhaust duct on the clothes dryer annually, and clean the lint filter before each use.
- Try making small repairs yourself. Small appliances, like can openers and garbage disposals, often require just a quick fix. When in doubt, call a professional.



In a side-by-side comparison, a modern refrigerator consumes less power than a 75-watt light bulb.





Whatever your reasons for choosing a new appliance—to replace an old one, to update your home or to improve energy efficiency—making a decision about what to buy can be daunting. With so many brands and aesthetic differences, a refrigerator isn't just a refrigerator anymore.

Here's what to consider when it comes time to shop:

Save Energy ...and Money!

Appliances marked with the ENERGY STAR® label use less energy than other products and save you money on energy bills.

A qualified ENERGY STAR TV, for example, consumes 3 watts or less when switched off, compared to a standard TV, which consumes 6 watts on average. What's more, if you pay the national average of \$1,900 per year on energy bills, you can save up to 30 percent or more than \$600 per year if you install ENERGY STAR appliances.

Another way to keep money in your pocket is to take advantage of the new Federal Energy Credit. You can receive a tax credit of up to \$500 if you buy certain high-efficiency heating and cooling units for your primary residence before the end of 2008.

For more information: <http://energystar.gov/>



Your needs. Be sure to consider who will be using the appliance, how often it will be used and what size it needs to be. If you're remodeling your kitchen, for example, it makes sense to buy appliances that will match the new look and feel of the room. If you're replacing your appliance because it's past its prime but you were happy with its performance, you might consider buying from the same manufacturer.

Your budget. Carefully determine how much you can spend on your new appliance. Compare prices in relation to convenience and service, which will vary by model. Remember that the price tends to increase as features are added. Also, establish the cost of delivery and installation—are they included in the appliance's price?

The performance factor. Ask your retail associate for specification sheets from several manufacturers. Compare available features, designs and capacities of different models and brands. Make sure authorized factory service is available in your area for the brand you select. Ask your retail associate for the appliance's user manual and read it carefully *before* buying the appliance.

Energy efficiency. It makes sense to look into buying an appliance with built-in energy saving features. Not only will you save on electricity and water bills, you'll be doing your part to protect the planet.

The warranty. A good warranty means better value. Find out if the warranty covers the entire product or only certain parts. Is labor included? How long does the warranty last? To protect consumers, information about warranty coverage must be available at point of purchase for all appliances costing \$15 or more.

Extended Warranty: A Good Idea or Not?

When buying a new home appliance, paying a few hundred dollars more to lengthen your warranty could either be a smart decision or a waste of money.

According to Consumer Reports, consumers spent more than \$1 billion per year on costly extended warranties on everything from electronics to appliances. With the exception of very expensive items, or in situations where the repair of the item would cost more than the item itself, extended warranties are unnecessary for several reasons. Most appliances are already covered by the manufacturer for several years, and they probably won't break anyway. Consumer Reports found that after three years of use, the likelihood that a major appliance, such as a refrigerator, will need repair is 8%. If the extended warranty still seems like a good option, remember that it should not cost more than 20% of the product's purchase price, and make sure you read the fine print to ensure it's worth the cost.

Source: http://blogs.consumerreports.org/shopping/2006/11/resist_the_pitc.html

