

The Home Binder Starter Kit

Twelve monthly maintenance checklists and nine record pages for everything about your house you can never find when you need it.

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How to use this kit

You do not have to fill this in all at once, and you should not try. A binder with three pages filled in is worth more than a perfect one you never started.

THE FIFTEEN-MINUTE START

- ☐ Print the whole kit single-sided and put it in a three-ring binder.
- ☐ Fill in the Emergency Shutoffs card first (page 11) and cut it out. If you only ever do one page, do this one.
- ☐ Walk to your furnace, read the filter size off the edge of the old filter, and write it on page 4.
- ☐ Open the cabinet where the paint cans live and copy the color names onto page 5.
- ☐ Photograph the model and serial plate on every big appliance. Copy the numbers onto page 6 whenever you have a spare evening.

THEN, ONCE A MONTH

Pick a day — the first Saturday, the day the mortgage comes out, whatever you'll remember — and spend twenty minutes on that month's checklist (pages 12–15). Tick the year-at-a-glance grid on page 16 as you go, so next January you can see what actually got done.

WHY BOTHER

Because the expensive failures in a house are almost never sudden. A water heater that floods a basement had been weeping for a year. A roof that leaks had a lifted shingle two storms ago. Twenty minutes a month and a written record is most of the difference between maintenance and a claim.

And when you sell, a binder full of dated service records is the single cheapest thing you can do to make a buyer trust the house.

Prefer this on your phone? HavenBinder is the same binder, digital — it builds the maintenance schedule for you, stores the photos and receipts alongside each appliance, and lets you search for a filter size while you're standing in the hardware-store aisle. It's free for one home at havenbinder.com.

Your home at a glance

The facts every contractor, insurer, and inspector asks for, in one place, so you stop hunting for them.

ADDRESS**YEAR BUILT****SQUARE FOOTAGE**

Finished / unfinished

LOT SIZE**BEDROOMS / BATHROOMS****DATE PURCHASED****PURCHASE PRICE****PARCEL / APN NUMBER**

On your property tax bill

LEGAL DESCRIPTION

From the deed

FOUNDATION TYPE

Slab, crawlspace, basement

ROOF TYPE & AGE

Material, year installed

HEATING TYPE & FUEL**COOLING TYPE****WATER SOURCE**

City, well

SEWER OR SEPTIC

Tank size, last pumped

ELECTRICAL SERVICE

Amps, panel brand

**INSURANCE CARRIER &
POLICY #****MORTGAGE SERVICER &
LOAN #****HOA NAME & CONTACT**

Sizes & specs

The hardware-store page. Fill this in once and take a photo of it with your phone — then you will never again stand in an aisle trying to remember whether the filter is 16x25 or 20x25.

ITEM	SIZE / MODEL / PART NUMBER	WHERE YOU BUY IT
Furnace / air handler filter Size (e.g. 20x25x1) + MERV		
Second filter (if any) Size + location		
Refrigerator water filter Model number		
Humidifier pad / water panel Model number		
Range hood filter Size or model		
Water softener salt Type + bags per fill		
Well / sediment filter Size + micron		
Toilet flapper & fill valve Brand + model, per bathroom		
Shower head / faucet cartridge Brand + model		
Garage door remote Brand + programming code		
Thermostat Model + Wi-Fi network		
Recessed light bulbs Type, wattage, color temp		
Exterior light bulbs Type, wattage, color temp		
Smoke / CO alarm batteries Type + how many		
Vacuum bags or filters Model		
Furnace belt / igniter Part number		
Septic tank Size + last pumped		
Paint sheen used on trim Brand + sheen		

Paint, stain & finishes log

Color names are not enough on their own — the same name is mixed differently by different brands, and stores discontinue lines. Write down the brand, the exact code from the can lid, and the sheen.

ROOM / SURFACE	BRAND & LINE	COLOR NAME	CODE	SHEEN	DATE
Living room walls					
Kitchen walls					
Kitchen cabinets					
Primary bedroom					
Bathroom walls					
Interior trim					
Interior doors					
Ceilings					
Exterior body					
Exterior trim					
Front door					
Deck / fence stain					

Tip: Take a photo of the label on every paint can lid before you throw the can out, and note roughly how much you used — a gallon per coat covers about 350 square feet.

Appliances & systems record

Model and serial numbers live on a plate — inside the fridge door, behind the dishwasher kick panel, on the side of the furnace, under the water heater's label. Photograph each one; copy the numbers here.

ITEM	BRAND	MODEL #	SERIAL #	INSTALLED	WARRANTY ENDS
Furnace / boiler					
Air conditioner					
Water heater					
Refrigerator					
Range / cooktop					
Oven					
Dishwasher					
Microwave					
Washer					
Dryer					
Garbage disposal					
Water softener					
Sump pump					
Garage door opener					
Thermostat					
Well pump					

The people who work on your house

The plumber you liked, the electrician who actually called back. Keep them here so you are not searching reviews at ten at night with water coming through the ceiling.

TRADE	NAME / COMPANY	PHONE	LAST USED	NOTES
Plumber				
Electrician				
HVAC				
Roofer				
Handyman				
Appliance repair				
Lawn / landscape				
Pest control				
Chimney sweep				
Septic / sewer				
Garage door				
Painter				
Insurance agent				
Snow removal				

After a fire or a flood, your insurer will ask you to list what you owned. Almost nobody can. Work one room at a time, and photograph as you go — a video walkthrough narrating what things are is worth as much as this list.

havenbinder.com

Documents to keep, and for how long

Tick what you have and note where it lives — the fireproof box, the filing cabinet, the folder on your computer. Half the value of this page is discovering what is missing.

DOCUMENT	KEEP FOR	WHERE IT LIVES
Closing documents and deed	Forever	
Title insurance policy	As long as you own the home	
Survey and plot plan	Forever	
Home inspection report	As long as you own the home	
Homeowners insurance policy and declarations page	Current year + claims history	
Mortgage note and payoff statements	Forever	
Property tax records	At least 7 years	
Appliance manuals and warranties	Life of the appliance	
Receipts for improvements (kitchens, roofs, additions)	Forever — they reduce capital gains when you sell	
Contractor contracts, bids, and lien waivers	At least 7 years	
Permits and inspection sign-offs	Forever	
HOA documents, bylaws, and assessments	As long as you own the home	
Utility account numbers and service records	Current	
Paint colors, flooring, and tile records	Forever — you will need them	
Radon, septic, well, and pest treatment reports	Forever	

Emergency shutoffs

Fill this in, cut it out, and tape it inside a kitchen cabinet door. Then walk everyone in the house past each shutoff once — including the teenagers and the house sitter.

IN AN EMERGENCY — HAVENBINDER.COM

MAIN WATER SHUTOFF

Where, and which way to turn it

WATER HEATER SHUTOFF

Water and gas/electric

GAS MAIN SHUTOFF

Where, and what tool it needs

ELECTRICAL PANEL

Where; label the main breaker

SUMP PUMP BREAKER

FURNACE EMERGENCY SWITCH

GAS COMPANY — EMERGENCY LINE

ELECTRIC COMPANY — OUTAGE LINE

WATER UTILITY

INSURANCE CLAIMS LINE & POLICY

ALARM COMPANY & PASSCODE

PLUMBER

ELECTRICIAN

NEIGHBOR WITH A KEY

— — — — — cut along the dashed line — — — — —

January–March

Twenty minutes a month. Tick as you go; carry anything you skip into next month rather than losing it.

January

DEEP WINTER

- ☐ Test every smoke and carbon-monoxide alarm — press and hold until it sounds
- ☐ Change the furnace filter (write the size on the Sizes & Specs page)
- ☐ Check the attic after a snowfall for frost, damp insulation, or daylight
- ☐ Look for ice dams at the roof edge and icicles over doorways
- ☐ Vacuum the refrigerator coils — the cheapest appliance life you'll ever buy
- ☐ Run ceiling fans clockwise on low to push warm air back down

February

LATE WINTER

- ☐ Change the furnace filter
- ☐ Test every GFCI outlet — press TEST, then RESET
- ☐ Check the basement or crawlspace for damp, musty smells, or new cracks
- ☐ Clean the bathroom exhaust fan covers (pull off, wash, dry, refit)
- ☐ Flush a gallon or two from the water heater to check for sediment
- ☐ Touch up interior caulk around tubs and showers

March

EARLY SPRING

- ☐ Change the furnace filter
- ☐ Book the AC service now, before the first hot week books everyone up
- ☐ Clear gutters and downspouts of winter debris
- ☐ Walk the perimeter and look at the roof from the ground with binoculars
- ☐ Test the sump pump: pour a bucket of water in and watch it cycle
- ☐ Check exterior caulk and weatherstripping for winter damage

April–June

Twenty minutes a month. Tick as you go; carry anything you skip into next month rather than losing it.

April

SPRING

- ☐ Change the furnace filter
- ☐ Turn on outdoor spigots and watch for leaks inside — split pipes show here
- ☐ Wash windows and repair or replace torn screens
- ☐ Inspect the deck, fence, and railings; reseal if water no longer beads
- ☐ Check driveway and walkway cracks before they widen
- ☐ Reseed and feed the lawn; sharpen the mower blade

May

LATE SPRING

- ☐ Change the furnace or AC filter
- ☐ Clean the dryer vent duct — the whole run, not just the lint screen
- ☐ Wash the siding; check for peeling paint and rot at ground level
- ☐ Clean the grill and check the gas line for cracks
- ☐ Run through the sprinkler zones and straighten crooked heads
- ☐ Trim shrubs back three feet from the AC condenser and the siding

June

EARLY SUMMER

- ☐ Change the filter
- ☐ Test the garage door auto-reverse: lay a board flat in its path
- ☐ Clean the AC condenser fins with a hose from the inside out
- ☐ Check attic ventilation and insulation depth
- ☐ Look for wasp and hornet nests under eaves and in the grill
- ☐ Clean the range hood filter in hot soapy water

July–September

Twenty minutes a month. Tick as you go; carry anything you skip into next month rather than losing it.

July

HIGH SUMMER

- ☐ Change the filter
- ☐ Mid-year alarm test — smoke, CO, and any water or freeze sensors
- ☐ Check under sinks and around the water heater for slow leaks
- ☐ Inspect exterior paint on the sun-facing walls
- ☐ Clean out the garage while the weather cooperates
- ☐ Check the dehumidifier drain and empty the basement bucket

August

LATE SUMMER

- ☐ Change the filter
- ☐ Inspect roof shingles, flashing, and the chimney cap
- ☐ Clean gutters ahead of leaf drop
- ☐ Check window and door seals; replace failed weatherstripping
- ☐ Service the generator and run it under load
- ☐ Photograph each room for insurance — takes ten minutes, pays for itself

September

EARLY FALL

- ☐ Change the filter
- ☐ Book the furnace or boiler service before the first cold snap
- ☐ Have the chimney swept and inspected if you burn anything
- ☐ Run the heat for ten minutes now, so a failure is an appointment, not an emergency
- ☐ Drain and store garden hoses
- ☐ Check handrails and outdoor lighting before the dark evenings

October–December

Twenty minutes a month. Tick as you go; carry anything you skip into next month rather than losing it.

October

FALL

- ☐ Change the filter
- ☐ Clear gutters after the leaves finish dropping
- ☐ Shut off and drain outdoor spigots; blow out the sprinkler system
- ☐ Reverse ceiling fans to clockwise on low
- ☐ Top up attic insulation where it has settled below the joists
- ☐ Check that storm doors and windows latch tight

November

LATE FALL

- ☐ Change the filter
- ☐ Test all alarms and replace the batteries — pick the same week every year
- ☐ Feel for drafts at doors and outlets; add sweeps and gaskets
- ☐ Make sure everyone in the house knows where the water shutoff is
- ☐ Stock ice melt, shovels, and a spare furnace filter
- ☐ Clear the roof valleys and gutters one last time

December

EARLY WINTER

- ☐ Change the filter
- ☐ Insulate pipes in unheated spaces — garage, crawlspace, exterior walls
- ☐ Test the sump pump again before the thaw
- ☐ Check holiday light cords for cracked insulation; nothing indoors on an outdoor timer
- ☐ Vacuum behind the dryer and under the refrigerator
- ☐ Walk the house with your phone recording, room by room, for insurance

One tick per box. By December you can see, honestly, what got done — and which job has been quietly skipped for eight months.

WHAT I NOTICED, WHAT NEEDS DOING, WHAT IT COST

The paper version works. The one in your pocket works harder.

This kit is yours to keep — print it, fill it in, hand it to whoever buys the house one day. It genuinely works.

But paper can't remind you that the filter is due, can't be searched from the hardware-store aisle, and can't be in two places when the basement floods. HavenBinder is this same binder, on your phone: it builds the maintenance schedule for you, stores photos and receipts against each appliance, and keeps the whole thing where you actually are.

Free for one home. No card, no trial clock.

havenbinder.com

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Not professional advice; a licensed pro beats a checklist every time.