



THE FIRST-TIME HOMEOWNER MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST

A clear, printable checklist for South African first-time homeowners who want to catch small issues early and avoid costly maintenance mistakes.

FIRST 30 DAYS	MONTHS 1-6	MONTHS 6-12
Know what to check first.	Catch small issues early.	Build a simple annual rhythm.

Free resource by The Homeowner's Manual. Use it as a quick reference, reminder and maintenance notes starter.

The Homeowner's Manual

thehomeownersmanual.co.za

START HERE

How to Use This Checklist

This checklist is designed to help you stay ahead of home maintenance issues without feeling overwhelmed. You do not need to complete everything at once. Use it as a quick reference, a reminder and a simple way to spot issues early.

Use this checklist to

- know what to check first
- catch small issues early
- avoid unnecessary repairs
- stay calm and organised
- start a basic maintenance record for your home

Important limit

- This free checklist shows what to check.
- It does not replace a professional inspection, qualified tradesperson or safety assessment.
- For explanations, timelines, budgeting guidance and decision-making support, use the full First-Time Homeowner Maintenance Blueprint.

HOW TO USE IT

Work through one section at a time. Tick off what applies, write short notes, and revisit the checklist regularly.

Reference Keep the checklist in a home file or digital folder for quick review.	Reminder Use it monthly, seasonally and after heavy rain or unusual home issues.
Early warning If something repeats, worsens or feels unsafe, get professional advice.	Not a panic list You are not behind if everything is not done immediately.

QUICK MAP

Your First-Year Checklist Map

A first home feels easier to manage when the checks are grouped by timing. Start with the first 30 days, then move into early prevention, then annual essentials.

Timeframe	Main focus	Your goal
First 30 days	Orientation and basic safety points	Know where key shut-offs are and identify obvious risks.
Months 1-6	Early prevention and pattern spotting	Notice leaks, damp, drainage, roof, electrical and pest issues before they grow.
Months 6-12	Annual essentials	Review major systems and create a repeatable maintenance rhythm.
Any time	High-cost warning signs	Do not ignore recurring water, electrical, roof, damp or security issues.

REMINDER

Most expensive maintenance mistakes happen because small warning signs were ignored too long - not because the homeowner needed to do everything at once.

Tip: if a task does not apply to your home, mark it N/A rather than leaving it open. This keeps the checklist useful instead of stressful.

FIRST 30 DAYS

Critical Checks for the First 30 Days

The first month is about learning your home. Focus on finding key control points, checking for obvious warning signs and avoiding rushed decisions.

Task	What to notice	Done
Locate the main water shut-off	Make sure it is accessible and known to the household.	☐
Locate the main electrical breaker / DB board	Know where the main switch is. Do not open or work inside the board.	☐
Check under sinks for visible leaks	Look for drips, swelling, damp wood or musty smells.	☐
Inspect ceilings and walls for damp or stains	Photograph any marks and re-check after rain.	☐
Test smoke detectors and safety alarms	Replace batteries where applicable.	☐
Check door and window locks	Confirm basic security points work properly.	☐
Confirm roof drainage paths	Look at gutters, downpipes and where water exits.	☐
Record appliance models and service dates	Keep photos or notes in a simple home file.	☐

KEY TAKEAWAY

Your first 30 days are for awareness, not perfection. Understand the home before spending money on upgrades.

FIRST MONTH NOTES

First 30 Days Notes Page

Use this page to record anything you notice during your first month. Short notes are enough. Dates, rooms and patterns are more useful than long descriptions.

Date	Area / Room	What I noticed	Needs action?

What to record

- recurring damp or leaks
- electrical trips or flickering patterns
- slow drains or gurgling sounds
- gate, garage or lock issues
- roof or gutter concerns after rain

MONTHS 1-6

Early Prevention Checklist

Months 1 to 6 are about catching small issues before they become expensive repairs. You are looking for patterns, not perfection.

Task	What to notice	Done
Clean gutters and roof drainage	Remove visible leaves, silt and blockages where safe to do so.	☐
Inspect roof tiles, sheeting or edges	Look from the ground for lifted, cracked or damaged areas.	☐
Check exterior walls for cracks or moisture	Note changes over time, especially after rain.	☐
Test electrical outlets and light fittings	Look for repeated issues, not one-off inconvenience.	☐
Inspect visible plumbing joints	Watch for moisture, corrosion or recurring drips.	☐
Check seals around baths, showers and sinks	Look for gaps, blackened silicone or water escaping.	☐
Review pest activity	Watch for termites, rodents, insects or droppings.	☐
Check gates, garage doors and exterior lights	Listen for strain, sticking, grinding or dead bulbs.	☐

PRACTICAL TIP

If something repeats or worsens, it deserves attention. Early advice is usually cheaper than emergency repair.

MONTHS 6-12

Annual Essentials Checklist

By the second half of your first year, your home should feel more familiar. This is the time to review systems, update records and build an annual rhythm.

Task	What to notice	Done
Service major appliances where applicable	Check manuals, warranties and professional service needs.	☐
Inspect water heater / geyser area	Look for leaks, rust marks, overflow pipe dripping or unusual behaviour.	☐
Inspect roof and ceilings after heavy rain	Check for new stains, damp marks or water trails.	☐
Check exterior paint and waterproofing	Look for peeling, cracking, gaps and water entry points.	☐
Observe the electrical board area	Look for obvious signs like repeated tripping, heat, smells or buzzing.	☐
Test safety alarms again	Check batteries and expiry dates where applicable.	☐
Review security maintenance	Locks, gates, beams, alarms, garage doors and lights.	☐
Update maintenance notes and records	Record what was checked, repaired or needs budgeting.	☐

ANNUAL RHYTHM

A well-maintained home is not one that is constantly being repaired. It is one where small issues are noticed early and decisions are made on time.

HIGH-COST SYSTEMS

Systems That Cost the Most When Ignored

Some systems are more expensive because failures spread damage, affect safety or require specialist repair. Give these areas regular attention.

System	Warning signs to watch for	Why it matters
Plumbing	Recurring damp, dripping, running toilets, slow drains	Water damage spreads quickly and can affect cupboards, walls and floors.
Electrical	Repeated tripping, warm plugs, buzzing, burning smells	Persistent electrical warning signs are safety concerns.
Roof and drainage	Overflowing gutters, stains after rain, pooling water	Roof and drainage issues often create hidden water damage.
Waterproofing	Bathroom damp, balcony leaks, bubbling paint	Failed seals or waterproofing can become expensive to trace and repair.
Security systems	Gate strain, faulty locks, dead beams or lights	Security failures can affect safety and daily convenience.
Major appliances	Leaks, rust, unusual noises, poor performance	Small faults can strain components and shorten lifespan.

REMINDER	Early attention is almost always cheaper than emergency repair.
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SA HOME RISKS

South African Home Risk Mini-Checklist

Use this quick scan for common South African homeowner realities: geysers, rainy seasons, damp, load-shedding and security maintenance.

Task	What to notice	Done
Geyser area checked	No visible leaks, rust marks, damp ceiling patches or overflow pipe concerns.	☐
Gutters and downpipes checked before rain	Water should flow away from walls and foundations.	☐
Damp-prone cupboards opened and aired	Watch musty smells, mould returning after cleaning or condensation.	☐
Surge protection reviewed	Sensitive electronics and appliances should be protected where possible.	☐
Backup power area kept safe	Batteries, inverters or generators should be ventilated and used safely.	☐
Exterior lights tested	Replace bulbs and check dark areas around entrances.	☐
Gate and garage motor observed	Listen for unusual strain, slow movement or repeated failure.	☐
Alarm, beams and locks tested	Confirm the basic security routine still works.	☐

SA FOCUS

Maintenance is not only about repairs. It is also about preventing avoidable stress during storms, outages and everyday home use.

WHEN TO CALL

DIY or Call a Professional?

This free checklist is not a DIY instruction manual. Use it to notice issues and make safer decisions about what can wait and what needs professional input.

Situation	Usually safe to monitor briefly	Call a professional sooner
Water	Old stain that does not change	Active leak, spreading damp or water near electrics
Electrical	One isolated trip after overload	Repeated tripping, heat, buzzing or burning smell
Roof / gutters	Light debris visible from ground	Leaks after rain, unsafe access or damaged roof areas
Cracks	Hairline crack that is unchanged	Crack widening, doors sticking or movement signs
Security	Dead bulb or loose handle	Gate failure, lock failure or alarm system faults

Contractor red flags

- pressure to decide immediately
- refusal to explain the issue clearly
- no written quote or scope
- large replacement recommended without proper inspection
- no business details or proof of experience

REMEMBER

A good professional explains, documents and gives you space to decide.

MAINTENANCE NOTES

Simple Maintenance Notes Page

Keep a basic record of meaningful maintenance. You do not need a complicated system - just enough detail to remember what happened, who helped and what to follow up on.

Date	System / Area	Issue or task	Cost / Contractor	Follow-up

Record the things that matter

- professional repairs or inspections
- recurring issues and how they were resolved
- work done on high-cost systems
- warranty or service details for appliances and equipment

NEXT STEP

What Comes Next

This checklist helps you identify what to check. The full First-Time Homeowner Maintenance Blueprint explains why each task matters, how often to do it, what can safely wait, and how to plan your maintenance budget.

Checklist A quick printable reference for first 30 days, months 1-6, months 6-12 and high-cost warning signs.	Blueprint A full 44-page printable system with explanations, worksheets, contractor red flags, SA risks and record pages.
Use this free PDF When you want a fast reminder of what to scan around the home.	Use the Blueprint When you want clarity, budgeting support and a calmer system for your first year.

The Blueprint helps you understand

- why each task matters
- what can safely wait
- when professional input is worth it
- how to plan for maintenance costs
- how to keep simple records that protect your home value

NEXT STEP

If you want clarity instead of guesswork, explore the full First-Time Homeowner Maintenance Blueprint.

View the 44-page Maintenance Blueprint at thehomeownersmanual.co.za/blueprint.html

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