

7 steps to get your house ready for fall.



You often hear about winterizing your home, but smart homeowners think ahead and autumnize. Follow these seven steps to get your house ready for fall now, and you'll have a lot less to do before winter weather blows in.

1. **Clean gutters and install gutter guards.** Why wait to clean your gutters until **after** your trees fill them with leaves? Clean out summer debris now, then install inexpensive mesh gutter guards to keep leaves out.
2. **Repair small concrete cracks.** The freeze-thaw cycle of late fall and winter can expand sidewalk and driveway cracks. Have them repaired now while warmer weather makes it easier.
3. **Paint walls and clean carpets.** Both these tasks require good ventilation to get rid of potentially harmful fumes and hasten the drying process. So, if they're on your to-do list, tackle them now while opening your windows ushers in a pleasant breeze — not an icy blast.
4. **Call the chimney sweep.** Book a chimney and fireplace inspection/cleaning now, and you'll not only beat the fall rush, you'll also remove a task from your holiday to-do list. Creosote can build up in your chimney and become a fire hazard, and debris can block the venting of toxic carbon monoxide, so homeowners should have this done at least once a year.
5. **Have your furnace checked.** As with chimney services, HVAC companies get busy when temperatures drop. Avoid the rush by having your furnace inspected now. While you're thinking about it, change the filter, too.
6. **Test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and replace batteries.** Before you throw a log in the fireplace or start baking pumpkin-spice goodies, make sure your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are working properly. Most detectors have a test button you can press and hold until the alarm sounds.

If you have detectors with a sealed 10-year lithium battery, you won't need to replace

the battery (but the entire unit should be replaced within 10 years).

If you have replaceable batteries, replace them now to ensure they'll function properly throughout the winter.

Also, now is a good time to gently vacuum the vents on your detectors to make sure the sensors aren't blocked by dust and debris.

7. **Clean out your garage and/or basement.** This is never a fun job, but it's a lot easier when it's not freezing outside. If you have any old paint, solvents, gasoline, kerosene, or other hazardous chemicals in these areas, properly dispose of what you don't need. Then make sure what's left is safely stored, well away from any heat-producing appliances, such as furnaces or radiators. (Consult your state or local Environmental Protection Agency for instructions on how to dispose of hazardous chemicals.)

Start autumnizing now, and you can enjoy the upcoming colder months with a little more peace of mind, knowing that you've safeguarded your home and family.

This content was developed for general informational purposes only. While we strive to keep the information relevant and up to date, we make no guarantees or warranties regarding the completeness, accuracy, or reliability of the information, products, services, or graphics contained within the blog. The blog content is not intended to serve as professional or expert advice for your insurance needs. Contact your local, independent insurance agent for coverage advice and policy services.