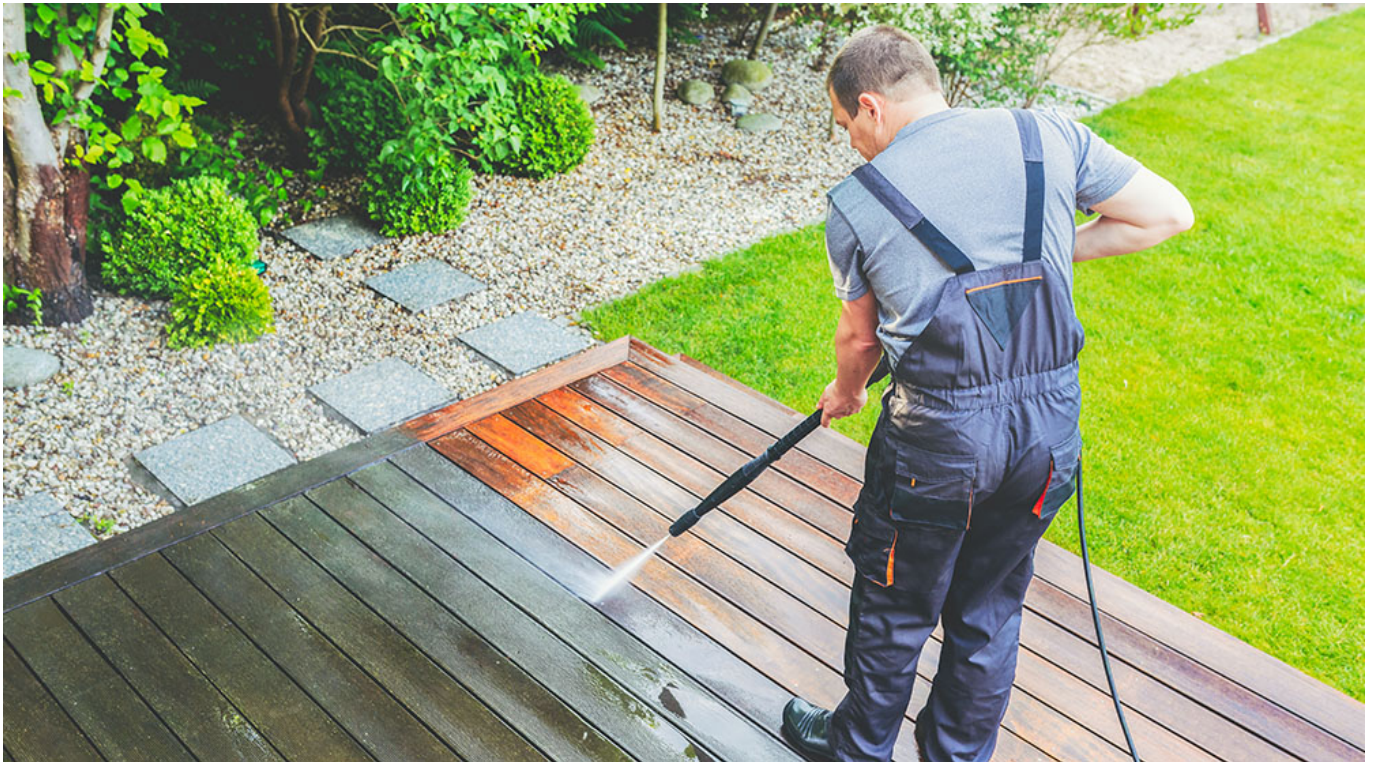


How to maintain your patio or deck for outdoor fun.



Your patio or deck is an extension of your home — the perfect outdoor spot to entertain family and friends, or just enjoy a quiet moment to yourself. Take these recommended steps to maintain your patio or deck, and you can keep enjoying it for years to come.

How to maintain your patio: cleaning and sealing.

Most concrete, paver, and stone patios require regular cleaning and sealing.

- **Sweep your patio once a week.** Use a stiff-bristled broom to get rid of dirt and yard debris.
- **Wash with dish soap and water.** Wash your patio once a month during spring and summer.
- **Power wash once a year.** Use low pressure to avoid damaging the surface.
- **Treat stains as quickly as possible.** The longer they sit, the more they'll soak in.

Grease stains: Sprinkle with baking soda and let it sit for 10-15 minutes. Scrub with a stiff-bristle brush.

Other food stains: Wash with warm water and a concrete-safe cleaner.

Rust stains: Clean with a commercial rust remover.

Biological growth: Use a 1/10 bleach-to-water solution to kill the growth of moss, algae, or mold.

- **Seal the surface.** This prevents moisture absorption and extends the life of your patio. Reapply sealer every two to three years.
- **Remove weeds.** If you have a paver patio, regularly remove weeds from between pavers.

How to maintain your patio: preventing and repairing cracks.

Take steps to prevent cracks in your patio, and repair small cracks before they spread.

- **Crack prevention:** Keep patios well-sealed against moisture to avoid freeze-and-thaw cracks in cold weather. Periodically rearrange heavy patio furniture and fire pits to avoid constant pressure on one area.
- **Crack repair for concrete patios:** Small cracks can be filled with concrete repair caulk. For larger cracks, consult a concrete professional.
- **Crack repair for paver patios:** To treat small cracks, sweep paver repair compound or polymeric sand into the gaps and tamp it down. For larger cracks, replace damaged pavers with new ones and fill gaps with polymeric sand.

How to maintain your deck: cleaning, inspecting, and sealing.

Regular deck cleaning, inspecting, and sealing help keep your outdoor space attractive and safe.

- **Sweep your deck weekly.** This keeps it free of yard debris and dirt that can damage or stain the surface.
- **Clean your deck at least once a year.** Remove all furniture and other items from the deck, spray with a biodegradable outdoor cleaner that removes mildew, and scrub with a stiff-bristle brush. Finish by rinsing thoroughly with your garden hose.
- **Inspect your deck annually.** Test railings to be sure connections are tight, and check for wood rot and loose floorboards.
- **Make repairs.** Secure any loose boards with wood screws and replace any rotting boards. If you find protruding nails, remove them and replace with wood screws.
- **Stain or seal your deck every one to five years.** How often depends on the type of stain/seal you use. Clear seals should be reapplied every one to two years; semi-transparent stains, every two to three years; solid or opaque stains, every three to five years.

Signs that your deck needs staining or sealing:

- Water no longer beads up on the surface
- You can see mold or mildew buildup
- Wood boards look dry, gray, and/or faded

Note: Composite decks, made from a synthetic blend of plastic and wood fibers, do not require sealing.

With regular cleaning and maintenance, your patio or deck can be the setting for years of family memories. For greater home protection, indoors and out, make sure you have plenty of [homeowners insurance coverage](#).

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