NEWHOUSE Checklist

Move-In Checklist

120 tasks, in the order they matter. Must-dos protect life or prevent major damage: do them first.

Address _____ Move-in date _____ Closing date _____

Check each box when it's done and write the date on the right. Tasks with a grey tag only apply to some homes. Step-by-step instructions and sources for every task: newhousechecklist.com/moving-in/

1 Before closing — Walkthrough and paperwork

- [ ] **Test for radon** Must-do
  Run a radon test before closing, during your inspection period, in the lowest level anyone could regularly use, for at least 48 hours with windows and outside doors closed. EPA says to fix the home at 4 pCi/L or higher and to consider fixing it between 2 and 4. If the result is high, negotiate the fix before closing. At least 48 hours for the test, plus lab time · About $12 and up for a DIY kit; about $150 on average for a professional test
  Buy: Radon test kits — we recommend Kansas State University short-term radon test kit
  ____/____

- [ ] **Use your 10-day lead paint inspection window** Must-do Built before 1978
  If you're buying a home built before 1978, federal rules give you a 10-day lead paint inspection period to test for lead paint and lead hazards. You don't have to use it, and you and the seller can lengthen, shorten or waive it in writing. Book a certified professional right away, because written reports can take a week.
  About 3 to 5 hours on site; report in about 3 to 7 business days · About $300 to $700 for an inspection, $500 to $1,200 for a risk assessment
  Buy: Lead test kits — we recommend LeadCheck Lead Test Swabs (8-pack)
  ____/____

- [ ] **Test the private well before closing** Must-do A private well
  Have a certified lab run a well water test before closing, and make the deal depend on the result. At minimum, test for total coliform bacteria, nitrates, total dissolved solids and pH, then add whatever is common in your area. Ask your health department what that is, and have someone independent collect the sample.
  Short sampling visit; ask the lab about turnaround · About $100 to $250 for a standard panel; $300 to $500 or more for a full one (one guide's estimate)
  Buy: Home water test kits — we recommend Safe Home Lead in Drinking Water Test Kit, 2 Test (In-Lab)
  ____/____

- [ ] **Compare your Closing Disclosure to the Loan Estimate** Must-do A mortgage
  Compare your Closing Disclosure to your most recent Loan Estimate and check your rate, APR, loan amount, payment, closing cash and each fee. Lender fees generally can't rise, some third-party fees can rise 10% as a group, and others have no cap. You get three business days to review.
  About 45 minutes · Free · Received 3 business days before closing
  ____/____

- [ ] **Verify wiring instructions by phone before sending** Must-do
  To avoid wire fraud at closing, call your settlement agent before you send closing funds, at a number you got on your own, and confirm the account name and number out loud. Never use contact details from an email, even one that looks right. If you've already sent money to a scammer, call your bank immediately for a wire recall. 15 min · Free · Before you wire funds
  ____/____

- [ ] **Bind homeowners insurance before closing** Must-do
  For homeowners insurance before closing, compare quotes after your offer is accepted, then bind a policy with a start date of your closing day and send proof to your lender. Base dwelling coverage on what it would cost to rebuild, not the sale price. NAIC says to insure at least 80% of replacement value, and full replacement is safer. 1 to 2 hours · Varies; paid at closing or through escrow · Effective on closing day
  ____/____

- [ ] **Do the final walkthrough** Must-do
  Do the final walkthrough shortly before closing, often 24 to 72 hours ahead, though your contract sets the window. Bring the contract and repair addendum. Your final walkthrough checklist: confirm repairs are finished, included items are there, systems work and nothing new is damaged. Report problems to your agent before you sign anything. 1 to 2 hours · Free · Within ~24 hours before closing (per your contract)
  ____/____

- [ ] **Walk the new build and write a punch list** Must-do A newly built home
  To build your new construction punch list, walk the house with the builder's supervisor about a week or two before closing, and allow two to three hours. Test every door, window, faucet, switch and register, mark each flaw, and put the full list in writing with completion dates. Recheck each item before you close, since warranty coverage for most finishes is short.
  2 to 3 hours · Free yourself; about $475 to $650 for an independent final inspection of a 2,500 sq ft home (one guide's estimate, varies by area)
  ____/____

- [ ] **File your closing documents for the long haul** Must-do
  Keep your closing documents for as long as you own the home, plus the tax limitations period after you sell it, which is generally 3 years from filing. They prove what you paid and support your gain calculation. Store a digital copy and keep the originals somewhere fire-resistant.
  30 min · Free, or the price of a fire-resistant box
  Buy: Fireproof document safes — we recommend SentrySafe Fire/Water File Folder Chest (Document Box)
  ____/____

- [ ] **Have older wiring and electrical panels checked** Built before 1986
  Homes wired between 1965 and the mid-1970s may have aluminum branch wiring, and inspectors often flag panels from Federal Pacific (Stab-Lok) and Zinsco. Have a licensed electrician evaluate them. CPSC accepts only three permanent fixes for aluminum wiring. For flagged panels, the usual advice is to replace the whole panel, not single breakers.
  Allow time for one electrician visit; repairs vary · About $220 to $490 for a whole-house inspection; panel replacement costs thousands
  ____/____

- [ ] **Decide whether to buy owner's title insurance**
  Owner's title insurance is optional, but it is the only title policy that protects you rather than your lender. It covers ownership claims that existed before you bought. You pay once at closing, commonly about 0.5% to 1% of the price, and coverage generally lasts as long as you own the home.
  20 min · One-time premium, commonly about 0.5% to 1% of the price (varies by state)
  ____/____

- [ ] **Check flood risk and buy flood insurance early**
  For flood insurance when buying a house, look up the address on FEMA's flood maps before closing, then get quotes even if your lender doesn't require them. NFIP policies usually take 30 days to start. If you buy in connection with your loan, and apply and pay at or before closing, the wait doesn't apply. Homeowners policies generally exclude flood.
  About 30 minutes to check; longer for quotes · Varies by home; NAIC cites an average of about $700 a year · Buy before closing to avoid the 30-day wait
  ____/____

- [ ] **Get every key, code, manual and leftover from the seller**
  Decide what to ask the seller before closing, then send your agent one written list asking for every key, remote and code, smart devices removed from the sellers' accounts, manuals, service records, warranty papers and labeled leftover materials. Ask now, because sellers get harder to reach after closing and some warranty transfers run on a deadline. 15 min · Free to ask; some warranty transfers charge a fee
  ____/____

- [ ] **Get and read HOA documents before you commit** An HOA
  Request your HOA documents before buying: the CC&Rs, bylaws, rules, budget, reserve study, recent minutes and a resale certificate. Read the money first: dues, reserves, special assessments and lawsuits. Delivery deadlines, fee limits and your right to cancel come from state law, so ask early what your state allows. 2 hrs to read the packet · Set by the HOA and state law (Texas caps a resale certificate at $375; California has no cap)
  ____/____

- [ ] **Get septic records, an inspection and a map of the tank** A septic system
  For a septic inspection when buying a house, ask the seller for pumping receipts before closing, get the as-built drawing from your local health department, and hire a septic pro for a full inspection. Expect about $300 to $650 for a real estate inspection with a written report. A failed system can cost thousands to tens of thousands of dollars. Records vary by county; the inspection is one visit · About $300 to $650 for a full inspection
  ____/____

- [ ] **Pull the permit history for the house**
  To find the permit history for a house, search the city or county building department's permit portal by address or parcel number, then call the records desk for anything older. Compare what you find with the actual house. Look for final inspections, open permits and work with no record, and raise any gaps with your agent before closing. Varies: quick online, longer if records are on paper · Often free to search; some offices charge small copy fees
  ____/____

- [ ] **Ask for a sewer scope before closing**
  A sewer scope inspection sends a camera down the pipe between the house and the city main, a stretch a standard home inspection doesn't see. It costs about $125 to $350 for most homes. Order one early in your inspection period, ask for the full video, and get repair quotes before your deadline if it finds damage. A short visit, usually booked with the home inspection · About $125 to $350; up to about $500 with a plumber
  ____/____

- [ ] **Photograph and video every open wall before drywall** A newly built home
  To photograph walls before drywall, visit after the rough-in work passes inspection and before insulation goes in. Film every wall and ceiling slowly with a tape measure in view, then take wide labeled photos of each room. Name files by room and wall, and keep them with your home records. The window may last only days. One site visit; length depends on house size · Free with a phone
  ____/____

- [ ] **Hold off on new credit and big purchases until you close**
  Avoid new credit before closing, which means no new cards, loans or financed purchases until your loan has closed. New debt can change the debt-to-income ratio your approval relied on, and lenders must account for debts they learn about along the way. Even a modest store card can force a new review, so ask your loan officer first. From application until closing · Free to wait; new debt can cost you the approval
  ____/____

- [ ] **Decide whether a home warranty is worth it**
  A home warranty is worth it only if the repairs it pays for will beat the yearly price plus a fee on every visit. Plans run about $564 to $984 a year, with visit fees near $75 to $125. Payout caps and exclusions decide most of the value, so read the contract first.
  30 min to read one contract · About $564 to $984 a year, plus about $75 to $125 per service visit
  ____/____

- [ ] **Measure rooms, doors and stairs for furniture**
  To measure doorways for furniture, follow the whole path a piece has to travel, not only the room. Record each door's clear opening, the narrowest hallway width, stair and landing dimensions, and the open space at every turn. Compare those with the furniture's width, height and diagonal depth, and round down. 45 min · Free
  ____/____

2 Before you move in — The empty-house window

- [ ] **Rekey or replace every exterior lock** Must-do
  Rekey or replace locks on every exterior door as soon as you get the keys. Rekeying swaps the pins so old keys stop working, and it costs less than new hardware. A single-lock kit runs about $12 to $25. Replace a lock instead if it's worn or damaged, or you have mixed brands.
  1 to 2 hours · About $12 to $25 per DIY kit; locksmiths about $40 to $100 per visit plus $10 to $30 per lock
  Buy: Lock rekey kits — we recommend Kwikset SmartKey Security Re-Key Lock Kit
  ____/____

- [ ] **Reset garage door codes and remotes** Must-do An attached garage
  To reset garage door codes, hold the Learn button on the opener's motor unit until its light goes out, which on many models erases every paired remote and keypad. Then reprogram only the remotes you have, set a new keypad PIN, and remove any previous owner's app access. Check your opener's manual for exact steps. 20 to 30 minutes · Free to reset; replacement remotes vary
  ____/____

- [ ] **Test, replace and add smoke alarms** Must-do
  Smoke alarm placement means one inside every bedroom, outside each sleeping area and on every level, including the basement. Press each test button, then check the manufacture date on the back. Replace any alarm 10 years past that date, and keep alarms at least 10 feet from the stove.
  1 to 2 hours for a whole house · Varies by type; hardwired work adds an electrician's fee
  Buy: Smoke alarms — we recommend Kidde Smoke Alarm, 10-Year Battery Powered (DETECT series)
  ____/____

- [ ] **Test and add carbon monoxide alarms** Must-do A fireplace or wood stove / An attached garage / Gas appliances or gas heat
  For carbon monoxide alarm placement, pick a central spot outside each sleeping area and on every level, then test each alarm monthly. Use alarms meeting UL 2034, with batteries or battery backup. Keep them away from vents and out of kitchens. If one sounds, go outside and call 911.
  30 to 60 minutes · Varies by type; combination smoke and CO units cost more
  Buy: Carbon monoxide alarms — we recommend First Alert Plug-In Carbon Monoxide Alarm with Battery Backup and Digital Display
  ____/____

- [ ] **Childproof stairs, windows, outlets and cabinets** Must-do · Kids at home
  To childproof a house, screw a wall-mounted gate to the top of each staircase, stop windows from opening more than 4 inches, latch cabinets holding medicines and cleaners, cover outlets and switch to cordless blinds. Do it room by room, starting with bedrooms and stairs, before your child starts exploring the new house. 2 to 3 hours · Varies; CPSC calls most devices relatively inexpensive ____/____

- [ ] **Check pool fence, gate latch and door alarms** Must-do · Kids at home / A pool or hot tub
  Walk the whole pool barrier with a tape measure to check it against pool fence requirements. CPSC guidelines call for a fence at least 48 inches high, gaps that stop a 4-inch sphere, and gates that open away from the pool and close and latch themselves. If the house forms one side, every door to the pool needs an alarm. 1 hour · Free to check; alarms and fence repairs vary ____/____

- [ ] **Clean the dryer vent and replace foil duct** Must-do
  Clean a dryer vent at least once a year, or sooner if clothes take longer to dry. Disconnect the duct, brush the full run to the outside and check that the outdoor flap opens. Replace plastic or thin coiled foil duct with smooth metal duct. Take extra care with gas dryers.
  45–60 min · Varies; a brush kit if you DIY, or a vent cleaner's fee
  Buy: Dryer vent cleaning kits — we recommend Gardus LintEater Rotary Dryer Vent Cleaning System ____/____

- [ ] **Set up utilities in your name** Must-do
  Utility service doesn't transfer with the deed, so set up utilities for a new home by opening each account in your name with a start date of your closing or move-in day. Call electric and gas two to three weeks ahead, confirm the seller's stop date, and have your ID and closing date ready. Water, sewer and trash may run through the city.
  1 to 2 hours across all providers · Often free; deposits and fees vary, from nothing to a few hundred dollars · 2–3 weeks before move-in ____/____

- [ ] **Submit your USPS change of address** Must-do
  File your USPS change of address at usps.com/move, pay the $1.25 identity check, and allow at least 7 to 10 business days to take effect. You can also file in person at a post office using PS Form 3575. Standard forwarding lasts 12 months, and some sensitive mail won't be forwarded at all.
  10 min · $1.25 online; in person at a post office has no listed fee · About 2 weeks before move-in ____/____

- [ ] **Replace the HVAC filter and record its size** Must-do
  To replace an HVAC filter, turn the system off, slide out the old filter and copy the size printed on its frame. Put in a new one with the airflow arrow pointing toward the furnace or air handler. Check it monthly. One-inch filters usually last 1 to 3 months, and thicker media filters last longer.
  About 10 minutes · About $6 to $30 for a 1-inch pleated filter; about $25 to $80 for 4- to 5-inch media
  Buy: HVAC air filters — we recommend Filtrete Healthy Living Elite Allergen Reduction, MPR 2200 (MERV 13), 1-inch ____/____

- [ ] **Set up internet and Wi-Fi**
  To set up internet in a new home, check which providers serve your exact address, compare the regular price as well as the promo, and grab the first install slot after you get the keys. The FCC's broadband benchmark is 100 Mbps down and 20 Mbps up, which suits many homes. Then set WPA3 or WPA2 and change the default router passwords.
  About 30 minutes to book; setup time varies · Install and monthly prices vary by provider and address · 1–3 weeks before move-in
  Buy: Mesh Wi-Fi systems — we recommend ASUS ZenWiFi BT8 ____/____

- [ ] **Deep clean the empty house**
  Deep clean an empty house from the top down, before the furniture arrives. Start with fans, vents and cabinet tops, then do walls, kitchen and bathrooms, and finish with floors at the exit. Use the same visit to check for leaks and mold, and keep bleach away from other cleaners.
  1–2 days · Supplies, or a cleaning service; prices vary by size and condition
  Buy: Cordless stick vacuums — we recommend Shark PowerDetect Cordless (incl. Clean & Empty version) ____/____

- [ ] **Enroll kids in the new school district** Kids at home
  To enroll your child in a new school district, call the district office first to confirm your assigned school, then gather proof of residency, a birth certificate, immunization records and past transcripts. Ask what counts as proof if you've just closed on a house. Requirements are set locally and by state, so use your own district's list. 1 to 2 hours, plus time to gather records · Free for public school ____/____

- [ ] **Patch and paint before furniture arrives**
  To patch and paint before moving in, check the build date first, since homes from before 1978 may have lead paint. Then fill holes, let the spackle dry and cure, sand and prime the patches, and paint ceilings, walls and trim in that order. Most spackle takes 1 to 2 hours to dry and about 24 hours to cure.
  1 to 3 days · Varies with paint grade and the number of rooms ____/____

- [ ] **Cover the bedroom and bathroom windows before the first night**
  Before move-in night, put up temporary window coverings in the bedroom and bathroom, such as stick-up paper shades or a sheet on a tension rod. Measure every window while the house is empty, then order real coverings. Once the lights are on after dark, an uncovered window shows the whole room to the street. Minutes per window for a stopgap · Varies; stopgaps cost little, and fitted shades cost more ____/____

- [ ] **Snake every drain before you move in**
  To snake a drain before you unpack, pull each stopper, clear hair with a hand snake or plastic drain strip, then run every fixture at once and watch the lowest drain. Slow draining or gurgling can point to the main line. A plumber's sewer camera inspection generally costs about $125 to $350.
  Half a day for a typical house · A hand snake or drain strip; about $125 to $350 if you need a sewer camera ____/____

3 Moving day and first night The first 24 hours

- [ ] **Find and tag the main water shutoff** Must-do
  The main water shutoff valve sits where the supply line enters your house, often low on a basement wall facing the street, in a crawl space, or in the garage near the water heater. Close it once to prove it stops the water, then tag it so anyone can find it fast.
  20 minutes · Free; a pro's valve replacement runs about $200 to $700 if it fails ____/____

- [ ] **Find the electrical panel and label the breakers** Must-do
  Your main electrical panel is usually in a garage, basement or utility room, or outside near the meter. Find it and learn which switch is the main. To label an electrical panel, turn off one breaker at a time and write down what goes dark. Label the door clearly and leave the panel cover on.
  20 minutes to find; 1 to 2 hours to label · Free
  Buy: Flashlights and lanterns — we recommend ThruNite Archer 2A V3 ____/____

- [ ] **Find the gas shutoff and learn what to do if you smell gas** Must-do Gas appliances or gas heat
  Your gas shutoff valve sits on the pipe entering the meter, usually outside or in an external closet. A quarter turn closes it, leaving the lever across the pipe. If you smell gas or hear hissing, get everyone out first, then call the gas company from a safe place.
  15 minutes · The price of a wrench, if you don't already own one ____/____

- [ ] **Anchor dressers, bookcases and TVs** Must-do Kids at home
  Anchor furniture to the wall by strapping every dresser, bookcase and tall cabinet to a wall stud with an anti-tip kit, and wall-mount TVs or strap them to a low, anchored stand. CPSC says most kits cost under $20 and take under 20 minutes. Add the anti-tip bracket on any freestanding range.
  Under 20 minutes per piece, per CPSC · Under $20 per kit for most kits, per CPSC
  Buy: Furniture and TV anti-tip kits — we recommend Hangman Anti-Tip Kit (400 lb steel cable) ____/____

- [ ] **Confirm the utilities work and photograph the meters** Must-do
  On the day you get the keys, check the utilities in your new house: test the lights, hot and cold water, and heating or cooling. Then photograph each electric, gas and water meter so you have a dated start reading. If gas appliances won't light, call the gas utility and don't relight anything yourself.
  10 minutes · Free ____/____

- [ ] **Keep pets secured and ID'd during the move** Pets
  To keep pets safe on moving day, put them in a quiet room with the door shut, or at a friend's house or boarding, while doors stand open. Before the move, put your new details on the tag and microchip. At the new house, check for hazards and start pets in one closed room.
  30 min · Free, plus a new tag or boarding if you use it ____/____

- [ ] **Reset smart devices and secure the Wi-Fi**
  To secure home Wi-Fi, factory-reset every smart device the seller left, then set each one up under your own account. On the router, change the admin password and network name, use WPA3 or WPA2 Personal, update the firmware, and turn off remote management, WPS and UPnP. Put smart devices on the guest network. About 1 hour · Free, unless your router needs replacing ____/____

- [ ] **Pack a first-night box for every person**
  Start your first night box checklist with one small box or bag for each person holding pajamas, tomorrow's clothes, toiletries, chargers and bedding, plus one shared box with cleaning and kitchen basics. Keep medications, IDs and house keys with you. Label everything clearly, and travel with the boxes yourself if you can. 30 min · Free, using things you own ____/____
  Buy: Box cutters for moving day — we recommend Milwaukee FASTBACK Compact Folding Utility Knife

- [ ] **Unpack bedrooms and bathrooms first**
  What to unpack first after moving? Set up beds and one bathroom, then a basic working kitchen. Move on to the living room, clothes and any home office, and leave guest rooms and storage for last. Essential rooms can often be usable in one to three days, and the full job often takes one to three weeks.
  Bed and bath on moving day; 1 to 3 weeks for the rest · Free ____/____

- [ ] **Put a plunger next to every toilet**
  The best plunger for a toilet is a flange plunger, so keep one beside every toilet. Its fold-out rubber flap fits the toilet drain, which a flat cup plunger can't seal. With the bowl about half full, pump quickly for 20 seconds and don't flush. If the clog stays, use a toilet auger or call a plumber.
  5 minutes to set up · Varies; a low-cost purchase ____/____
  Buy: Toilet plungers — we recommend Korky BeehiveMAX Universal Toilet Plunger

- [ ] **Protect floors and photograph the house before movers**
  To protect floors on moving day, film every room, floor and doorframe before anything comes off the truck, then cover the main path with runners and pad the door frames. Check the mover's inventory as items arrive, and write any damage on the paperwork before you sign. A note alone isn't a claim.
  20 min · Varies with the protection you buy ____/____

4 First week Settle the essentials

- [ ] **Make a fire escape plan and practice it** Must-do
  For a home fire escape plan, draw each floor, mark two ways out of every room, and check that every escape window really opens. Choose a meeting spot in front of the house, then practice twice a year with the smoke alarm's test button. Aim to get everyone out in under 2 minutes.
  45 min, plus 2 drills a year · Free ____/____
  Buy: Fire escape ladders — we recommend Kidde 2-Story Fire Escape Ladder (13 ft)

- [ ] **Update your license, car registration and voter registration** Must-do
  Change the address on your driver's license soon after moving, because state deadlines can be as short as 10 days. California and New York give you 10 days, and Texas gives you 30. Update your vehicle registration and voter record in the same sitting, and tell your auto insurer where the car is now kept.
  20 min online; longer if you must visit in person · Free to small fee, set by your state · 10–30 days after moving, depending on state ____/____

- [ ] **Mount fire extinguishers on each level**
  Mount a home fire extinguisher, a lab-listed multipurpose ABC model, on each level, on a normal path to an exit. Keep the top no more than 5 feet up and the bottom at least 4 inches off the floor. Use it only on a small fire with a clear way out behind you. 30 minutes · Varies by size and rating ____/____
  Buy: Fire extinguishers — we recommend Amerex B402 5-lb ABC Dry Chemical Extinguisher

- [ ] **Test outlets, GFCIs and AFCIs**
  To test outlets and GFCIs, plug a three-light tester into each outlet and compare the lights with its printed chart. Press TEST and RESET on each GFCI and AFCI. Anything other than correct wiring, or a device that won't trip, means calling a licensed electrician. Hot covers, sparks or burning smells mean stop using that outlet now. 45 minutes · The price of a plug-in tester
  Buy: Non-contact voltage testers — we recommend Klein Tools NCVT-3P Dual-Range Non-Contact Voltage Tester with Flashlight
  ____/____

- [ ] **Test the garage door's auto-reverse** An attached garage / Kids at home
  For a garage door auto reverse test, lay a 2x4 flat on the floor in the door's path and close the door. It should reverse when it touches the board. Then break the photo-eye beam while the door closes, and it should reverse again. If either test fails, disconnect the opener until it's fixed. 10 minutes · Free
  ____/____

- [ ] **Reinforce exterior and sliding doors**
  To reinforce a door, replace the short screws in each strike plate and hinge with 3-inch wood screws that reach the wall framing, and check the deadbolt throws at least 1 inch. On sliding doors, add a pin or key lock and put screws in the overhead track so the door can't be lifted out.
  About 20 minutes per door · Varies; screws are the main cost
  Buy: Cordless drills — we recommend DeWalt ATOMIC 20V MAX Brushless 1/2-in Drill/Driver Kit
  ____/____

- [ ] **Lock up medicines, chemicals and firearms** Kids at home / Pets
  To store medicines and chemicals safely, keep medicines locked, out of children's sight and reach, and put them away after every dose. Store chemicals in their original containers behind latches. Keep firearms unloaded and locked, with ammunition locked separately. Take anything the seller left to a household hazardous waste collection site. About 1 hour · Varies by lockbox, latch or safe
  ____/____

- [ ] **Look for moisture and mold in the basement and attic** An attic / A basement
  To check for mold, inspect the basement, attic and every plumbing spot for stains, musty smells, condensation and visible growth, then measure humidity. EPA says to keep it below 60%, ideally 30 to 50%. You can usually clean mold covering less than about 10 square feet yourself, but fix the water source first or it will come back. About 45 minutes · About $10 to $50 for a humidity meter
  ____/____

- [ ] **Update your address with the IRS, banks and everyone else**
  Work through a change of address checklist and tell each sender directly, starting with banks, your employer, insurers and the IRS. USPS forwarding doesn't update anyone's records, and some sensitive mail won't be forwarded. For the IRS, file Form 8822 or use your new address on your next return. Expect about 4 to 6 weeks to process. 1 hr, spread over your first weeks · Free
  ____/____

- [ ] **Check the water heater's age and set it to 120°F**
  Set your water heater to about 120°F, the temperature the Department of Energy recommends for most homes. Measure at the faucet farthest from the tank, adjust the dial or thermostat, then retest after at least three hours. Read the serial number on the label to find the heater's age, since brands code it differently. About 20 minutes, plus a retest after 3 hours · Free
  ____/____

- [ ] **Check for hidden leaks and high water pressure**
  To check for water leaks, run three checks. Put food coloring in each toilet tank and wait 10 minutes. Read your water meter, use no water for two hours, and read it again. Then screw a pressure gauge onto an outdoor faucet. Color in the bowl, a moving meter or a reading above 80 psi means something needs fixing. 30 minutes of work, plus a two-hour wait · Food coloring and a pressure gauge; a flapper if a toilet fails
  ____/____

- [ ] **Start a home binder and maintenance calendar**
  Make a home maintenance binder with one record of every major system and appliance: brand, model, serial number, install date, filter sizes and manuals. Keep your settlement statement, improvement receipts and home inventory with it. Then add calendar reminders, such as checking HVAC filters monthly and booking a tune-up each spring and fall. About 1 hour to start, then a few minutes per job · Free
  ____/____

- [ ] **Learn trash, recycling and bulk pickup rules**
  Look up your address on your city or hauler's website to find trash and recycling pickup days. Then check the cart rules, what your recycling program takes, and how to request bulk pickup. Rules are local, and bulk items usually need a request ahead of time. Some rural areas use private haulers instead.
  About 15 minutes · Often part of your city bill or taxes; extras vary by city
  ____/____

- [ ] **Find the nearest ER, hardware store and local pros**
  Before you need them, save your nearest ER, an urgent care your health plan covers, a late-night pharmacy, a hardware store and a few licensed pros. In a real emergency, call 911 or go to the closest hospital that can help, whatever its network status. 30 min · Free
  ____/____

- [ ] **Update your pet's microchip and get a local license** Pets
  To update pet microchip details, find your pet's 9, 10 or 15-digit chip number, enter it in the free AAHA Universal Pet Microchip Lookup, and note which registry holds the record. Change your address and phone number with that registry itself. Then ask your new city or county about pet license rules.
  20 min · Varies by registry; license fees vary by city or county
  ____/____

- [ ] **Put together a basic toolkit**
  A basic toolkit for new homeowners starts with a small hand tool set, a cordless drill and a stud finder. A basic set runs about $25 to $40 and a two-tool drill combo about $99, based on prices This Old House listed. That covers most first-month jobs, like hanging rods and tightening hinges.
  30 minutes to buy and sort · About $125 to $140 for a hand tool set plus a drill combo
  Buy: Home tool kits — we recommend Stanley 65-Piece Homeowner's Tool Kit
  ____/____

- [ ] **Test the AC and heat before you need them**
  Test AC and heat soon after you move in, so you find problems before you need them. Run the heat in any weather. Hold off on the AC unless it's warmer than about 60°F outside, because cooling in colder weather can damage the compressor. Check each room, the drain line and the shutoff, and report problems in writing. About 15 minutes per system, plus a walk through the rooms · Free
  ____/____

- [ ] **Watch the first load of laundry**
  Before your first load in a new home, check the washing machine hookup: slide the washer away from the wall and confirm the drain hose is secured in the standpipe and the supply hoses are snug. Then run a short empty cycle and stay beside it the whole time. Know where the shutoff valves are before you press start, so a leak stays small. One wash cycle · Free; new hoses if the old ones look worn
  ____/____

- [ ] **Take over or cancel the existing alarm system**
  With an alarm system in a new home, find out who monitors the panel, get the master and installer codes from the seller, then start your own account or cancel. Many accounts can't simply transfer, so plan on a new contract. Change every code, and ask your insurer about a discount of at least 5% for a burglar alarm. Allow an afternoon, plus provider wait times · Varies by provider; ask for takeover and monthly fees in writing
  Buy: Video doorbells — we recommend Google Nest Doorbell (Wired, 3rd Gen)

- [ ] **Find the sewer cleanout** A basement
  A sewer cleanout is a capped pipe or small box on your main drain. Look near the foundation where the line leaves the house, along the route to the street, or indoors near where the drain exits. Find it before a backup, keep it clear, and leave the cap to a plumber.
  15 minutes · Free to find; a backwater valve varies, so get a plumber's quote

- [ ] **Program a thermostat schedule**
  To program a thermostat schedule, set it 7 to 10°F lower in winter, or higher in summer, for about 8 hours a day, usually while you sleep or work. The Department of Energy says that can save as much as 10% a year on heating and cooling. Heat pumps need a thermostat built for them.
  About 15 min · Free with the thermostat you have
  Buy: Smart thermostats — we recommend ecobee Smart Thermostat Essential

- [ ] **Write a punch list and pick two or three quick wins**
  Start your new house punch list by walking each room alone and writing down everything you notice. Tag each item as safety, water, structure or cosmetic. Handle safety and water first, then choose two or three small fixes you'll see every day. Leave the remaining cosmetic items alone for 30 days and look again. One unhurried walk-through, then a 30-day wait · Free to list; fixes vary

5 First month Learn the house

- [ ] **Build a Ready.gov emergency kit** Must-do
  For a home emergency kit, store at least one gallon of water per person per day for three days, plus non-perishable food you'll actually eat. Add a radio, flashlight, batteries, first aid kit, medicines, a wrench for utilities and copies of key documents. Keep it all in one or two bins that you can grab fast.
  About 2 hours · Varies; start with what you already own
  Buy: Emergency weather radios — we recommend Midland WR120B / WR120EZ NOAA Weather Alert Radio

- [ ] **Have the chimney inspected before first fire** Must-do A fireplace or wood stove
  Get a chimney inspection before you light your first fire. NFPA 211 calls for a Level II inspection when a property is sold or transferred, which includes a camera look at the flue. Expect about $200 to $600 or more with video. After that, a Level I inspection each year is the norm.
  One visit; ask how long when you book · About $200 to $600+ for Level II with video

- [ ] **Set up your first mortgage payment and autopay** Must-do A mortgage
  Your closing papers show your first mortgage payment due date and who to pay, and it's often later than you'd guess. Create an online account with that servicer, make the first payment yourself, then turn on autopay set for before the due date. Keep watching your mail, because servicers can change.
  20 min · Free; a late payment can cost about 4% to 5% of the payment · Before the first due date on your Closing Disclosure

- [ ] **Stock a family first aid kit**
  Start your family first aid kit checklist with the Red Cross list for a family of four: 25 adhesive bandages, 2 compress dressings, gauze, tape, antiseptic wipes, gloves, a thermometer, a cold pack and a space blanket. Add your family's medicines, keep it where everyone can reach it, and check it once a year.
  30 min · Varies by kit and what you add
  Buy: First-aid kits — we recommend Johnson & Johnson All-Purpose Portable First Aid Kit (140 pieces)

- [ ] **Write a family emergency communication plan**
  In your family emergency communication plan, write down how you'll get alerts, where you'll shelter, two evacuation routes and two meeting places. Pick one out-of-area contact everyone can text. Add medical details and phone numbers, then give everyone a copy. Ready.gov has a fillable form, and the whole job takes about an hour. About 1 hour · Free

- [ ] **Check your water for lead** Built before 1986
  You can't see, taste or smell lead in water, so testing is the only way to know. To test water for lead, ask your water utility to test your tap, or use a state-certified lab. Look up your service line in the utility's inventory too. Until you have results, drink and cook with cold water only, and make baby formula the same way. About 15 minutes, plus lab time · Varies; ask your utility about testing before you pay a lab
  Buy: Home water test kits — we recommend Safe Home Lead in Drinking Water Test Kit, 2 Test (In-Lab)

- [ ] **Put leak sensors under sinks and appliances**
  Put battery water leak sensors on the floor under sinks, behind toilets and the washer, by the water heater and fridge, and near a sump pit. Choose models that alert your phone. If you travel often, add an automatic shutoff valve, which a plumber usually has to install on the main line.
  About 30 minutes for battery sensors · Sensors vary; one maker lists a shutoff bundle at about $500 to $640 before plumber fees
  Buy: Water leak sensors — we recommend Basement Watchdog Water Alarm

- [ ] **Get fuel-burning appliances checked for venting** Gas appliances or gas heat
  Book a qualified technician once a year for a fuel-burning appliance inspection covering furnaces, boilers and water heaters along with their flues. CPSC says they should check chimneys and flues for blockages, corrosion and loose or disconnected sections. A service call with testing runs about $90 to $450. If a CO alarm sounds, get outside first. One visit; ask how long when you book · About $90 to $450 for a call with diagnostics
  Buy: Carbon monoxide alarms — we recommend First Alert Plug-In Carbon Monoxide Alarm with Battery Backup and Digital Display

- [ ] **Watch the mail for loan transfers and deed scams**
  After closing, your name is in public records, so expect deed mail scams and other letters that look official. You never need to buy a deed copy from a mailer, and a real loan transfer notice has specific details you can check. Verify anything using contact information you already have, never the phone number printed on the letter. 5 min per suspicious letter · Free; county deed copies are often $10 or less

- [ ] **Make a home inventory and review your policy**
  Make a home inventory for insurance by recording your belongings room by room with photos, serial numbers and receipts, then compare the list with your policy. Check your dwelling limit against rebuild cost, your contents limit, and low caps on items like jewelry. NAIC says to review coverage with your agent at least once a year and after renovations. 1 to 2 hrs for a first pass · Free
  ____/____

- [ ] **Book an HVAC service if there's no recent record**
  If you can't find a service record from the past 12 months, book a professional HVAC service visit for the system you'll use next: heating in fall, cooling in spring. A basic visit costs about $75 to $250 and gives you a baseline record of the equipment's age, condition and filter size.
  One visit; ask how long when you book · About $75 to $250 for a basic visit (varies by region)
  ____/____

- [ ] **Test the sump pump by filling the pit** A basement / A sump pump
  To test a sump pump, pour about five gallons of water into the pit, slowly, and watch the float rise. The pump should start on its own, lower the water quickly, shut off, and send the water out of the discharge pipe away from the house. Test it every few months and before your wet season, and fix any failure before the next storm. About 15 minutes · Free to test; a service call runs about $100 to $300 (one guide's estimate)
  Buy: Wet/dry shop vacuums — we recommend Ridgid 12-Gallon 5.0 Peak HP NXT Wet/Dry Shop Vacuum
  ____/____

- [ ] **Register appliances and check for recalls**
  To register appliances and check for recalls, write down each appliance's brand, model and serial number, then search them on CPSC.gov/Recalls. Register each one on the manufacturer's site in your own name, since appliances that came with the house may be listed under the last owner. Then subscribe to recall emails through Recalls.gov. 45 min · Free
  ____/____

- [ ] **Make rainwater drain away from the foundation**
  Good grading away from foundation walls means the ground falls at least 6 inches within the first 10 feet. Check it with a straight board and a level, watch where water goes in the rain, and extend downspouts so they empty well away from the house. Add soil where the slope runs backward.
  1 hour · Free to check; soil and pro work vary by site
  ____/____

- [ ] **Inspect the roof from the ground or a ladder**
  Inspect your roof at least twice a year, in spring and fall, and after any severe storm. To inspect a roof from the ground, use binoculars, or work from a ladder at the eaves. Look for missing, curling or split shingles, loose flashing, debris in valleys and stains inside. Call a roofer for anything you can't explain. About 30 minutes · Free
  ____/____

- [ ] **Turn your inspection report into a repair plan**
  Build your home inspection repair plan by sorting each finding into one of four tiers: immediate safety or active damage, near-term repairs, routine maintenance and cosmetic work. Get licensed specialists to scope serious items, compare itemized written estimates, then spread the rest across a one to three year budget. Safety and water come first. 1 hr to sort, longer for quotes · Free to sort; specialist visits vary
  ____/____

- [ ] **Start a separate home repair fund**
  Start a home repair fund: open a separate savings account and automate a monthly transfer. A common rule is 1% to 4% of your home's value a year: about 1% for a house under 10 years old, and closer to 4% for one over 30. On a $300,000 home, that's about $250 to $1,000 a month.
  15 min to open and automate · Free to set up; aim for about 1% to 4% of home value a year
  ____/____

- [ ] **Track indoor humidity**
  For ideal indoor humidity, set one digital humidity meter in your basement and another in a room you use every day, then check them regularly. EPA says to stay below 60%, ideally 30 to 50%. In cold weather, aim lower as the temperature drops outside. If the basement stays high, a dehumidifier set around 55% is the usual fix. A few minutes to set up, then quick checks · About $10 to $50 per humidity meter
  ____/____

- [ ] **Shut off the water before you travel**
  To turn off water before vacation, close the main house valve before you leave, after checking that it really stops the water. Decide what still needs water, such as sprinklers, set the water heater to vacation mode if it has one, and reopen the main slowly when you get back, watching for leaks.
  A few minutes on the day, plus one practice run about a week before · Free
  ____/____

- [ ] **Replace washer hoses and toilet supply lines**
  Replace washing machine hoses every three to five years, or now if you don't know their age, and check toilet supply lines the same day. Close the valves, thread on new hoses and tighten about a quarter turn past hand-tight. Braided stainless resists bursting, but its inner tube still ages.
  Varies; allow extra time to move a heavy front-loader · About $10 to $16 per pair of hoses in one November 2026 sample
  ____/____

- [ ] **Write a quick-reference sheet for house emergencies**
  Make a one-page house emergency reference sheet that shows where the water, gas and electric shutoffs are, with photos, and gives the first moves for a gas smell, leak, outage or frozen pipe. Add phone numbers for your utilities, plumber, electrician, HVAC company and insurer. Print it for anyone staying in the house. One sitting, plus a walk around the house · Free
  ____/____

- [ ] **Get a pest inspection, and a termite check where they're common**
  A pest inspection looks for active insects and the conditions that attract them. A termite or wood-destroying organism (WDO) inspection adds a written report on wood damage. Expect about $110 to $156 for a standard termite inspection, or $100 to $325 for a real estate report. Do it before you move your things in. 30 minutes to 2 hours; written report in about 1 to 3 days · About $110 to $156 standard; $100 to $325 for a real estate report
  ____/____

- [ ] **Set up a safe spot to charge e-bikes and batteries**
  For safe e-bike battery charging at home, charge e-bike and scooter batteries while you're awake and home, on a hard surface, away from exits and bedrooms, with a working smoke alarm nearby. Use only the manufacturer's charger, plug straight into the wall, and unplug when full. CPSC reports show most investigated e-bike fires began during charging. About 15 min · Free if you already have the right charger
  ____/____

- [ ] **Check the mailbox and house numbers**
  USPS mailbox height requirements generally call for a curbside box 41 to 45 inches above the road surface, with its door 6 to 8 inches back from the curb. Your house number should be on the box and readable from the street. Check with your local post office before you move or replace anything.
  15 minutes · Free to check; a new box or numbers vary
  ____/____

- [ ] **Introduce yourself to the neighbors**
  To meet your neighbors, say hello within your first weeks to the houses on each side and across the street, or leave a short note with your names and a phone number. Ask two or three practical questions about trash, parking and the house. Keep it brief, and let friendship come later. 30 min · Free
  ____/____

- [ ] **Swap the remaining bulbs for LEDs**
  To switch to LED bulbs, shop by lumens instead of watts: about 800 lumens replaces a 60-watt bulb and about 1,600 replaces a 100-watt. Match the base and shape, pick a color around 2700 to 3000 K for warm light, and buy bulbs marked dimmable for any dimmer switch.
  About 1 hour · Varies by bulb type; DOE estimates about $55 saved per bulb over its life
  Buy: LED light bulbs — we recommend Feit Electric 8.8W (60W-equivalent) Dimmable LED A19, 2700K soft white, 90+ CRI
  ____/____

- [ ] **Clean or replace the bathroom exhaust fan**
  To clean a bathroom exhaust fan, turn off the breaker, take down the grille, wash it and vacuum the housing and blades. Then hold a tissue to the running fan: it should stay against the grille. If the motor is noisy, hot or caked in dust, replace it with a matching part. The duct must end outdoors.
  Short job to clean; allow longer to replace a motor · Free to clean; replacement parts vary by model
  ____/____

- [ ] **Register for oil tank insurance if you heat with oil**
  If you heat with oil, check your heating oil tank insurance: confirm in writing whether your homeowners policy covers a tank leak, then ask your state environmental agency about a tank cleanup or insurance fund. Programs differ widely, and some require registration. Cleanup can top $100,000, so do this as soon as the house is yours. Varies by state; start with two phone calls · Varies by state program
  ____/____

6 First 3 months

Before the first season changes

- [ ] **Clear a 5-foot noncombustible zone** Must-do · Wildfire area
  Zone 0 defensible space is the first 5 feet around your house and attached decks. Replace wood mulch and plants with gravel, pavers or concrete, and move firewood and other things that burn. Fit metal mesh over vents, keep gutters clear and swap any wood fence where it meets the house.
  1 to 2 days for a basic clear-out, longer for fences and vents · Varies with landscaping, fencing and vent work
  ____/____

- [ ] **Apply for your homestead exemption** Must-do
  A homestead exemption cuts the taxable value of your primary home, and you normally apply through your county. Florida's takes off about $50,000, with a March 1 deadline. California's takes off $7,000, with a February 15 deadline for the full exemption. Most programs test where you lived on January 1.
  About 30 minutes · Usually free through your county · Varies by state (e.g., FL Mar 1, TX Apr 30, CA Feb 15)
  ____/____

- [ ] **Before renovating, test for lead and asbestos** Built before 1986
  For asbestos testing before renovation, have an accredited asbestos inspector take samples before you cut, sand, drill or demolish older materials, and treat paint in a pre-1978 home as lead until tested. Don't sample suspect material yourself. EPA says undamaged materials you won't disturb can stay in place. Use one firm to assess and a different firm to remove.
  A short sampling visit, plus lab time · Commonly a few hundred dollars for an asbestos inspection; about $300 to $700 for a lead inspection
  Buy: Lead test kits — we recommend LeadCheck Lead Test Swabs (8-pack)
  ____/____

- [ ] **Prepare the house for hurricane season** Hurricane area
  Prepare your house for hurricane season before it starts, June 1 in the Atlantic. Buy flood insurance at least 30 days ahead, look up your evacuation zone, and arrange shutters or 5/8-inch exterior plywood cut to fit each window. Clear gutters and drains, and know your hurricane deductible before a storm forms. Half day, plus lead time for insurance and shutters · Varies by house size and shutter type
  ____/____

- [ ] **Strap the water heater and secure heavy items** Earthquake area
  To strap a water heater, use a metal strap kit with two straps screwed into wall studs, with the tank within 2 inches of the wall. Have a plumber add flexible gas and water connectors if yours are rigid. Then anchor top-heavy furniture and appliances, and latch kitchen cabinets.
  2 to 3 hours · Varies; Earthquake Country Alliance rates straps, latches and hooks as low cost
  ____/____

- [ ] **Plan safe generator use before an outage** Freezing winters / Hurricane area
  For portable generator safety, run the generator only outdoors, at least 20 feet from the house, with the exhaust pointing away from doors, windows and vents. Buy a model with automatic CO shut-off. Power your home's circuits only through a transfer switch or interlock fitted by a licensed electrician.
  About 1 hour to plan; electrician work is extra · About $400 to $1,300 installed for a manual transfer switch; generator prices vary
  ____/____

- [ ] **Confirm your deed was recorded with the county**
  After closing, check if your deed was recorded: search your county recorder's website by name or address, or call the office. Confirm your names, how you hold title and the legal description. Copies usually cost a few dollars. If you spot an error or can't find the deed, call your title company or closing attorney right away. About 15 minutes · Often free to search; copies vary by county
  ____/____

- [ ] **Clean gutters and check they drain**
  Clean gutters after the leaves fall and before your wet season, and more often under trees. Scoop out debris from a well-set ladder, flush each run with a hose and confirm water exits the downspout. Set the ladder one foot out for every four feet of height, and hire out two-story homes.
  2–3 hrs · Free if you own a ladder; pro prices vary by height and length
  Buy: Extension ladders — we recommend Werner 28-ft Fiberglass Extension Ladder with GlideSafe
  ____/____

- [ ] **Look over trees near the house and lines**
  To tell if a tree is dangerous, walk around every large tree that could reach your house, driveway or power lines and check it for large dead branches, cracks, cavities, mushrooms at the base, leaning and recent root damage. If you see any of these, have an ISA Certified Arborist examine it. Never touch branches near power lines. About 30 minutes · Free to look; arborist fees vary, so get a written quote
  ____/____

- [ ] **Call 811 before planting trees or setting posts**
  Call 811 before you dig, or file online, a few business days ahead, even for a small shrub. It's free. Utilities mark their buried lines with paint or flags. Wait until all of them have responded, then hand dig near the marks. Private lines such as sprinklers usually aren't marked.
  About 10 minutes to file, then a wait of a few business days · Free · 2–3 business days before any digging
  ____/____

- [ ] **Watch for a supplemental property tax bill**
  In California, a sale triggers a new assessment, and you may get one or two supplemental property tax bills for the difference. These bills aren't mailed to your lender, and your impound account won't pay them. Watch your county tax collector's website after closing and pay any bill yourself by its due date.
  15 min to check, then watch for a few months · Depends on the value change; can be a refund ____/____

- [ ] **Check attic insulation depth and ventilation** An attic
  To see how much attic insulation you need, measure the depth with a ruler from the hatch, then compare it with ENERGY STAR's target for your climate zone. Most US zones call for R-38 to R-60. For blown cellulose, R-49 means about 13 to 15 inches. Check that soffit vents stay clear before adding more.
  30 minutes · Free to check ____/____

- [ ] **Inspect the sprinkler system** Lawn sprinklers
  To inspect a sprinkler system, find the controller, backflow device and valves, then run each zone and watch it. Look for broken or tilted heads, leaks, and spray landing on pavement. Fix those, set a seasonal schedule, and ask your water utility if your backflow device needs testing. EPA suggests inspecting the system monthly. 1 to 2 hours · Free to check; parts and controllers vary ____/____

- [ ] **Learn the lawn: grass type, mowing height, watering**
  Lawn care basics start with your grass type, because it sets your mowing height. Mow often enough that you never cut more than a third of the blade. Water only when the lawn shows stress, using about 1/2 to 1 inch in the early morning, and test the soil before you buy fertilizer.
  About 30 minutes to learn the basics · About $10 for a soil test at Penn State's lab; fees vary by state ____/____

7 First year Before your first anniversary

- [ ] **Learn the builder warranty and book the 11-month walkthrough** Must-do A newly built home
  Book your 11-month builder warranty inspection, either a walkthrough or an independent inspection, while most one-year builder coverage is still active. Compare what you find against your warranty booklet, send the full repair list in writing, and keep every record. Coverage terms vary, so your own booklet decides what counts and when it ends.
  2 to 3 hours · Free with the builder; about $200 to $350 for an independent inspector, varying by region · Before the 12-month anniversary of closing ____/____

- [ ] **Review your first escrow analysis and tax bill** A mortgage
  Your escrow analysis compares what your servicer collected with what taxes and insurance now cost. If costs rose, you may have a shortage and a higher payment. Check the tax and insurance figures against your real bills, and remember that federal rules limit the cushion and require refunds of $50 or more. 30 min · Free to review; a shortage can raise your payment ____/____

- [ ] **Note your PMI removal date and plan for it** A mortgage
  For PMI removal on most conventional loans, you can ask to cancel once your balance reaches 80% of the home's original value, and PMI generally ends on its own at 78%. Find both dates on your PMI disclosure, put them on your calendar, and keep a clean payment record so a written request succeeds.
  15 min now, plus one written request later · Free to request; any appraisal cost varies, so ask your servicer first ____/____

- [ ] **Start a tax file for the house** A mortgage
  Start one folder of homeowner tax records with your closing statement, each Form 1098, proof of property taxes paid, and receipts for improvements. You use the first three to see if itemizing beats the standard deduction each year. You use the last to reduce taxable gain when you sell. Keep it all while you own the home. 30 min to set up, then a few minutes per receipt · Free ____/____

- [ ] **Live in the house a year before remodeling**
  Live in a house for about a year before remodeling a kitchen or bath, adding on or changing the layout, so you see every season and learn how you use the house. Don't wait on safety hazards or water. Paint and small fixture swaps are cheap, reversible and fine to do early.
  One full year of seasons · Free to wait; set a monthly repair fund ____/____

- [ ] **Appeal your property tax assessment if it's too high**
  If your home is worth less than its assessed value, appeal your property tax assessment by the deadline on your notice. Start with an informal review at the assessor's office, then go to the local board. Your Closing Disclosure and three to five comparable sales are your best evidence. Deadlines are short and vary by location. A few hours of paperwork, plus any hearing · Informal review is free; some places charge a filing fee ____/____

- [ ] **Check energy tax credits before upgrading**
  The two main federal home energy tax credits are gone for new projects. The efficiency credit (25C) doesn't apply to property placed in service after December 31, 2025, and the clean energy credit (25D) doesn't apply to spending after that date. Don't budget a 2026 upgrade around either one.
  About 15 minutes · Free ____/____

- [ ] **Plant trees in your first year**
  To plant a tree, contact 811 a few business days before you dig, then dig a hole two to three times wider than the root ball and no deeper. Set the root flare at ground level, backfill with native soil and mulch 2 to 4 inches deep. Water deeply for two summers.
  Varies with tree size and soil · Varies by species and size; the 811 call is free ____/____

Gear list

What the tasks call for. Why we chose each one: newhousechecklist.com/buying-guides/

	WHAT	BEST FOR MOST HOMES	BEST VALUE
☐	**Radon test kits** For: Test for radon	Kansas State University short-term radon test kit	—
☐	**Lead test kits** For: Use your 10-day lead paint inspection window	LeadCheck Lead Test Swabs (8-pack)	—
☐	**Home water test kits** For: Test the private well before closing	Safe Home Lead in Drinking Water Test Kit, 2 Test (In-Lab)	—
☐	**Fireproof document safes** For: File your closing documents for the long haul	SentrySafe Fire/Water File Folder Chest (Document Box)	SentrySafe 1200 Fireproof Box with Key Lock
☐	**Lock rekey kits** For: Rekey or replace every exterior lock	Kwikset SmartKey Security Re-Key Lock Kit	—
☐	**Smart locks** For: Rekey or replace every exterior lock	Schlage Encode Smart Wi-Fi Deadbolt	Wyze Lock Bolt v2
☐	**Deadbolts** For: Rekey or replace every exterior lock	Schlage B60N Single Cylinder Deadbolt	Kwikset 980 Single Cylinder Deadbolt with SmartKey
☐	**Smoke alarms** For: Test, replace and add smoke alarms	Kidde Smoke Alarm, 10-Year Battery Powered (DETECT series)	Kidde Smoke Alarm, AA Battery Powered (DETECT series)
☐	**Smoke + CO combo alarms** For: Test, replace and add smoke alarms	First Alert 10-Year Battery 2-in-1 Smoke and CO Alarm with Slim Profile Design	—
☐	**Step ladders** For: Test, replace and add smoke alarms	Louisville Ladder 6-Foot Fiberglass Cross Step Ladder	Gorilla Ladders 2-Step Aluminum Step Stool Ladder
☐	**Carbon monoxide alarms** For: Test and add carbon monoxide alarms	First Alert Plug-In Carbon Monoxide Alarm with Battery Backup and Digital Display	First Alert Plug-In Carbon Monoxide Alarm with Battery Backup
☐	**Dryer vent cleaning kits** For: Clean the dryer vent and replace foil duct	Gardus LintEater Rotary Dryer Vent Cleaning System	—
☐	**HVAC air filters** For: Replace the HVAC filter and record its size	Filtrete Healthy Living Elite Allergen Reduction, MPR 2200 (MERV 13), 1-inch	Aerostar Allergen & Pet Dander MERV 11 Pleated Air Filter
☐	**Mesh Wi-Fi systems** For: Set up internet and Wi-Fi	ASUS ZenWiFi BT8	TP-Link Deco BE23 (Deco 7 BE3600 dual-band Wi-Fi 7)
☐	**Surge protectors** For: Set up internet and Wi-Fi	Tripp Lite Protect It! 12-Outlet Surge Protector, 8 ft cord, 2880 joules	Tripp Lite Protect It! 6-Outlet Surge Protector, 6 ft cord, 900 joules
☐	**Cordless stick vacuums** For: Deep clean the empty house	Shark PowerDetect Cordless (incl. Clean & Empty version)	Levoit LVAC-200
☐	**Wet/dry shop vacuums** For: Test the sump pump by filling the pit	Ridgid 12-Gallon 5.0 Peak HP NXT Wet/Dry Shop Vacuum	Stanley 5-Gallon 4 Peak HP Wet/Dry Vacuum
☐	**Flashlights and lanterns** For: Find the electrical panel and label the breakers	ThruNite Archer 2A V3	—
☐	**Label makers** For: Find the electrical panel and label the breakers	Brother P-touch PT-D220 Home/Office Label Maker	Brother P-touch PT-H110
☐	**Furniture and TV anti-tip kits** For: Anchor dressers, bookcases and TVs	Hangman Anti-Tip Kit (400 lb steel cable)	—
☐	**Stud finders** For: Anchor dressers, bookcases and TVs	Zircon MultiScanner A200	Zircon StudSensor A100
☐	**Box cutters for moving day**	Milwaukee FASTBACK Compact Folding Utility Knife	—

	WHAT	BEST FOR MOST HOMES	BEST VALUE
	For: Pack a first-night box for every person		
☐	**Toilet plungers** For: Put a plunger next to every toilet	Korky BeehiveMAX Universal Toilet Plunger	—
☐	**Drain snakes and toilet augers** For: Put a plunger next to every toilet	Ridgid Power Spin+ Drain Cleaner	FlexiSnake Drain Weasel Hair Clog Kit
☐	**Fire escape ladders** For: Make a fire escape plan and practice it	Kidde 2-Story Fire Escape Ladder (13 ft)	—
☐	**Fire extinguishers** For: Mount fire extinguishers on each level	Amerex B402 5-lb ABC Dry Chemical Extinguisher	Kidde Basic 110 Multipurpose Fire Extinguisher
☐	**Non-contact voltage testers** For: Test outlets, GFCIs and AFCIs	Klein Tools NCVT-3P Dual-Range Non-Contact Voltage Tester with Flashlight	—
☐	**Cordless drills** For: Reinforce exterior and sliding doors	DeWalt ATOMIC 20V MAX Brushless 1/2-in Drill/Driver Kit	Black+Decker 20V MAX Cordless Drill/Driver
☐	**Patio door security bars** For: Reinforce exterior and sliding doors	Ideal Security Patio Door Security Bar with Anti-Lift Lock	Master Lock Dual Function Door Security Bar
☐	**Home tool kits** For: Put together a basic toolkit	Stanley 65-Piece Homeowner's Tool Kit	Apollo Tools 39-Piece General Tool Set
☐	**Video doorbells** For: Take over or cancel the existing alarm system	Google Nest Doorbell (Wired, 3rd Gen)	Ring Wired Doorbell 2K (2nd Gen)
☐	**Smart thermostats** For: Program a thermostat schedule	ecobee Smart Thermostat Essential	Honeywell Home X2S Smart Thermostat
☐	**Emergency weather radios** For: Build a Ready.gov emergency kit	Midland WR120B / WR120EZ NOAA Weather Alert Radio	Midland ER210 Portable Emergency Crank Weather Radio
☐	**First-aid kits** For: Stock a family first aid kit	Johnson & Johnson All-Purpose Portable First Aid Kit (140 pieces)	—
☐	**Water leak sensors** For: Put leak sensors under sinks and appliances	Basement Watchdog Water Alarm	—
☐	**Smart water shutoff valves** For: Put leak sensors under sinks and appliances	Moen Flo by Moen Smart Water Monitor and Shutoff (1 in)	YoLink Wireless Valve Controller and Bulldog Valve Robot Automatic Water Leak Detection and Shut-off Kit (hub included)
☐	**LED light bulbs** For: Swap the remaining bulbs for LEDs	Feit Electric 8.8W (60W-equivalent) Dimmable LED A19, 2700K soft white, 90+ CRI	Sylvania LED A19 8.5W (60W-equivalent), 2700K, non-dimmable, 24-pack
☐	**Extension ladders** For: Clean gutters and check they drain	Werner 28-ft Fiberglass Extension Ladder with GlideSafe	—
☐	**Gutter cleaning tools** For: Clean gutters and check they drain	Orbit Telescoping Gutter Cleaning Wand	Amerimax Home Products Gutter Getter Scoop

Important numbers and places

Main water shutoff is _____

Main breaker panel is _____

Gas shutoff is _____

HVAC filter size _____

Water heater age / model _____

Electric provider + account # _____

Gas provider + account # _____

Water / sewer provider _____

Internet provider _____

Trash and recycling day _____

Homeowners insurance + policy # _____

Mortgage servicer + loan # _____

Plumber _____ **Electrician** _____

HVAC company _____ **Nearest urgent care** _____