

A Home Seller's Guide to Plumbing Repairs and Improvements

No one wants to invest a significant amount of money into a home they plan to sell, but some strategic repairs and replacements can have a big impact on future sales. Before your buyer's inspector leaves your home with a long list of repairs, worrying your buyers in the process, spend some time making these plumbing repairs and improvements.

Fix Dripping Faucets

Everyone knows that kitchens and bathrooms sell homes, but not everyone can invest in an expensive remodeling project before placing their home on the market. Instead of thinking about a complete makeover, focus on making sure that your existing fixtures function properly. While buyers may not have the wow factor, they can be sure that everything is in working order.

If you hear the drip-drip-drip of your leaking faucet, potential buyers will hear it, too. Fortunately, repairing a leaking faucet is typically an easy fix. The most common cause of a leaking faucet is a worn or damaged O-ring in the handle or knob. Follow manufacturer's guidelines to remove the knob and replace the O-ring or neoprene seal found inside. Though the solution to a leaking faucet is simple, however, you may want to take the opportunity to update the fixture instead of repairing it. Even if an entire kitchen remodel may not be in your budget, small updates like new fixtures, can have a larger impact.

Replace Toilets

You may have gotten used to your toilet that never stops running or wobbles while it's being used, but potential buyers are likely to notice. Some toilet repairs are simple, and certainly more cost effective than installing a whole new fixture, but when should you consider replacing it?

The average life span of a toilet is around 25 years. If your toilet is older than that, or if it looks like it could be older than that, you may want to consider replacement over repairs. Cracks and leaks in the toilet itself are another indicator that it's time to install a new fixture. Wobbling toilets and those that continue running long after you flush usually require simple fixes, but if you find yourself repairing the same issue time after time, you may want to consider purchasing a new toilet.

Check for Undetected Leaks

Most homeowners don't realize they have a leak until it pools on their kitchen floors or comes through the walls or ceiling. It's important to know, however, that even small leaks, which can go undetected for months, can cause damage to flooring a drywall, and leave mold and mildew in their path.

Potential home buyers can look past an outdated paint color or a broken light fixture, but water damage is often a deal breaker. That's why it is essential to find any possible leaks, then repair not just the pipe itself, but any water damage from surrounding areas as well. If you suspect you have a leak, either because of noticeable changes in water pressure or an unusually high water bill, you may want to consider having a licensed plumber conduct an inspection.

Replace Garbage Disposal

A garbage disposal is a modern convenience that most potential buyers expect to find in their future homes. If your older kitchen sink doesn't have a garbage disposal, consider installing a new one before you place your home on the market. Most garbage disposals last from 8-15 years with normal use. If your existing unit is older than that, or if your family uses it more frequently, you may want to consider replacement. Other signs that a new garbage disposal is needed include frequent clogs or leaks under the sink.

Replace Hot Water Tank

Having energy efficient appliances can be a strong selling point for homeowners. If you have an older, less efficient water heater, now may be the right time to replace it. Newer models not only do a better job at heating water, they can also save on energy bills, a win-win for new home buyers.

The average life expectancy for water heaters is between 8-12 years, but even if your heater is in this age range, you may want to consider replacement, especially if you've noticed changes to your water pressure when the hot water is being used, or if the time it takes to heat the water has increased significantly.

Upgrade Your Plumbing Pipes

Repiping a house is not a necessary repair for most homeowners looking to sell, but in some cases, it may be an important fix to make. In order to decide whether to consider pipe replacement, you first need to know the age and material of your existing piping. If your home is 70 years old, or older, you may want to have a plumber inspect your piping to make sure that your supply lines are in good working order. Your plumber's assessment could bring peace of mind to future homeowners, anxious about buying an older home.

If lead piping still exists anywhere in your home, it should be replaced, because even if the pipes are in working order, lead could leach into the water supply. In addition, polybutylene piping, common in homes built from the 1970s through the 1990s have a reputation of breaking. If your home was built during this time period and you've dealt with frequent leaks, you may want to talk to your plumber about the benefits of repiping.

Preparing your Home for Sale

When planning to sell a home, it can be challenging to determine which repairs to make. First, find and repair all leaks, from the kitchen faucet to the crawl space. Water damage can be a deal breaker for many new home owners, so be sure to not only repair the leak, but fix any damage it caused. Next, make sure that things in your kitchen and bathrooms are in working order, including your toilet and garbage disposals. Inspect your water heater, and consider replacing it if it is 12 years or older, or if you've noticed significant changes to your hot water usage. Finally, speak with a plumber about replacing pipes, especially in older homes. These changes may seem small, but they will be a strong selling point to your future buyers.