

# **The Essential Home Owner's Manual**

*An indispensable guide to successful homeownership for  
caring homeowners who value their time and their home.*

By  
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## Introduction

As a home inspector, it is common to find many preventable problems in the homes I inspect because most homeowners are unaware of proper home maintenance. This is not surprising when you consider most homes don't typically come with an owner's manual and most homeowners learn homeownership through the school of hard knocks. Unfortunately, the education is often very costly. With a minimal amount of effort and knowledge all homeowners can ensure their home is properly maintained and avoid unnecessary costs and damage.

To that end, this book has been written to serve as a guide and resource in providing information on the essentials of homeownership. The audience is every homeowner. You do not need to be a do-it-yourselfer or a handy-Andy or Ann. What is needed is an understanding that it is the homeowners' responsibility to know what needs to be done and when it needs to be done. Knowledge and awareness of your home's condition, safety issues and the elements that require prompt attention is necessary in order to protect yourself, your family and your investment. You do not necessarily have to perform the maintenance work yourself, only to ensure that it is performed and that it is done by competent individuals or companies.

It may help to think of this book as a homeowner's version of the automobile owner's manual. An automobile owner's manual will provide information on the vehicles operation and required maintenance schedule. It is not a "how to" manual for fixing the car, since it is not important for all automobile owners to know how to fix their car, just to know what and when maintenance needs to be performed to ensure safe operation and prolong the life of the vehicle. The owner can choose to perform the maintenance or repairs themselves or have it done by a professional.

Again, the focus of this book is on what needs to be done rather than detailed step-by-step instructions on how to do the maintenance. If you choose to perform your home maintenance work yourself and find you need additional information, there are numerous sources that can provide broad or detailed step-by-step how-to information that is suited to your specific situation and needs. These include how-to books, magazines, television shows and web sites (see Web Tips below).

## How to Use This Book

Each section and topic of this book provides vital information and warrants reading from cover to cover, however, to serve as a reference manual, the topics presented are independent from one another. You do not need to follow a particular progression or order to gain an understanding of a given topic. This allows you to easily find the subject you are interested in and all pertinent information and explanations will be contained under that topic. In places where references are made to other areas, the reference will provide additional helpful, but not necessarily essential information for the given topic.

The first section presented is "[\*Basic Home Tool Kit\*](#)". Even if you are not very handy, there will always be a need for some very basic tools. This section provides a listing of the minimum recommended tools that are not only convenient to have on hand for simple needs, but also contain some basic tools that are essential in an emergency.

The "[\*General Information Every Homeowner Should Know\*](#)" is a must read section that provides homeownership fundamentals and warrants an understanding by all homeowners. It includes important information that applies to every home. It also contains insights into homeownership and helpful advice that can better prepare you for some of the uncertainties and stress that go with owning a home.

There are many things that can pose a threat to a house and its occupants and your knowledge and awareness is critical to help minimize or eliminate unnecessary risks. The "[\*Person Protection\*](#)" section addresses threats and safety practices that directly impact the health and well being of people. The "[\*Property Protection\*](#)" section addresses threats mainly to property, but that also can cause harm to people. It provides information, sound advice and procedures to follow, that will help minimize or prevent damage to various systems or components of the house in emergency situations.

[\*“The Essentials of the Essential Home Components”\*](#) section will provide answers to some of the important questions most homeowners have.

- What systems and components of a home should I be concerned with?
- What should I know about them?
- What conditions are problematic?
- What conditions require immediate correction and what can wait?

Presented in this section are the most important systems, components, and materials of your home that you should be aware of. Each topic will start with what you should expect to find in your home regarding installation and condition. Most topics will also contain a checklist, presented as bullet points, of inspection and upkeep information. This format is intended to provide a quick reference to help you quickly and easily assess the condition of the item. Inspection and assessment of the items in this section should be considered part of routine home upkeep and done on a regularly scheduled basis. The checklists ensure thoroughness and serves to help you perform the task quickly.

Timely awareness of your homes condition is essential and that’s why routine inspection and assessment of your home’s condition on a regularly scheduled basis is necessary. To facilitate this important task, a quick reference summary of the fundamental home maintenance and inspection tasks is provided in convenient schedules at the back of the book in the [\*“Routine Maintenance Schedule”\*](#) and [\*“Routine Inspection Schedule”\*](#). I highly recommend you take advantage of these schedules and use them as they will serve as indispensable tools that will provide an easy, concise, and clear checklist of what essential inspection and maintenance tasks should be performed and when they should be performed.

## **Terminology**

This book is written to provide an easy read and understanding, simple common terms are used wherever possible, however, sometimes professional trade terms are the most appropriate or there is no better way to say something. A glossary is provided to assist in understanding trade terms.

Also, links to glossary terms are provided within the text. To avoid unnecessary redundancy, the link will only be in the first occurrence of a term in a topic or subtopic. Where the definition of a term within the text is sufficient no link to the glossary is provided.

## **Helpful Links**

Since this book is presented in electronic format, links to other pages within the book and other electronic documents included in the CD are provided to enhance and facilitate your reading. It is helpful to note that:

- Links to other topics, subtopics or figures within the book will be presented as italicized font with blue underlined text i.e. [\*“sample”\*](#).
- Links to other documents included in this CD will be presented in Arial font with blue underlined text i.e. [“sample”](#)
- Links to glossary terms will appear in the same font and size as the text, only with blue text and no underline i.e. [“sample”](#).

## **Helpful PDF Navigation Tips**

This book is presented in Adobe PDF format. If you are unfamiliar with many of the useful mouse or keyboard features that facilitate PDF navigation, click on this link for helpful [Adobe PDF Navigation Tips](#).

## **Tips**

Where appropriate, helpful tips regarding a topic are provided as a separate item.

## **Web Tips**

In some cases, additional information that is beyond the scope of this book, or the latest information available for products, materials, or topic may be of interest to the reader. The internet provides a quick and easy source of detailed information. To help you quickly find additional detailed information, I have provided web tips. These are keywords that you can use in your favorite search engine (Ask, Dogpile, Google, Yahoo, etc.) to find the latest information available. Because the internet is a dynamic environment where web site addresses are constantly changing (i.e. being added or removed) I have avoided specific web addresses since they may become obsolete.