



FREE HOMEOWNER FIELD GUIDE

Replace All Your Filters: Why It Is Very Important

A practical whole-home plan to support efficient equipment, cleaner indoor conditions, and the wellbeing of your family and fur babies.

The hidden maintenance job in every room

Most homes have more filters than their owners can name. This guide turns them into one visible routine.

THE 20-MINUTE RESET

Find, photograph, and date them

A filter is a barrier with a job: catch particles, grease, lint, sediment, or odors before they recirculate or reach sensitive equipment. When that barrier is loaded, performance can change. The right response is not “buy the strongest filter.” It is to use the exact type and schedule the equipment maker specifies.

- Walk room by room with your phone and photograph each filter location.
- Record the exact dimensions, model number, airflow arrow, and last-change date.
- Check the manual before changing filter type or filtration rating.
- Add a recurring reminder; inspect sooner during heavy use, smoke, renovation dust, shedding, or allergy season.

Important: replacement schedules are starting points.

Condition, use, climate, pets, and manufacturer instructions can change the interval. Inspect first; replace when required.

Heating and cooling airflow

The filter protects the system and can help manage recirculated particles—but only when it fits and airflow stays adequate.

CHECK MONTHLY

HVAC return-air filter

- Turn the system off at the thermostat before removing the old filter.
- Confirm the printed size and note the airflow arrow. The arrow points toward the blower or air handler.
- Slide the replacement in without bending it. Gaps around the frame allow bypass.
- Start with the manufacturer's recommended efficiency rating. A higher MERV rating can restrict airflow in systems not designed for it.
- Write the installation date on the frame and set the next inspection reminder.

Stop and get help when:

The filter is wet, collapses, whistles, repeatedly turns black quickly, or you see suspected mold. Fix moisture and airflow causes rather than masking them with a new filter.

Water and kitchen filters

These filters do different jobs. Keep their parts, cleaning methods, and replacement records separate.

FOLLOW THE APPLIANCE MANUAL

Refrigerator water and ice

- Use the exact compatible cartridge; certification applies to the complete filter model, not a look-alike shape.
- Shut off water if the manual requires it. Protect the floor with a towel.
- Install, flush, and reset the indicator exactly as directed. Check for leaks after several minutes and again later.

REMOVE GREASE SAFELY

Range hood

- Switch the hood off and let the cooktop cool before removing filters.
- Wash reusable metal grease filters only as the maker directs; replace damaged mesh.
- Replace charcoal filters on recirculating hoods; they are usually not washable.
- Never operate the hood without its required filter installed.

Lint, vacuum, and pet hair

Lint and fine dust need routine removal. Your fur baby may make the schedule shorter—but the manual still sets the method.

EVERY LOAD

Dryer lint control

- Clean the lint screen before or after every load.
- If drying time increases, stop using the dryer until the vent path is checked.
- Inspect the exterior flap while the dryer runs; it should open and exhaust freely.
- Do not run a dryer with a damaged screen or use a screen coating that blocks airflow.

DO NOT SPREAD THE DUST

Vacuum and robot vacuum

- Empty bins outside or into a bag when practical, especially if someone is sensitive to dust.
- Wash only filters explicitly labeled washable, and let them dry completely before reinstalling.
- Replace torn, misshapen, or persistently clogged filters with compatible parts.

Portable air cleaners and dehumidifiers

Correct sizing, safe placement, and source control matter as much as the filter itself.

USE THE LABEL, NOT HYPE

Portable equipment

- Match the room size and airflow rating to the space. Keep intakes and outlets clear.
- Vacuum a permanent prefilter only if instructions allow; replace disposable filters rather than washing them.
- Avoid ozone-generating devices in occupied spaces.
- For dehumidifiers, clean the intake filter and water bucket; address the leak or moisture source too.

A realistic health note

Good filtration may reduce some airborne particles when correctly selected and operated. It cannot diagnose or treat illness, and it does not replace ventilation, source control, smoke avoidance, pest control, or proper mold and moisture remediation. Ask a qualified clinician about individual health concerns.

Your whole-home filter inventory

Write the actual manufacturer interval beside each item, then set reminders on your phone or calendar.

ROOM-BY-ROOM

Inventory checklist

- ☐ HVAC return or air-handler filter
- ☐ Refrigerator water/ice cartridge
- ☐ Range hood grease filter
- ☐ Range hood charcoal filter, if present
- ☐ Dryer lint screen and exterior vent
- ☐ Vacuum or robot-vacuum filters
- ☐ Portable air-cleaner filter
- ☐ Dehumidifier intake filter
- ☐ Humidifier pad or filter, if present
- ☐ Other: _____

MODEL / SIZE: _____

NEXT CHECK: _____

STORAGE LOCATION: _____

The repeatable filter routine

A small record is more useful than a stack of filters bought without a plan.

FOUR STEPS

Inspect → identify → replace → record

- **INSPECT:** Look for loading, damage, moisture, odors, weak airflow, or longer appliance cycles.
- **IDENTIFY:** Match exact dimensions and model compatibility. Never guess from appearance alone.
- **REPLACE OR CLEAN:** Follow shutdown, handling, washing, drying, flushing, and installation instructions.
- **RECORD:** Photograph the label, write the date, and schedule the next inspection.

YOUR NEXT SAFE STEP

Start with the HVAC filter today.

Confirm the size and airflow direction, then visit xianehomes.org/diy/change-an-air-filter for the step-by-step video. If the equipment is damaged, wet, hot, or unsafe to access, stop and use Find a Pro.

SOURCES TO KEEP HANDY

- Equipment manufacturer manuals and care labels
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: Guide to Air Cleaners in the Home
- ENERGY STAR: Heating and cooling maintenance guidance
- U.S. Fire Administration: Clothes dryer fire safety

Educational information only. Product requirements differ. Follow manufacturer, local code, utility, fire-safety, and qualified professional guidance.

My filter reminder planner

Find each filter, write the actual maker interval, then put the next check on your calendar.

FILTER / TASK	MODEL / SIZE	NEXT CHECK
Heating & cooling Inspect monthly; replace as directed	_____	_____
Refrigerator water & ice Check cartridge indicator and manual	_____	_____
Range hood grease Inspect / clean per manual	_____	_____
Range hood charcoal (if fitted) Replace per manual; do not wash	_____	_____
Dryer lint & exterior vent Clean screen every load; inspect vent	_____	_____
Vacuum & robot vacuum Wash only if washable; dry fully	_____	_____
Portable air cleaner Check indicator and manual	_____	_____
Dehumidifier intake Clean per manual; fix moisture source	_____	_____

A schedule is a prompt, not a replacement guarantee.

Pets, smoke, dust, heavy use and local conditions may shorten the interval. Match the exact filter and follow the equipment manual first.

Set optional personal reminders at xianehomes.org/replace-all-your-filters