



Residential Letting That Works For You

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# Maintenance Policy

## Guide for Tenants



# The Right Place | Maintenance Policy Guide

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## About this guide

This guide provides you with information about our maintenance policy and service to our tenants.

It tells you what you need to do before we can respond to a maintenance request, what repairs we are responsible for and what repairs you are responsible for.

## What to do in an emergency

### Water leak

- Turn the mains water stopcock clockwise (to the right).
- If you have no water supply to the property, call your water supplier.

### Gas leak

- Call the Gas Emergency Service immediately on 0800 111 999. Use a telephone outside your home; even using a mobile phone inside could spark an explosion (for non-emergency repairs call 0800 840 8021).
- Don't smoke or switch anything electrical on or off until the problem is fixed.
- Turn off the gas by turning the handle at the gas meter to the horizontal position.
- Open windows.

### Electricity

- Turn the mains switch on the consumer unit (fuse box) to OFF.
- If you have a power cut, call the emergency number for your electricity supplier.

### Fire

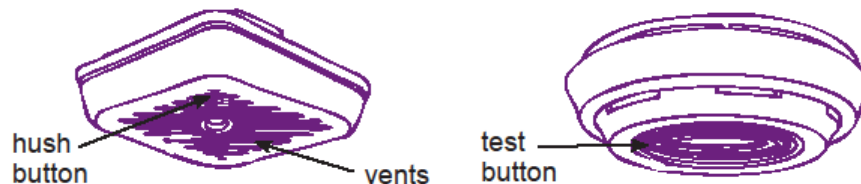
- Do not attempt to tackle a fire yourself. Smoke and fumes can kill in minutes.
- Get everyone out of the house and call 999, or 112 immediately.
- Don't go back for any reason.

## What to do in an emergency (continued)

### Smoke, fumes or your smoke detector sounds

- If you can smell or see smoke, call 999, or 112 immediately.
- Take your family to where it is easy to escape, in case there is a fire.
- Check all rooms for signs of smoke. Feel around each door before opening. If there is any sign of heat, smoke, or noise don't open the door.
- If there is no sign of smoke or fire something may have caused the alarm to sound in error and you will need to reset it. This can happen if:
  - ❖ a heater or clothes drier is too near it
  - ❖ someone smokes a cigarette or pipe near it, or an aerosol spray is used near it
  - ❖ there are a lot of cooking fumes or steam (i.e. burnt toast or roasting meat)
  - ❖ there are strong draughts from nearby doors or windows
  - ❖ the battery is low.
- To reset the detector, press and hold the test button until the alarm stops sounding.
- To test your detector, press and hold the test button for a few seconds. The alarm should sound. If the alarm does not sound, try cleaning it using the nozzle of your vacuum cleaner. Test the detector again. If it still does not sound, then you can contact us.
- Never disconnect a detector. This will put you and your family at risk.

### Smoke detectors



## Our responsibilities

- Landlords' repairing obligations are set out in Section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985.
- We are responsible for maintaining the external *structure* of your home and any outbuildings, such as external walls, roofs, doors and windows (excluding glass), drains, gutters and outside pipes, together with the main paths that lead to your front and back doors.
- Inside your home, we are responsible for water and gas pipes, wiring, heating systems, drainage, power and light fittings and any items originally provided by us, but not items that are your responsibility (see what you are responsible for in the following section).
- We are responsible for carrying out a gas safety check once a year in any of our homes that has a gas supply. You must allow us access to your home to carry out the gas safety check. It is for your safety. If you do not allow us access, we will take legal action and charge for our costs.
- We are *not* responsible for communal areas and facilities in blocks of flats.

## Your responsibilities

Not all routine maintenance is the responsibility of your landlord. Under Housing and landlord and tenant law you are expected to attend to minor maintenance and repairs yourself, or to arrange and pay to get them done by someone else.

The following are examples of your responsibilities; however it is not an exhaustive list.

### General

- Keep your home in good condition, including the fixtures, fittings and internal decoration.
- Allow our staff and contractors access to your home to carry out safety checks, inspections and repairs.
- Inform us as soon as you notice a repair is needed and to take action to prevent it getting worse, or causing injury.
- Repair any fixture or appliance you own, or took responsibility for when you started your tenancy.
- Take out home contents insurance to protect your own belongings, with cover to include accidental damage to the property caused by you, your family, visitors and pets.
- Arrange for the repair of any damage caused by you, a member of your household, a visitor or a pet. If we have to do the repair to make sure you and your family are safe you will have to pay for the cost of the repair.
- If damage is caused by criminal behaviour, we may carry out work to make your home safe, which you will be responsible for paying for, unless you provide us with a Police crime number (not just an incident number).

### Bathrooms

- Regularly clean all baths, basins, shower trays and toilet bowls using the appropriate proprietary cleaning products and keep free from limescale, staining and corrosion.
- Clean and remove limescale from taps and shower heads.
- Clear baths, basins, showers and toilets blocked by hair, cooking fat, body waste, etc.
- Do not flush down any toilet items such as nappies, cleaning wipes, toilet fresheners, condoms, tampons, etc. If you have a macerator attached to your toilet you will have been informed that nothing except body waste and toilet paper can be flushed. If you block a macerator by flushing anything inappropriate you will be charged for it to be unblocked, which costs from £300 upwards.
- Replace toilet seats, flush handles, shower heads and hoses, plugs and chains on baths, basins and sinks.
- Renew tap washers and keep taps free from limescale and corrosion.
- Renew bath and shower sealant that becomes mouldy, or discoloured.
- Ensure that any extractors, or air vents remain unobstructed.
- Ensure that shower curtains are pulled across during use to prevent water damage to floor coverings. Regularly washing shower curtains will prevent dirt and mould staining. Most shower curtains are machine washable, but always check the care label before washing.

## Your responsibilities (continued)

### Cleaning

- Regularly clean inside and outside your home, including the inside and outside of all doors and windows.
- Regularly vacuum and shampoo carpets to prevent dirt from becoming ingrained.
- Regularly wash and press curtains, nets and drapes.
- With proper care, attention and regular cleaning we expect to achieve a minimum lifespan, from new, of 5 years for internal decoration and 10 years for carpets, curtains, nets, kitchens and bathrooms.

### Decoration

- Do not hang pictures or posters on the walls without permission. Nail & screw holes can cause significant damage to wall finishes and you will be charged for any damage caused by their use, whether you are given permission to use them or not.
- Do not use "blu-tack" or similar adhesive materials on the walls. They are oil based and the stain they leave on wall finishes cannot be decorated over without first stain blocking the wall.
- Do not change, or alter any decoration without first seeking our permission.

### Doors

- Replace door locks and keys when keys are lost or broken, or if you get locked out.
- Adjust doors, repair or replace door handles, catches, or knobs on cupboards.
- Replace broken or cracked glass, unless you can give us a Police crime number (not just an incident number).

### Drains, wastes

- Prevent and clear blockages in waste pipes, drains, or gullies and make sure that any air vents remain unobstructed. Repair leaks from washing machines, or dishwashers.
- Regularly check that water is not escaping from overflow pipes.
- Keep gully grids clear of leaves and rubbish.

### Electrics

- Replace light bulbs, fluorescent tubes and starters.
- Replace fuses and reset any electrical trip switches.

### Furniture

- Regularly polish, vacuum and shampoo any furniture we provide to keep it clean and stain-free.
- Ensure all your own furniture meets the Furniture & Furnishings Fire Safety Regulations (furniture must have a label to show it meets the standards).

## Your responsibilities (continued)

### Gardens

- Maintain all lawns, borders, hedges, trees, shrubs and plants. Keep them neat, clean, tidy and in seasonal order as at the start of your tenancy.
- Maintain garden features, such as paths, patios, rockeries, trellises, decking and ponds.
- Maintain fences, sheds and external timber features by regularly treating with wood stain to maintain its appearance as at the start of your tenancy.
- Replace clothes lines and restring rotary driers (unless in a communal area).
- Repair or replace gate catches (unless in a communal area).

### Heating, ventilation

- Keep your gas meter turned on and topped up. If your boiler stops working because the gas supply is interrupted (i.e. if you've run out of credit, or for any other reason you don't have gas at the meter) and our gas engineer attends, you will be charged for the call out.
- Regularly open and close radiator valves to prevent them from sticking.
- If a radiator is leaking or loose because you have knocked or damaged it, you will be charged for the cost of repair.
- Keep your home properly heated and ventilated to prevent damp and condensation, especially kitchens and bathrooms. In winter the heating should be left on at a minimum of 12 degrees centigrade to prevent freezing and the attic door should be left open to allow warm air to circulate to prevent the water tank freezing.
- Do not dry clothes inside the home on radiators without properly ventilating the rooms.
- Regularly check the water pressure gauge on combination and sealed unit gas boilers for the correct water level reading, which is normally between 1 to 1.5 bar when cold. Top up the pressure when necessary following the manufacturer's instructions for the boiler (often found on the boiler or can be searched on the internet). If you need to top up the pressure frequently then check and bleed all radiators to ensure that they are not leaking, which would cause a drop in water pressure.

### Kitchens

- Renew tap washers and keep taps free from limescale and corrosion.
- Adjust doors, repair or replace door handles, catches, or knobs on cupboards.
- Provide white goods, such as washing machines, dishwashers, or tumble driers, if not already provided. Replace any appliance that fails during the course of your tenancy (you will be entitled to take the new appliance with you when you move).
- Fit wastes, water supply pipes and air vents for washing machines, dishwashers and tumble driers, if not already provided.
- Ensure floor coverings are not damaged by leaks from sinks, washing machines, dishwashers, etc.

### Pest control

- Take all reasonable steps to prevent infestation by rats, mice, birds, squirrels, bees, wasps, cockroaches, ants, fleas, mites and bedbugs.

## Your responsibilities (continued)

### Pipes

- Take all reasonable steps to prevent water pipes from being damaged by cold and frost.
- Drain down the water system if you expect to be away from your home for a period of time, especially in the winter.
- If a water pipe bursts, turn off your water supply at the stop cock, or at the water meter. Then, turn on all taps inside the home to drain any remaining water in the system.

### Roofs

- Request our permission to install any aerial or satellite dish.
- Maintain any aerial or satellite dish that you put up, or any aerial that was on the building when you moved in, unless it is a communal aerial.
- Prevent electrical fittings from getting wet if the roof is leaking. Do not use any switches connected to them and contact us immediately.

### Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors

- Check smoke and carbon monoxide detectors at least once a week and replace any dead batteries. If you have a sealed detector, you must inform us immediately if it stops working.
- If you call us out and the fault is as a result of an interruption to your electricity supply, or a dead renewable battery (not including sealed units) you will be charged for the call out.

### Windows

- Keep window trickle vents open and clear to prevent condensation.
- Replace window locks and keys when keys are lost or broken, or if you get locked out.
- Adjust windows, repair or replace window handles, catches, restrictors, etc.
- Replace broken or cracked glass, unless you can give us a Police crime number (not just an incident number).

## Reporting maintenance requests

You should make all maintenance requests via our dedicated 24 hour maintenance voicemail service by calling 01908 904334 and choosing option 2. Your request will be processed and the most appropriate member of staff will call you to discuss the issue.

Before calling our maintenance line you should refer to this guide to see whether the issue is something that you are responsible for resolving yourself. If our maintenance staff visit you and discover that the issue is your responsibility, or find no fault, you will be charged for the call out.

If you don't attend to maintenance issues that are your responsibility in good time, or if you delay reporting maintenance issues that are our responsibility and more damage is caused as a result of your delay, you may be liable for some or all of the costs to put the problem right.

## Performance targets

We have a small service and maintenance team that attend to the majority of our repair work. We cannot guarantee when they will respond to your maintenance requests, however we always try to prioritise urgent over non-urgent requests. If your maintenance request involves contracting a specialist trade, such as a Gas Safe engineer, NICEIC electrician, roofer, or builder, then we are reliant on them to determine when they can attend.

We aim to respond to urgent maintenance requests within 3 working days. All non-urgent requests will be scheduled within a reasonable timeframe, normally within 5 to 20 working days. Please note that we do *not* offer an emergency call out service. Our staff work normal business hours and are not available to attend to urgent or routine maintenance requests at evenings or weekends.

## Urgent maintenance requests

We treat as urgent all maintenance requests that:

- make the property secure following a break-in
- restore essential services, such as heat and power
- avoid major damage to your home, such as a serious flood
- remove immediate danger, or serious health and safety risks to occupants

The following are some examples of urgent maintenance requests. Any request not considered to be urgent will automatically be treated as non-urgent.

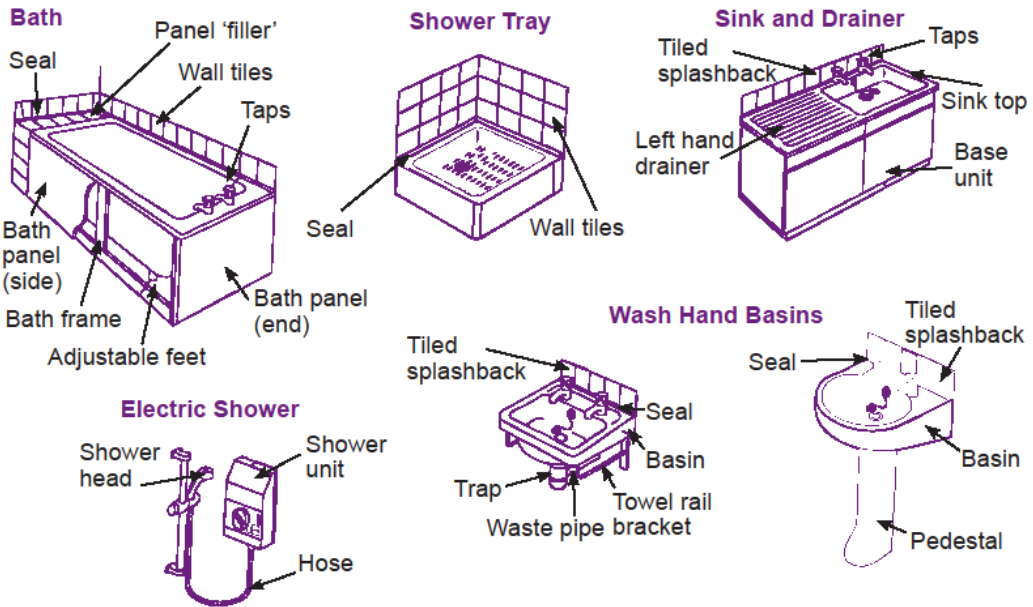


## Examples of urgent maintenance requests

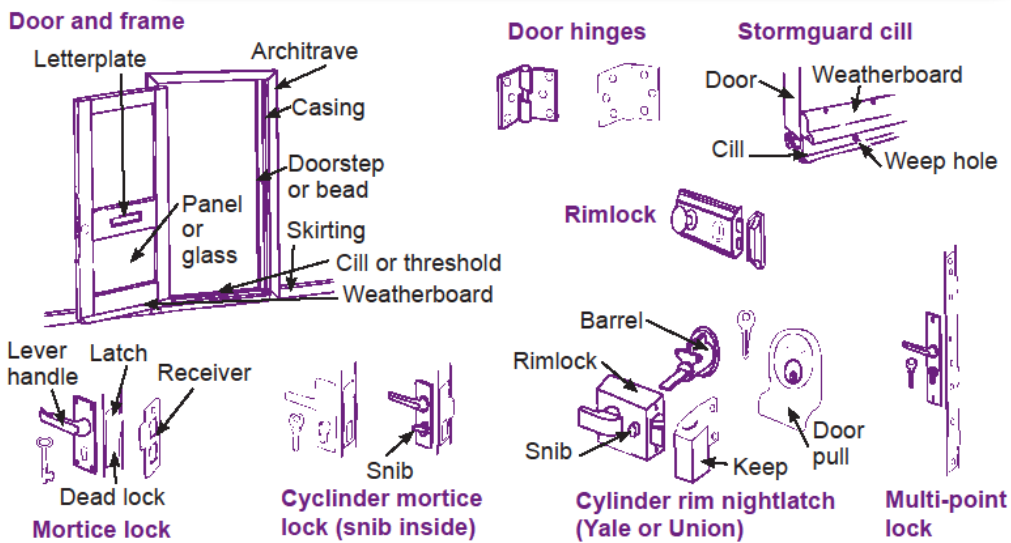
- Total loss of electric, gas or water supply (unless fault lies with supplier)
- Total loss of space or water heating
- Unsafe power socket, lighting socket, or electrical fitting
- Leaking foul drain, soil stack, or toilet pan (where there is no other working toilet)
- Toilet not flushing (where there is no other working toilet)
- Tap that cannot be turned (where there are no other working taps)
- Leaking roof, water or heating pipe, tank or cistern
- Insecure external window or door
- Insecure stair guard or hand rail
- Insecure timber flooring or stair tread
- Inoperative mechanical extractor fan in internal kitchen or bathroom

## Home care guide

### Baths and basins

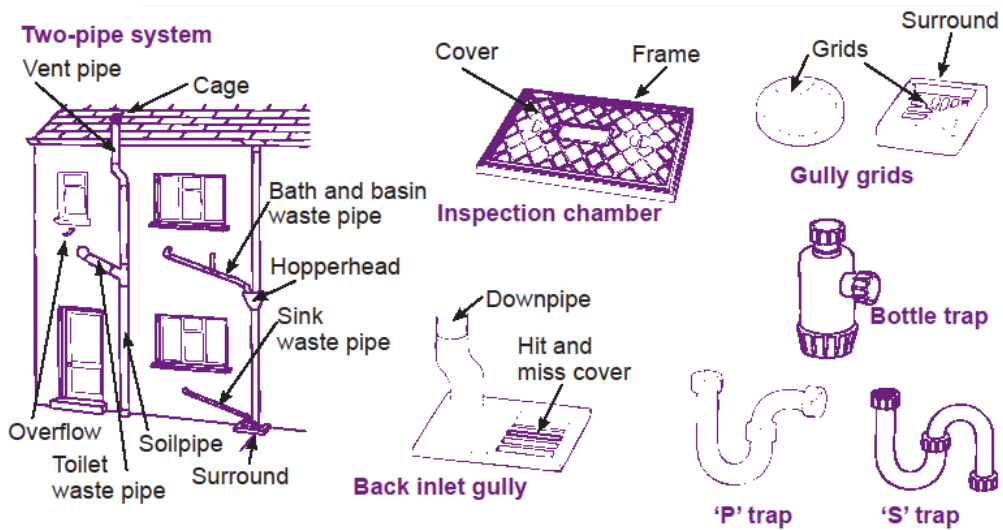


### Doors and locks

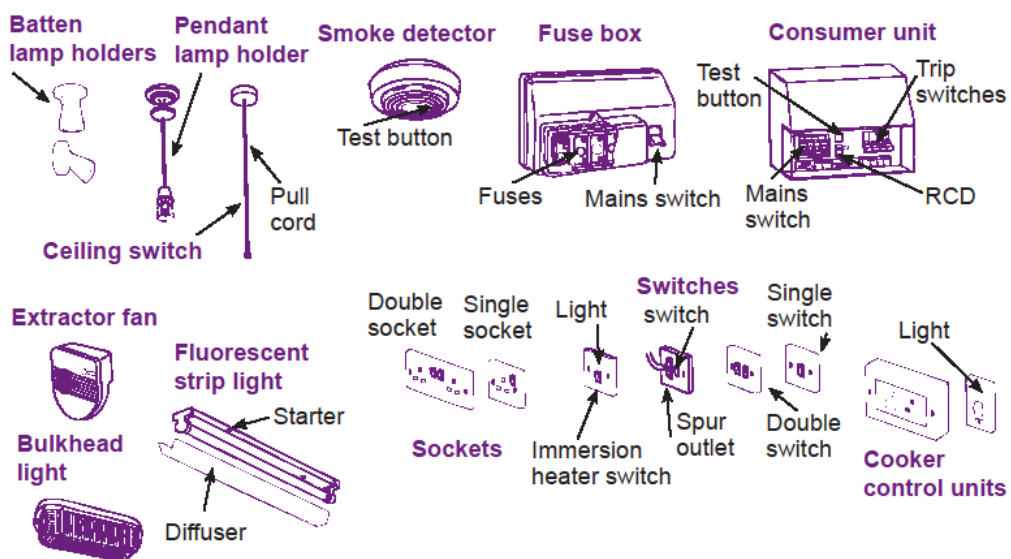


## Home care guide (continued)

### Drains and wastes

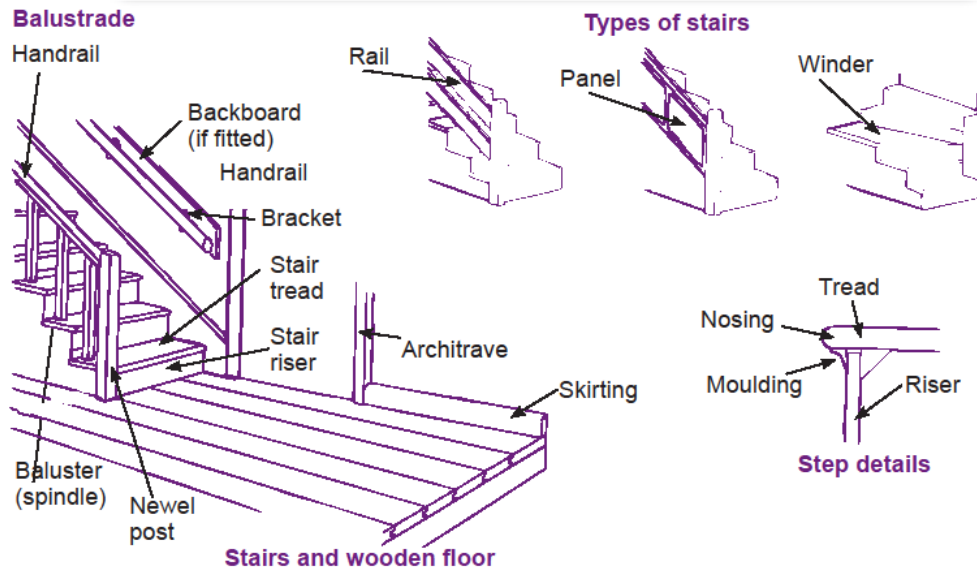


### Electrics

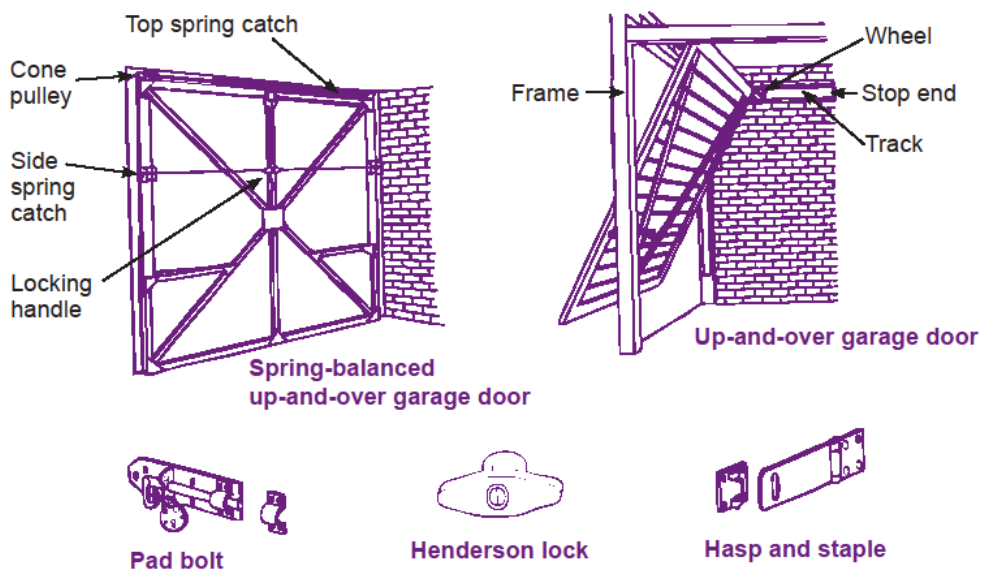


## Home care guide (continued)

### Floors and stairs

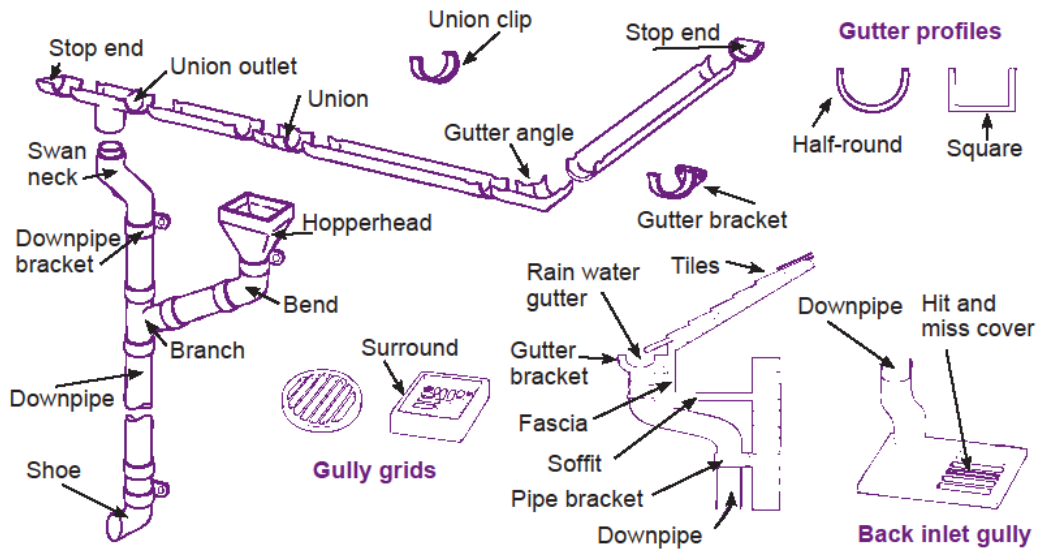


### Garages

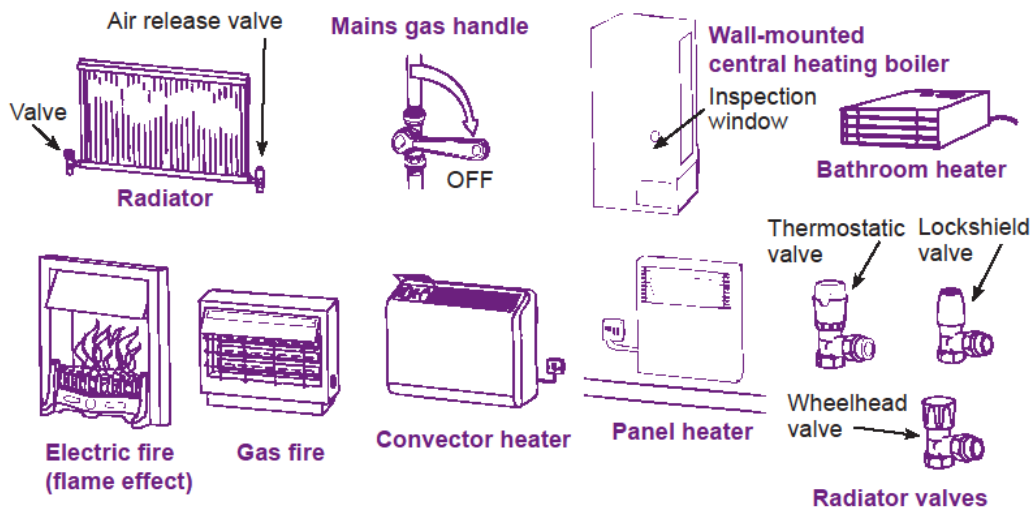


## Home care guide (continued)

### Gutters

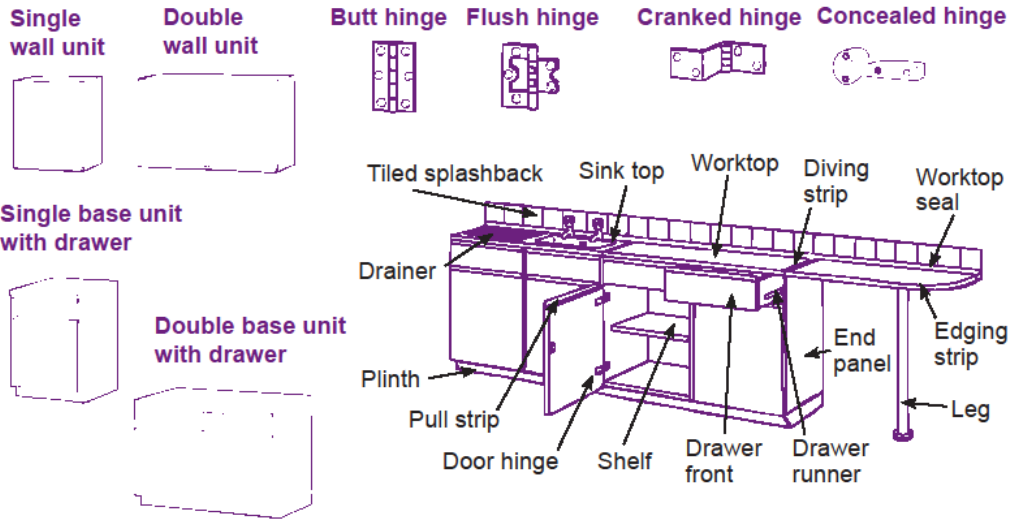


### Heating

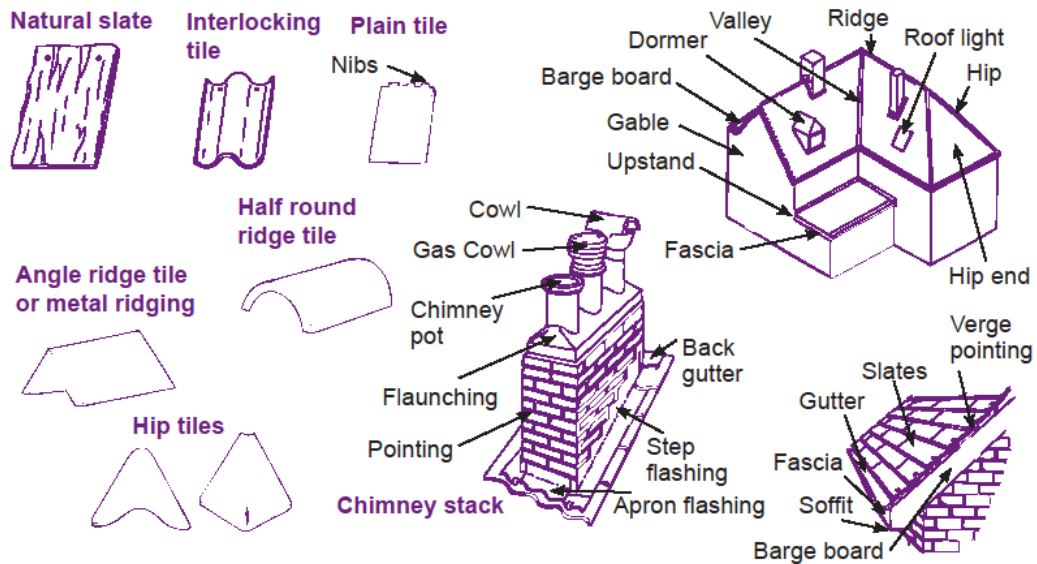


## Home care guide (continued)

### Kitchens

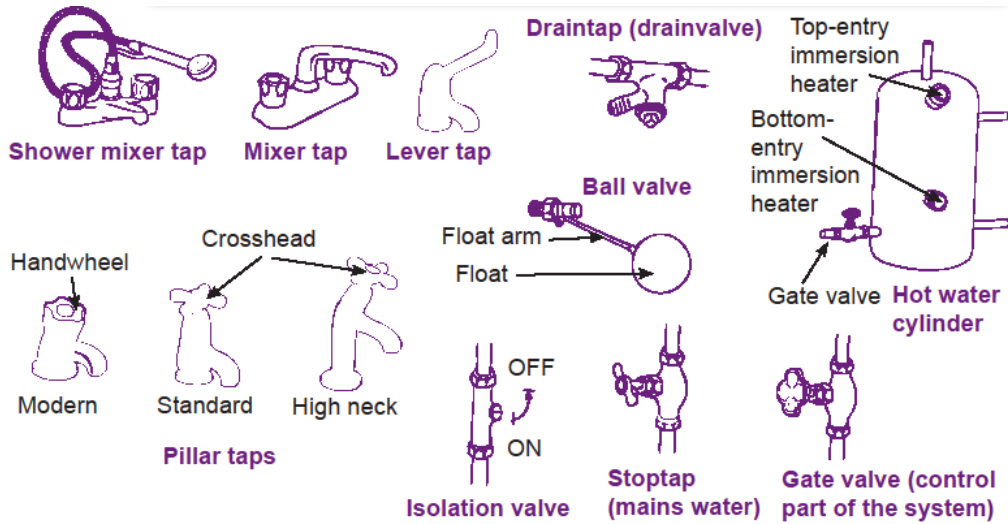


### Roofs

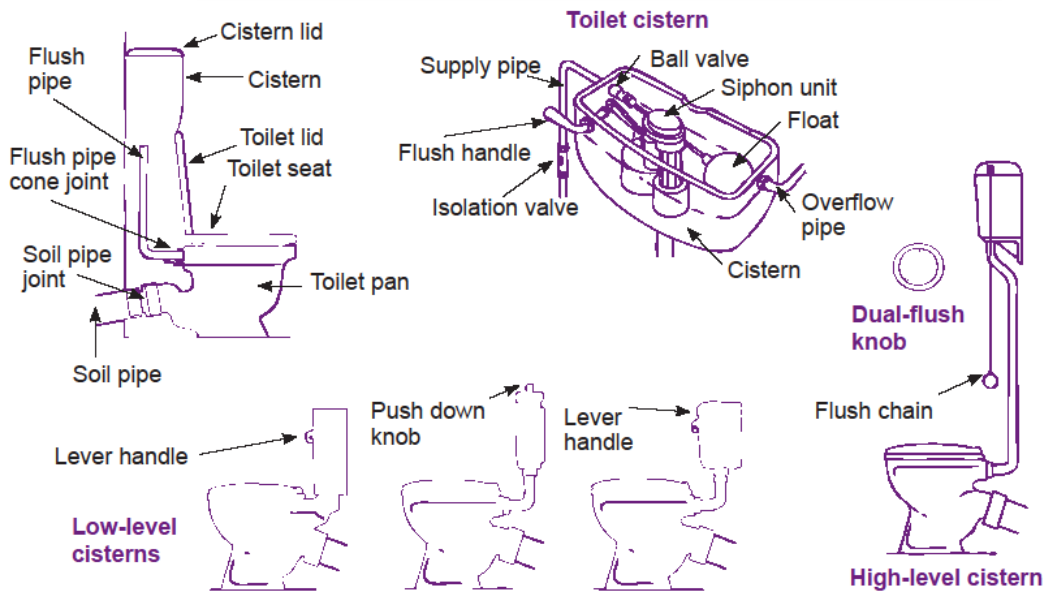


## Home care guide (continued)

### Taps

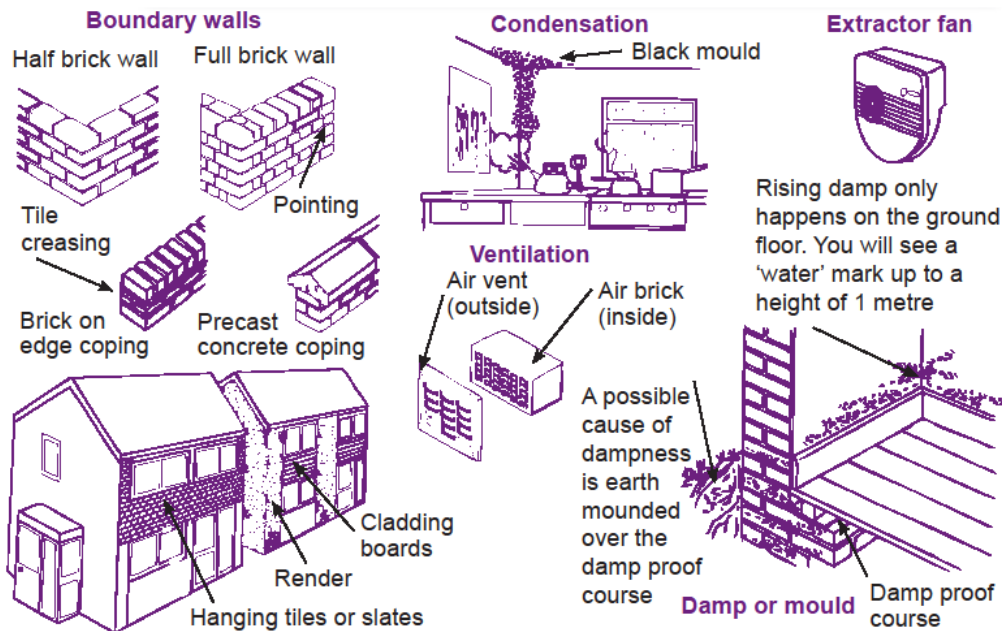


### Toilets

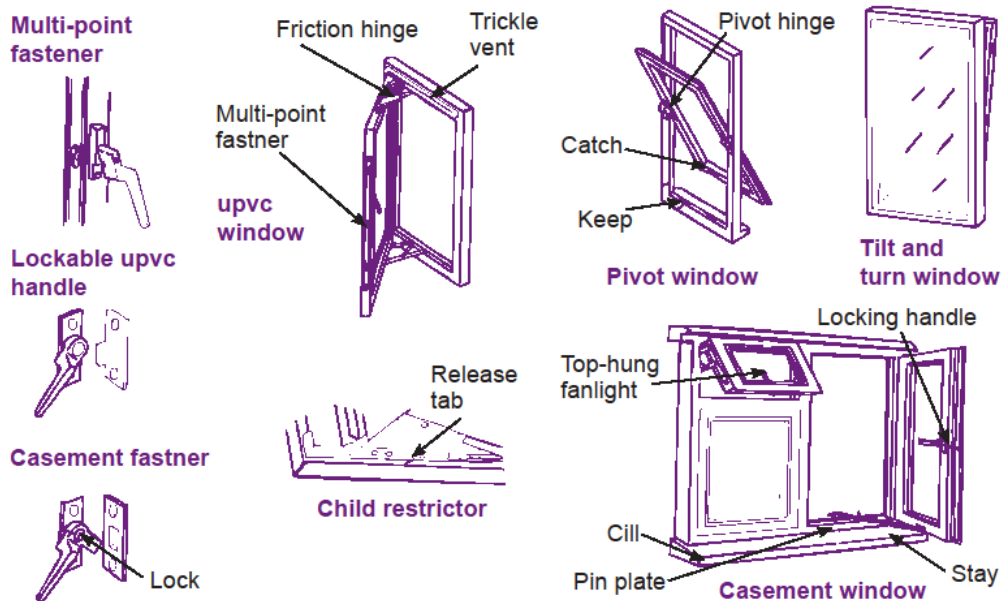


## Home care guide (continued)

### Walls



### Windows





## Home care guide (continued)

### Clearing a blocked waste

#### You will need the following

- Bowl or bucket
- Jug or cup to be used as a scoop
- Wet rag or dishcloth
- Plunger, or toilet brush for the toilet
- Protective gloves

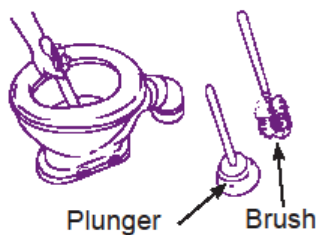
#### To unblock a bath, basin or sink

- Scoop out most of the water.
- Hold the rag tightly over the overflow opening.
- Place the plunger over the plug hole and pump it up and down rapidly.

#### To unblock a toilet

- If the pan is already full, remove some of the water into a bucket using some form of scoop, for example a jug or cup.
- Push the brush or plunger to the bottom of the pan.
- Pump it up and down vigorously about 10 times. This creates a vacuum and pressure, which may shift the blockage.
- Flush the toilet to see whether the blockage has gone.
- You may need to repeat this process several times before the toilet flushes normally.
- Thoroughly wash your hands and all equipment after you have finished.

#### Unblocking a toilet



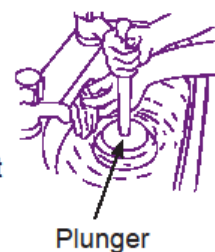
#### Bottle trap



#### U-bend trap



#### Unblocking a basin or sink



## Home care guide (continued)

### Resetting a trip switch

Modern electric circuits are fitted with circuit breakers called trip switches.

If a fault develops, a switch is tripped and the circuit is broken. You will find all of the trip switches (or fuses) in the consumer unit. Some consumer units have buttons rather than switches.

If one of your electrical appliances is faulty, leave it unplugged and get a qualified electrician to check it.

If a wall or ceiling light is faulty, keep it switched off (put some tape over the switch) and contact us.

Make sure your hands are dry when you touch electrical fittings.

### A trip switch or button usually operates because

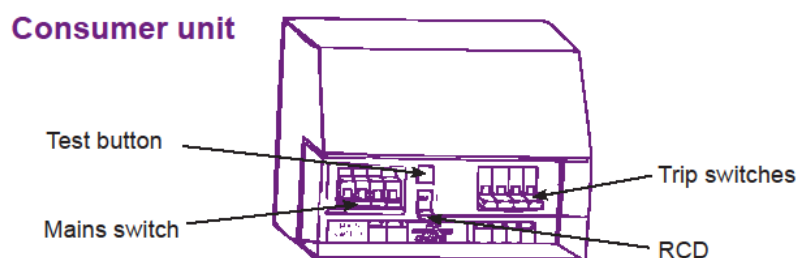
- a light bulb has blown
- there are too many appliances on a circuit and it is overloaded
- an appliance is faulty or has been misused, such as an over-filled kettle, or a dirty toaster
- water has leaked into a circuit, or spilt onto a plug
- an immersion heater is faulty

### To reset the circuit

- Open the cover on the consumer unit to expose the trip switches or buttons.
- Check which switch or button has tripped off and which circuit (rooms) has been affected.
- Put these switches or buttons back to the on position.

**If the circuit trips again, it is probably being caused by a faulty appliance or light. You need to identify which circuit is being affected and which appliance on that circuit is causing the problem.**

- Check all the rooms and note which set of lights or sockets is not working.
- Unplug all appliances on the problem circuit and switch off the immersion heater.
- Put the tripped switch or button to the on position.
- Turn on appliances or switch on each light one at a time until the trip goes again. Do not use adaptors or multi plug extensions when testing appliances.



## Home care guide (continued)

### Preventing condensation

Condensation starts as moisture produced by cooking, washing or drying clothes indoors on radiators.

This moist air condenses (turns into water) on cool surfaces, such as walls, mirrors, tiles and windows.

When the moist air is warm, it rises and often ends up on ceilings and in upstairs rooms, which can eventually form mould.

#### If mould forms

- Wipe the mould off immediately with warm water.
- Apply a recommended mould removal product available from a hardware or DIY store. Always follow the instructions carefully. Do not use bleach.

#### Control excess moisture

- Close kitchen and bathroom doors to prevent steam going into other colder rooms.
- Open windows when cooking, washing or bathing so that steam can escape and leave them open for a while after you have finished. Use an extractor fan if you have one fitted. Leave these on for a while (up to 20 minutes) after you have finished cooking or washing.
- Open some windows in other rooms for a while each day and open any trickle vents fitted in your window frames. This allows a change of air.
- Wipe down surfaces where moisture settles to prevent mould from forming in the first place.
- Do not block air vents.
- Allow air to circulate around furniture and in cupboards.

#### Produce less moisture

- Dry clothes outdoors whenever possible, or in well ventilated rooms.
- Cover fish tanks and remember house plants and pets also produce moisture.
- Cover pans when cooking.
- Vent any tumble driers to the outside.

#### Keep your house warm

- Take steps to prevent heat loss.
- Maintain low background heat when the weather is cold or wet. This shouldn't actually cost more than switching it on and off.

