

# Water damage prevention checklist

## Introduction

Square One has provided this checklist to help you prevent and quickly minimize water damage to your home.

## Instructions

Review each question and mark your answer in the space provided. For assistance, refer to the help text or visit [www.squareone.ca](http://www.squareone.ca).

## Whole house

Question	Answer	Advice
Where is the main water shut-off located?		<p>Usually in a utility space near where the main water line enters the house.</p> <p>Often located “on grade,” so if in the basement, look about eye level. If on the main floor, look down near the floor. Or, look for an access panel, if the valve is behind drywall.</p> <p>If there is a water leak, shut off the main water supply, and keep it off while repairs are being done.</p> <p>Remember that some insurance companies may ask that you shut off your water supply when away from home for a significant length of time, like a vacation.</p>
Do you have a water leak detection system?		<p>Various types are available. Many models can be set to shut off the water if it is running for an unusual period of time, which can prevent your entire house from being ruined, especially if you’re away from home.</p>
Does your home have copper plumbing?		<p>Copper plumbing is longer- lasting, and less fragile than other types of plumbing.</p>
Is there any galvanized steel or Poly B plumbing in your home?		<p>Both types tend to leak over time. You may want to consider replacing these types of plumbing, or getting a plumbing inspection, because they tend to deteriorate invisibly from the inside out.</p>
Is your computer on a shelf (or desk), not on the floor?		<p>Water can quickly ruin a computer. Make sure all components are above floor level.</p>
Are important papers kept on shelves, not on the floor?		<p>If you store important papers in the basement (or main floor if no basement), place them on a shelf above ground to prevent damage in the event of flood.</p>

## Basement (Or main floor)

Question	Answer	Advice
When was the hot water tank replaced?		Hot water tanks generally have a life expectancy of approximately 15 years.
Do you check around the hot water tank, at least annually, for signs of leakage?		If you notice any leaks, you may want to pro-actively replace your tank before it bursts. Alternately, you may wish to consider a tankless system.
Where is the shut-off valve for the washing machine?		Usually, the valves are exposed above and behind the washer. Turn both valves clockwise.  If you can't see the valves, slide out the washer to see if they are behind the machine, lower down.
Are there braided steel hoses on the washing machine?		Regular rubber hoses are prone to break down over time, especially in the presence of hot water and household chemicals like bleach. Braided steel hoses are much longer lasting.
Do you check washing machine hoses annually for leaks or kinks?		Kinks can cause the rubber to crack. You may need to move the machine further away from the wall.  All hoses should be replaced periodically. If a rubber hose is beginning to feel rigid, it is becoming brittle and is in danger of cracking.
Are important papers kept on shelves, not on the floor?		If you store important papers in the basement (or main floor if no basement), placing them on a shelf above ground can prevent damage in a flood.
Do you have a backwater valve?		This will prevent water from backing up into your home, when municipal sewer systems become overloaded.
Does your home have a sump pump?		This is very important if you live in an area prone to sewer back-ups.
If your home has a basement, are there any signs of water damage on the wall?		If yes, check that downspouts are directed away from the home, and that there is no blockage in eavestroughs (gutters). Perimeter drains may need replacing. Walls may need to be waterproofed.

## Exterior

Question	Answer	Advice
Have you checked window wells to see if they are draining properly?		If the window wells are not draining properly, water can back up in a heavy rain, and enter the home through the basement windows.
Are eavestroughs (gutters) being cleaned annually?		Eavestroughs tend to clog up with leaves and debris. This can cause water to enter the house.
Are downspouts directed away from the home?		Consider adding an extension to the downspout to make sure water drains well away from the home.
Is your yard graded so that rainwater runs away from the house?		If the yard slopes towards your house, any rainwater will run directly towards your house, putting pressure on your perimeter drains.

## Kitchen

Question	Answer	Advice
Where is the kitchen water shut-off located?		<p>Look under the sink for one or two valves (one for cold, one for hot) in older homes, or a single small lever in newer homes.</p> <p>If any appliances spring a leak, or if you are doing any plumbing repairs in the kitchen, turn off the water supply.</p>
Are there braided steel hoses on the dishwasher and any other appliances holding water?		Regular rubber hoses are prone to break down over time, especially in the presence of hot water and household chemicals like bleach. Braided steel hoses are much longer lasting.

## Bathroom

Question	Answer	Advice
Where is the bathroom sink water shut-off located?		<p>Look under the sink for 2 valves (1 for cold, 1 for hot) in older homes, or a single small lever in newer homes. If you notice dampness under your bathroom sink, you could have a leak.</p> <p>Turn off the water supply when making repairs, or if there is a sudden large leak.</p>
Where is the water shut-off for the toilet?		Look under the toilet, against the wall, for flexible metal tubing. Turn the handle clockwise until it stops. Don't use excessive force.
Where is the water shut-off for the tub?		Often found in a wall or tub access panel. If you can't locate this, you will need to shut off the main water supply.
Are there any leaks around the faucet?		This could indicate the O-ring needs replacing.
Are there any leaks around your toilet?		There could be seals that need replacing. Crane toilets manufactured between 1980 and 1991 tended to crack, and cause significant water damage.