

GRANDPA WALT'S

The Homeowner's Binder

Every record, schedule and shutoff in one place, so small problems stay small and you never overpay for a repair.



Hey there, kiddo.

I kept a binder like this for my whole life. When a pipe burst, I knew where the shutoff was. When I sold a house, the buyers loved the records. When a contractor quoted me, I knew what the last guy charged.

Fill it in a little at a time. Future you will thank you.

Walt

This binder belongs to: _____

Home address: _____

Started on: _____



How to Use This Binder

Print it, three-hole punch it, keep it in the kitchen

Walt's rule: don't try to fill it all in one day. Do the Home Info and Emergency pages today. Add one more section each weekend. In a month, you'll know your house better than most people ever do.

Start here (30 minutes)

- ☐ Fill in the Home Info page
Utility companies, account numbers, key dates.
- ☐ Walk the house and find every shutoff
Water, gas and electrical. Tag them with bright tape.
- ☐ Snap a photo of every appliance's model sticker
Then copy the numbers onto the Appliance Inventory pages.
- ☐ Put the Maintenance Calendar on the fridge
- ☐ Keep a pocket in the back for receipts and warranties

What's inside

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Home Info & Utilities | 9. Contractor Directory |
| 2. Emergency Shutoffs | 10. Quote Comparison Sheet |
| 3. Breaker Panel Directory | 11. Paint & Finish Records |
| 4. Emergency Contacts | 12. Warranty Tracker |
| 5. Appliance & Systems Inventory | 13. Project Planner & Budget |
| 6. 12-Month Maintenance Calendar | 14. Home Improvement Records |
| 7. Filter, Battery & Bulb Tracker | 15. Before You Call a Pro |
| 8. Repair & Service Log | |



Home Info & Utilities

The facts you'll need when something goes wrong

The house

Year built	
Square footage	
Move-in / purchase date	
Roof installed (year / material)	
Water heater (type / year)	
HVAC system (type / year)	
Filter size(s)	
Water source (city / well)	
Sewer (city / septic)	

Utilities & accounts

Service	Company	Account #	Phone
Electric			
Gas			
Water / sewer			
Trash / recycling			
Internet			
Home insurance			
Home warranty			
HOA			



Emergency Shutoffs & Contacts

Fill this in before you need it

Walt's rule: a burst pipe can dump a lot of water fast. Every person in the house should know where the main water shutoff is and how to turn it.

Shutoff	Location	How to turn it off
Main water		
Water heater supply		
Gas meter / main		
Main electrical breaker		
HVAC disconnect		
Outdoor faucet valves		
Irrigation / sprinklers		

Smell gas? Don't flip switches or use your phone inside. Get everyone out, then call the gas company or 911 from outside.

Emergency contacts

Who	Name	Phone
Plumber (24-hour)		
Electrician		
HVAC		
Water damage / restoration		
Insurance claims line		
Neighbor with a spare key		



Breaker Panel Directory

Label it once and you'll never play guess-the-breaker again

How to map it: plug a radio or lamp into an outlet, flip one breaker at a time, and note what goes dark. A second person with a phone makes it quick. Never open the panel cover itself; that's a job for a licensed electrician.

#	Amps	What it controls
1		
3		
5		
7		
9		
11		
13		
15		
17		
19		
21		
23		
25		
27		
29		

#	Amps	What it controls
2		
4		
6		
8		
10		
12		
14		
16		
18		
20		
22		
24		
26		
28		
30		



Appliance & Systems Inventory

Model and serial numbers save you a trip when ordering parts

Walt's shortcut: the model sticker is usually inside the door, on the back, or behind a lower panel. Take a photo and keep it in an album called "House."

Item	Brand	Model #	Serial #	Installed	Warranty ends
Furnace / air handler					
AC / heat pump					
Water heater					
Refrigerator					
Range / oven					
Dishwasher					
Microwave					
Washer					
Dryer					
Garbage disposal					
Garage door opener					
Sump pump					
Water softener / filter					

12-Month Maintenance Calendar

One or two jobs a month keeps the big bills away

January

- Test smoke & CO alarms
- Change HVAC filter
- Check attic for frost or leaks
- Keep vents clear of snow

February

- Check caulk in tubs & showers
- Vacuum fridge coils
- Test GFCI outlets
- Look under sinks for drips

March

- Inspect roof from the ground
- Clean gutters after winter
- Check outdoor faucets for leaks
- Change HVAC filter

April

- Schedule AC service
- Check window & door screens
- Walk the foundation for cracks
- Flush water heater (per manual)

May

- Clean dryer vent duct
- Check deck & porch boards
- Trim plants away from siding
- Test sprinkler zones

June

- Change HVAC filter
- Clean range hood filter
- Lube garage door rollers
- Check AC condensate line

July

- Test smoke & CO alarms
- Check grout & backsplash
- Look for gaps where pests get in
- Run bath fans after showers

August

- Vacuum fridge coils
- Check exterior paint & caulk
- Inspect washer hoses
- Test GFCI outlets

September

- Schedule furnace service
- Change HVAC filter
- Seal gaps around windows
- Check weatherstripping

October

- Clean gutters after leaves drop
- Disconnect & drain hoses
- Chimney inspection (if used)
- Test sump pump

November

- Reverse ceiling fans
- Insulate exposed pipes
- Check attic insulation
- Stock up: salt, filters, batteries

December

- Change HVAC filter
- Know your main water shutoff
- Open sink cabinets in hard freezes
- Review this binder for next year



Filter, Battery & Bulb Tracker

The cheap stuff that protects the expensive stuff

Sizes & part numbers

Item	Size / part #	Where to buy
HVAC filter		
Fridge water filter		
Range hood filter		
Whole-house water filter		
Smoke / CO alarm batteries		
Specialty bulbs		

Replacement log

Date	What I replaced	Next due	Cost



Repair & Service Log

Every fix, who did it and what it cost

Why it matters: when the same problem comes back, you'll know if it's still under the contractor's guarantee. And when you sell, a full repair history builds buyer trust.

Date	Problem / work done	Who did it	DIY or Pro	Cost	Guarantee



Contractors & Quote Comparison

Get three quotes. Compare apples to apples.

Contractor directory

Trade	Company / name	Phone	License #	Would I hire again?
Plumber				
Electrician				
HVAC				
Roofer				
Handyman				
Remodeler				
Pest control				

Quote comparison for: _____

	Quote A	Quote B	Quote C
Company			
Total price			
What's included			
Materials / brand			
Start date & timeline			
Warranty on labor			
Licensed & insured?			
Permit pulled by			
Deposit required			

Walt's rule: the cheapest quote isn't always the best deal. Look at what's included, the warranty, and whether they'll pull the permit.



Paint, Finishes & Warranties

So touch-ups match and nothing expires unused

Paint & finish records

Room	Brand & color	Color code	Sheen	Date painted
Trim / doors				
Exterior				

Warranty tracker

Item / work	Company	Start	Ends	Where the paperwork is



Project Planner & Budget

Plan it on paper before you spend a dime

Project	
Why I'm doing it	
DIY or hire a pro?	
Permit needed?	
Target start / finish	
Total budget	

Budget breakdown

Item	Qty	Estimate	Actual	Bought?
Total				

Walt's rule: add 15% to your budget for surprises. In an older house, you'll usually find something behind the wall.



Home Improvement Records

Upgrades that add value. Keep every receipt.

Why keep these? Records of major improvements (a new roof, an addition, a remodel) can matter when you sell, for insurance, and possibly for taxes. Rules vary, so ask a tax professional what applies to you.

Date	Improvement	Contractor	Cost	Receipt filed?
	Running total			

Before You Call a Pro

Quick checks that solve a lot of "emergencies"

No power to some outlets

Check for a tripped GFCI outlet (kitchen, bath, garage, outside) and press Reset. Then check the breaker panel for a breaker sitting in the middle. Flip it fully off, then on. **Call a pro if it trips again right away.**

AC or furnace won't run

Check the thermostat batteries and setting, change a dirty filter, and make sure the outdoor disconnect and the breaker are on. **Call a pro if it still won't run, or you smell burning.**

Toilet keeps running

Lift the tank lid. A worn flapper or a chain that's too tight is the usual culprit, and both are cheap fixes. **Call a pro if water is leaking at the base.**

Slow drain

Clean the stopper and pull hair out with a cheap drain snake tool. Skip harsh chemical cleaners; they can damage pipes. **Call a pro if several drains are slow at once.**

No hot water

Gas: check that the pilot light is on (follow the label on the tank). Electric: check the breaker. **Call a pro if the tank is leaking or you smell gas.**

Garbage disposal hums but won't spin

Turn off the power. Use the hex wrench slot on the bottom to free it, then press the red reset button. Never put your hand inside.

Garage door won't close

Check that the safety sensors near the floor are lined up and not blocked, and wipe their lenses. **Never adjust the big springs yourself; call a pro.**

Walt's rule: if it can burn, shock, flood or fall on you, call a pro.



This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

From Walt: thanks for picking this up. If it helped you, tell me what you fixed. Send me a message on Instagram at [**@grandpawaltdiy**](#). New DIY fixes every week.