



Call a Pro or DIY?

The Cost Cheat Sheet

28 common home repairs: what the parts cost if you do it yourself, what pros typically charge, and my honest call on which way to go.

How to use this: before you call anyone, look up the job here. If a quote is way above the typical range, ask why. If it's a green "DIY" job, you might not need to call at all. Pro prices are published U.S. averages, so your area may run higher or lower.

DIY most folks can do it **MAYBE** doable if you're handy and careful **CALL A PRO**

safety, code or big money at risk

Plumbing

Job	DIY parts*	Typical pro price	Walt's call	Walt's note
Fix a running toilet (flapper or fill valve)	\$8 – \$25	\$75 – \$200 ¹	DIY	The classic. Turn off the water at the wall valve first. About 15 minutes.
Clear a slow sink or tub drain	\$10 – \$30	\$147 – \$346 ²	DIY	Pull the stopper and use a plastic drain snake. If several drains are slow at once, call a pro.
Replace a garbage disposal	\$100 – \$250	\$200 – \$625 ³	MAYBE	Same-brand swaps are easier. Turn off the breaker, not just the switch.
Replace a toilet (same spot)	\$120 – \$400	\$224 – \$533 + toilet ⁴	MAYBE	Heavy and awkward. Use a new wax ring and check for a soft floor around the base.
Replace a tank water heater	n/a	\$882 – \$1,810 ⁵	CALL A PRO	Gas, venting, pressure valves and permits. Not a weekend project.
Move a toilet to a new spot	n/a	\$2,500 – \$3,500 ⁴	CALL A PRO	Means moving drain lines. Get at least three quotes.

Electrical

Job	DIY parts*	Typical pro price	Walt's call	Walt's note
Swap a standard outlet (same type)	\$3 – \$15	\$90 – \$200 ⁶	MAYBE	Breaker off and test with a voltage tester first. Aluminum wiring or scorch marks? Stop and call.
Install a GFCI outlet	\$15 – \$50	\$130 – \$300 ⁷	MAYBE	Line vs. load wires matter. If the instructions confuse you, hire it out.
Replace a ceiling fan (existing box)	Cost of fan	\$145 – \$356 ⁸	MAYBE	The box must be fan-rated. A wobbly fan on a light box is dangerous.
New circuit or panel work	n/a	\$300 – \$700+ ⁶	CALL A PRO	Never open the panel cover. Licensed electrician only.

Heating & Cooling

Job	DIY parts*	Typical pro price	Walt's call	Walt's note
Change the HVAC filter	\$5 – \$40	Usually part of a service call	DIY	Write the size in your binder. The cheapest thing you can do for your system.
AC tune-up	n/a	\$75 – \$200 ⁹	CALL A PRO	Once a year, before the first hot week. You can rinse the outdoor coil yourself in between.
Furnace tune-up	n/a	\$100 – \$200 ¹⁰	CALL A PRO	Book it in early fall, before the rush.
Replace a thermostat	\$25 – \$250	\$117 – \$254 ¹¹	MAYBE	Low-voltage models are DIY-friendly. Take a photo of the wiring before you disconnect anything.

Inside the House

Job	DIY parts*	Typical pro price	Walt's call	Walt's note
Patch a small drywall hole (under 4")	\$10 – \$25	\$100 – \$250 ¹²	DIY	Patch kit, thin coats, sand, prime, paint. Patience beats skill.
Patch a larger hole (4" to 12")	\$20 – \$40	\$200 – \$500 ¹²	MAYBE	Needs a backing piece and more taping. Doable with a good video.
Paint a room	\$100 – \$300	\$400 – \$1,600 ¹³	DIY	Good tape and good prep do most of the work. Ceilings and stairwells are harder.
Recaulk a tub or shower	\$10 – \$25	\$150 – \$500 ¹⁴	DIY	Remove all old caulk, let it dry fully, use 100% silicone. Wait 24 hours before showering.
RegROUT a shower	\$30 – \$80	\$560 – \$2,500 ¹⁵	MAYBE	Slow, tedious work. If tiles are loose or the wall is soft, there's water damage. Call a pro.

Inside the House (continued)

Job	DIY parts*	Typical pro price	Walt's call	Walt's note
Replace a door knob	\$15 – \$60	\$60 – \$150 ¹⁶	DIY	Two screws and a latch. Bring the old one to the store to match it.
Fix a sticking door	\$0 – \$15	Door repairs avg. about \$200 ¹⁷	DIY	Usually loose hinge screws. Try a longer screw in the top hinge first.
Weatherstrip an exterior door	\$10 – \$30	\$117 – \$307 per door ¹⁸	DIY	If you can see daylight around the door, you're paying to heat the outdoors.
Rescreen a window	\$10 – \$20	\$20 – \$70 rescreen; \$82 – \$319 replace ¹⁹	DIY	A spline roller and a roll of screen do several windows.

Outside the House

Job	DIY parts*	Typical pro price	Walt's call	Walt's note
Clean the gutters	\$0 – \$30	\$119 – \$234 ²⁰	MAYBE	One story with a solid ladder and a helper: DIY. Two stories: hire it out.
Pressure wash the house	\$50 – \$100 (rental)	\$192 – \$405 ²¹	MAYBE	Too much pressure can force water behind siding and strip paint. Start on a low setting.
Repair a fence section	\$50 – \$150	\$304 – \$942 ²²	MAYBE	Replacing a few pickets or a rail is easy. Leaning posts set in concrete are a bigger job.
Fix a roof leak	n/a	\$394 – \$1,963 ²³	CALL A PRO	Don't climb on the roof. Put a bucket under the drip and take photos for insurance.

Appliances

Job	DIY parts*	Typical pro price	Walt's call	Walt's note
Swap a dishwasher (existing hookups)	Cost of unit	\$130 – \$300 labor ²⁴	MAYBE	Shut off water and power. New install with no hookups? That's \$300+ in labor; call a pro.

What pros charge per hour (U.S. ranges)

\$65 – \$125
Handyman²⁵

\$85 – \$175
Plumber²⁶

\$75 – \$150
Electrician²⁶

Watch for the trip fee. Many plumbers and electricians charge a service call fee of roughly \$50 to \$200 just to show up^{1,6}, plus nights and weekends cost more. Bundle small jobs into one visit.

Walt's rules for getting a fair price

- **Get three quotes** for anything over a few hundred dollars, and compare what's included, not just the total.
- **Ask what's causing the problem**, not just what it costs to fix. A good pro will explain it.
- **Check the license and insurance**, and ask who pulls the permit.
- **Never pay most of the job up front.** A reasonable deposit is normal; paying in full before work starts is a red flag.
- **Get it in writing:** scope, price, start date and warranty.
- **If it can burn, shock, flood or fall on you, call a pro.**

Where these numbers come from

Pro prices are national ranges published by the cost guides below (checked October 2026). Prices vary by region, home, access and season. Use them as a sanity check, not a quote. DIY parts costs are typical big-box store prices and are estimates only.

1. Running toilet repair and plumber service fees: compiled 2026 running-toilet cost guides; plumber labor about \$45–\$150/hr plus service call fees.
2. HomeAdvisor, "How Much Does It Cost to Unclog a Drain?" (avg. \$242).
3. NerdWallet, "How Much Does It Cost to Replace a Garbage Disposal in 2026?" citing Angi (avg. about \$550).
4. HomeAdvisor, "How Much Does Toilet Installation Cost?" (avg. \$374; moving a toilet about \$2,500–\$3,500).
5. HomeAdvisor, "How Much Does a Water Heater Replacement Cost?" (avg. \$1,333).
6. UseCalcPro, GFCI outlet installation cost calculator (2026): outlet swaps, new circuits, electrician trip fees.
7. Bob Vila, "GFCI Outlet Cost," citing Angi (avg. about \$210).
8. 2026 ceiling fan installation cost guides (national avg. about \$251 per fan).
9. HomeAdvisor, "How Much Does an AC Tune-Up Cost?"
10. Bob Vila, "Furnace Tune-Up Cost," citing HomeAdvisor.
11. HomeAdvisor thermostat installation cost (one-market example; typical \$117–\$254).
12. 2026 drywall repair cost guides citing Angi (by hole size).
13. Angi, "How Much Does It Cost to Paint a Room?" (2026 data).
14. 2026 bathtub caulking cost guides; Angi caulking cost page (\$1.25–\$4 per linear foot).
15. Fixr, "How Much Does It Cost to RegROUT a Shower?" (\$560–\$880); Bob Vila citing Angi (\$600–\$2,500).
16. 2026 door knob replacement cost guides (standard interior knob installed).
17. Fixr, "Door Repair Cost" (avg. \$202).
18. Homewyse, "Cost to Install Door Weather Stripping" (May 2026).
19. Homeyou, "Window Screen Replacement Cost"; 2026 rescreening guides.
20. HomeAdvisor, "How Much Does Gutter Cleaning Cost?" (avg. \$168).
21. HomeAdvisor, "How Much Does It Cost to Pressure Wash a House?" (avg. about \$299).
22. HomeAdvisor, "How Much Does Fence Repair Cost?" (avg. \$613).
23. HomeAdvisor, "How Much Does It Cost to Repair a Roof?" (avg. \$1,171).
24. UseCalcPro, dishwasher installation cost calculator (2026).
25. Housecall Pro, "How to Price Handyman Jobs" (2026).
26. Clean-Invoice, tradesperson hourly rates USA (2025, drawing on BLS and Angi/HomeAdvisor data).

One more thing from Walt: want every record, receipt and schedule for your house in one place? My **Homeowner's Binder** has a repair log, quote comparison sheet and 12-month maintenance calendar. Find it at grandpawalt.com.

Grandpa Walt is an AI character. This sheet is general information, not professional advice or a quote. Always follow manufacturer instructions and local codes, turn off power and water before working, and hire a licensed professional for electrical, gas, roofing, structural or major plumbing work. Personal use only; please don't resell or share copies.