

RESOURCE

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E-NEWSLETTER

Protect - Conserve - Preserve

DIY Water Leak Audit - Find, Fix Water Leaks

Average home can waste 10,000 gallons of water per year

Water leaks can waste a ton of water and dramatically increase your water bill. Neither one of those things is good for your household, or the community's water supply. But, there are some simple ways you can check your water system to make sure it is water tight and operating the way it should. Take a look.



First stop...your **water meter**. It is typically located near the street, in a rectangular box on your property. Be careful when opening the lid as there may be bees or bugs inside. To test for leaks in your plumbing system, turn off all indoor and outdoor water use activity (sinks, dishwasher, sprinklers, etc.). Lift the lid from the meter and look for a small red diamond- or triangle-shaped dial on the meter face. If this is spinning, you have a leak. Your water meter is a great leak detector because you can see the dials showing you if there is any movement of water through your meter.

If you find that you have a leak, here are some of the likely culprits.



Your **toilets** will leak at some point, so you should get in the habit for checking these fixtures. In fact, water leaks account for approximately 12% of all water use in the average American home, and the toilet is one of the most likely places to find them.

Put a few drops of food coloring or other dark-colored liquid in the tank. Don't flush. Wait 10 minutes. If color appears in the bowl, there is a leak in the toilet mechanism. Or, you can flush the toilet then mark water level in tank with marker or a pencil. Check the tank after 10 minutes to see if water has fallen below mark. If so, the leak is coming from the flush valve.

[Here's a great link to help you fix the problem.](#)



Outdoors, an **irrigation system** with its many unground valves and sprinklers heads can waste water and leak. Leaks in your irrigation system won't always show on your meter due to their separate anti-siphon shutoff valves. To find irrigation leaks, walk your irrigation lines. Check for unusual wet spots, leaky or broken sprinkler heads, and use your meter to measure total irrigation use.

If you use another type of sprinkler, you should locate all hose bibs (outdoor faucets) and check for leaks and drips. Replace washers if there are any leaks.

DIY Water Audit - Continued



If you own a **pool**, look closely at the filter, pump, heater, and pool fill valve(s). Check the ground for moisture. Turn the pump on and off, looking closely for spraying water when the pump is turned off.

Pools are meant to be watertight but sealants will deteriorate while other parts of your pool shift and settle or just plain wear out. Pools can leak through any of the fittings or accessories, plumbing, or even right through the shell. It is important to repair leaks, not only to save water, heat, and chemicals, but also to prevent undermining a pool's structural components and washing away fill dirt. 💧

How Do Your Water Use Habits Rate?



Now that you've taken the time to make sure your water fixtures are operating efficiently, now you can take a look at how your water use habits shape up. After all, wasting water can happen in many ways, not just through leaking fixtures. How many of these water use practices can you say you do all of the time?

- Keep showers to under 5 minutes.
- Use only a little water in the bathtub.
- Turn off the water while brushing your teeth.
- Flush the toilet only when necessary. Don't use it to flush tissues.
- Use a broom to clean the driveway or sidewalk.
- Use a bucket when washing the car.
- Use a turn-off nozzle on the end of the hose to adjust the water flow and turn the water off and on.
- Turn water faucet off tight.
- Put water in the kitchen sink to wash and rinse dishes.
- Run the dishwasher only when it's full.
- Run the washing machine only when it's full.

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Did you know...

The EPA estimates that household leaks can waste more than 1 trillion gallons annually nationwide. That's equal to the annual household water use of more than 11 million homes. Fixing easily corrected household water leaks can save homeowners about 10 percent on their water bills.