

DIY: Changing Your Air Filter

Priority: High

Difficulty Level: Very Easy - Simple routine task requiring no tools or technical expertise.

Time Commitment: Less than 5 minutes

Physical Requirements: Light reaching or standing on a step stool if vents are high.

Purpose

The purpose of changing your HVAC air filters is to keep your heating and cooling system running efficiently while maintaining clean, breathable air inside your home.

- Protect HVAC equipment: Prevents dust buildup on sensitive internal motors and coils.
- Lower energy bills: Allows air to flow freely, reducing system strain and power use.
- Improve indoor air quality: Traps airborne dust, pollen, pet dander, and mold spores.
- Prevent system breakdowns: Stops the system from overheating or freezing up due to restricted airflow.

Indicators that this Action is worth doing in your home

- If the last time the air filter was more than
 - 30 days for a fiberglass filter
 - 90 days for a pleated filter
 - 6-12 months for a HEPA filter
 - *Less time if there are pets in the home*

Video

[Change out your air vent filter](#)

Materials Needed

- New air filter: Correctly sized to match your current filter's dimensions.
- Permanent marker: Writes the installation date directly on the new filter frame.
- Vacuum cleaner or cloth: Cleans away loose dust from the return vent grille.

Directions

- Turn off the HVAC system: Shut off the system at the thermostat to prevent unfiltered air or dust from being sucked in.
- Locate the filter slot: Find the filter housing, usually behind a return air grille in a wall/ceiling, or inside the main furnace/air handler cabinet.
- Remove the old filter: Unlatch the grille or slot cover, pull the dirty filter out smoothly, and slide it directly into a trash bag to keep dust from spreading.
- Check the airflow arrow: Locate the printed arrow on the edge of the new filter, which indicates the direction the air travels (always points *toward* the furnace/AC unit).
- Insert the new filter: Slide the new filter into the slot with the arrow facing the correct way, making sure it sits flush without gaps.
- Close up and restart: Secure the grille latches or slot cover, then turn your HVAC system back on at the thermostat.

Tips

- Write the date: Always write the current date on the cardboard edge of the new filter so you know exactly when it was changed.
- Set a recurring reminder: Check thin 1-inch filters every 30 to 90 days; thicker 4-to-5-inch media filters can typically last 6 to 12 months.
- Inspect visually: If you have pets or allergies, pull the filter out monthly - if it looks grey and choked with dust, change it early regardless of the calendar.
- Do not upgrade blindly: Avoid buying ultra-restrictive high-MERV filters unless your specific HVAC system is rated to handle them, as they can choke airflow just like a dirty filter.