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How Long Things Last

Want to know when your old furnace or washing machine is going to give out? Here's a guesstimate of the life cycle of all sorts of parts of your house

By [ThisOldHouse.com](#)

0-10 yrs 11-15 yrs 16-25 yrs 26-50 yrs 50+ yrs



dishwashers,
microwave
ovens,
foundation
waterproofing,
carpets,
washing
machines,
light switches,
smoke
detectors,
security systems



refrigerators,
stoves, clothes
dryers, kitchen,
faucets, air
conditioners,
electric water
heaters



asphalt roofing,
furnaces, heat
pumps, decks,
cultured-marble
countertops,
laminate
flooring,
linoleum,
aluminum
gutters, vinyl
doors, asphalt
driveways



screen doors,
wooden
windows,
thermostats,
underground
PVC piping,
engineered-
lumber trim,
whirlpool
baths

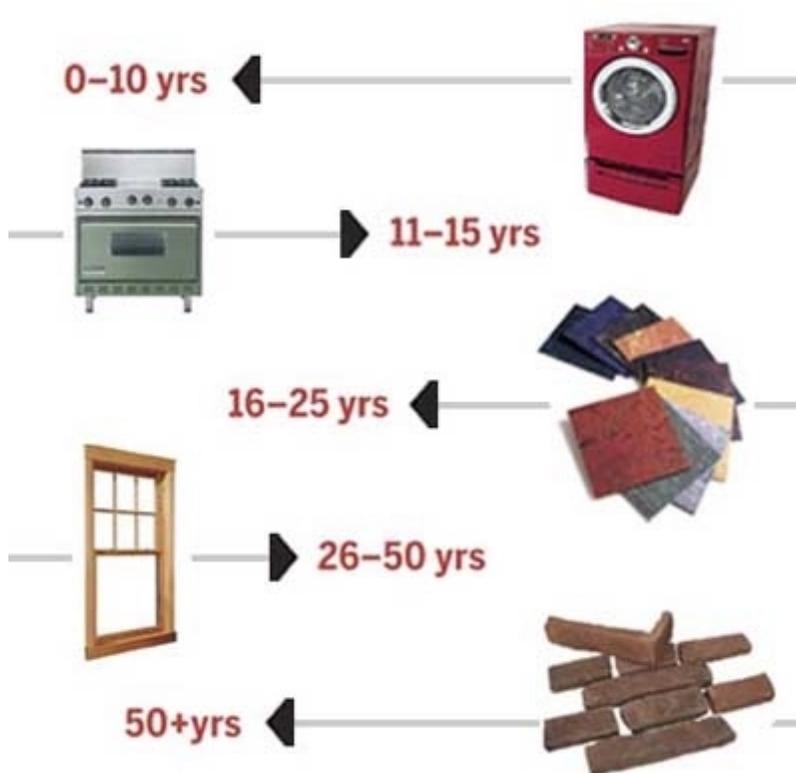


brick,
concrete
foundations,
kitchen
cabinets,
shower
enclosures,
stone
countertops





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Want to know when your old furnace or washing machine is going to give out? Or when those old cabinets just can't be saved? The [National Association of Home Builders](#)' "Study of Life Expectancy of Home Components" gives a decent guesttimate by compiling life-cycle data from scores of product manufacturers and testing labs. Following is a summary to guide you in planning your next big home improvement.



The life expectancy of a typical appliance depends to a great extent on the use it receives. Moreover, appliances are often replaced long before they are worn out because changes in styling, technology and consumer preferences make newer products more desirable. Of the major appliances in a home, gas ranges have the longest life expectancy: 15 years. Dryers and refrigerators last about 13 years. Some of the appliances with the shortest lifespan are: compactors (6 years), dishwashers (9 years) and microwave ovens (9 years).



Kitchen cabinets are expected to last up to 50 years, medicine cabinets for 20+ years, and garage/laundry cabinets for 100+ years. Closet shelves are expected to last for a lifetime.



PHOTO BY JULIAN WASS

Masonry is one of the most durable components of a home. Chimneys, fireplaces, and brick veneers can last a lifetime, and brick walls have an average life expectancy of more than 100 years.



PHOTO BY WENDELL T. WEBBER

Natural stone countertops, which are less expensive than a few years ago, are gaining in popularity and are expected to last a lifetime. Cultured marble countertops have a life expectancy of about 20 years.

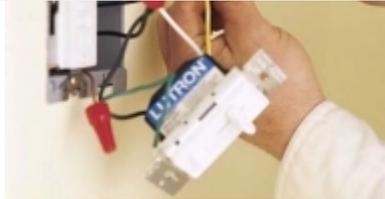


PHOTO BY PHILIP HARVEY

Because they are subject to a wide range of conditions in different climates, the life expectancy of wooden decks can vary significantly. Under ideal conditions, they have a life expectancy of about 20 years.



Exterior fiberglass, steel and wood doors will last as long as the house exists, while vinyl and screen doors have a life expectancy of 20 and 40 years, respectively. Closet doors are expected to last a lifetime, and French doors have an average life of 30 to 50 years.



Copper plated wiring, copper clad aluminum, and bare copper wiring are expected to last a lifetime, whereas electrical accessories and lighting controls are expected to last 10+ years.



Kitchen sinks made of modified acrylic will last 50 years, while kitchen faucets will work properly for about 15 years. The average life of bathroom shower enclosures is 50 years. Showerheads last a lifetime, while shower doors will last about 20 years. Bath cabinets and toilets have an unlimited lifespan, but the components inside the toilet tank do require some maintenance. Whirlpool tubs will function properly for 20 to 50 years, depending on use.



All natural wood floorings have a life expectancy of 100 years or more. Marble, slate, and granite are also expected to last for about 100 years, but can last less due to a lack of maintenance. Vinyl floors last up to 50 years, linoleum about 25 years, and carpet between 8 and 10 years (with appropriate maintenance and normal traffic).



PHOTO BY COURTESY OF FABFORM

Poured as well as concrete block footings and foundations last a lifetime, assuming they were properly built. Termite proofing of foundations will last about 12 years if the chemical barriers put in place during construction are left intact. Waterproofing with bituminous coating lasts 10 years, but if it cracks it is immediately damaged. Concrete or cast iron waste pipes are expected to last 100 years or more.



PHOTO BY BEVAN WALKER

Framing and structural systems have extended longevities: poured-concrete systems, timber frame houses and structural insulated panels will all last a lifetime. Wall panels and roof and floor trusses will similarly last a lifetime. Softwood, hardboard, and plywood last an average of 30 years, while OSB and particleboard are expected to function properly for 60 years.



Garage door openers are expected to last 10 to 15 years, and light inserts for 20 years.



Home technology systems have various life expectancies. While a built-in audio system will last 20 years, security systems and heat/smoke detectors have life expectancies of 5 to 10 years. Wireless home networks and home automation systems are expected to work properly for more than 50 years.



Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems require proper and regular maintenance in order to work efficiently, but even in the best case scenarios most components of such systems only last 15 to 25 years. Furnaces on average last 15-20 years, heat pumps 16 years, and air conditioning units 10-15 years. Tankless water heaters last more than 20 years, while an electric or gas water heater has a life expectancy of about 10 years. Thermostats usually are replaced before the end of their 35-year lifespan due to technological improvements.



As long as they are not punctured, cut, or burned and are kept dry and away from UV rays, the cellulose, fiberglass, and foam used in insulation materials will last a lifetime. This is true whether the insulation was applied as loose fill, house wrap, or batts/rolls.



Ladders are expected to last a lifetime, and life expectancy of lifts is about 8 to 10 years.





PHOTO BY PASCAL BLANCON

Both interior and exterior points can last for 15 years or longer, however home owners often paint more frequently.



PHOTO BY NEW ENGLAND CLASSIC

Hardboard panels and softwood panels are expected to last 30 years, while oriented strand board and particleboard have a life expectancy of 25-30 years. Wall panels are expected to last a lifetime.



The life of a roof depends on local weather conditions, proper building and design, material quality, and adequate maintenance. Slate, copper, and clay/concrete roofs have the longest life expectancy—over 50 years. Roofs made of asphalt shingles last for about 20 years while roofs made of fiber cement shingles have a life expectancy of about 25 years, and roofs made of wood shakes can be expected to last for about 30 years.

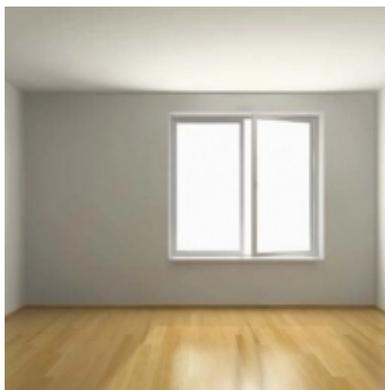


Outside materials typically last a lifetime. Brick, vinyl, engineered wood, stone (both natural and manufactured), and fiber cement will last as long the house exists. Exterior wood shutters are expected to last 20 years, depending on weather conditions. Gutters have a life expectancy of more than 50 years if made of copper and for 20 years if made of aluminum. Copper downspouts last 100 years or more, while aluminum ones will last 30 years.



Most landscaping elements have a life expectancy of 15 to 25 years. Sprinklers and valves last about 20 years, while underground PVC piping has a lifespan of 25 years. Polyvinyl fences are designed to last a lifetime, and asphalt driveways should last between 15 and 20 years.

Tennis courts can last a lifetime if recoated; most coatings last 12 to 15 years. The concrete shell of a swimming pool is expected to last over 25 years, but the interior plaster and tile have life expectancies of about 10 to 25 years.



Walls and ceilings last the full lifespan of the home.



Aluminum windows are expected to last between 15 and 20 years while wooden windows should last upwards of 30 years.

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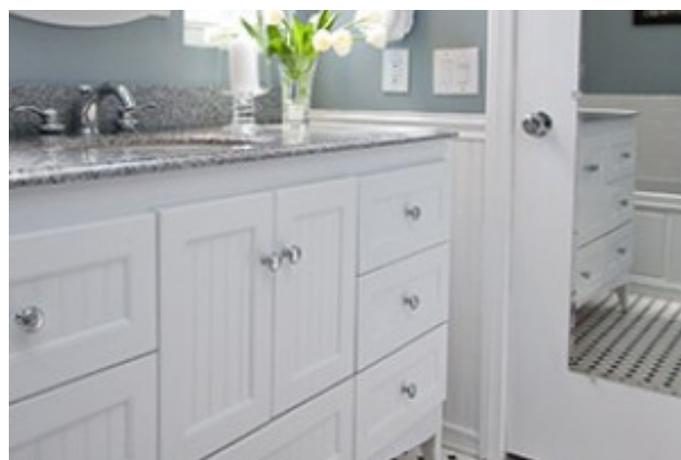
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