

the life expectancy of appliances

Find out how long appliances usually last, and how to keep them in top condition to squeak out a few extra years.

LIFE SPAN:
1-3 YEARS



hair dryer

KEEP IT ALIVE LONGER: Clean lint and dust from the rear filter regularly.

TIME FOR A NEW ONE IF: It has a burning smell or blows only cool air.

LIFE SPAN:
5-7 YEARS



vacuum cleaner

KEEP IT ALIVE LONGER: After every few uses, clean the filters—many models have more than one—to make sure nothing is blocking the nozzle, hose, or entry to the bag (on canister models) or the dirt container (on uprights).

TIME FOR A NEW ONE IF: The motor burns out or the frame cracks. Either repair typically costs as much as a new vacuum.

LIFE SPAN:
5-9 YEARS



stand mixer

KEEP IT ALIVE LONGER: Don't mix too much at once—consult the manual for guidelines. If the appliance has to work too hard, the motor could stop functioning. When cleaning, never skip the socket where the accessories click in—dough or egg white residue can cause a motor breakdown.

TIME FOR A NEW ONE IF: The mixer won't turn on at all, a sign that the motor is dead.

LIFE SPAN:
5-10 YEARS



drip coffeemaker

KEEP IT ALIVE LONGER: Every time you make coffee, empty the grind basket and rinse it, even if it looks clean. Escaped grinds can block water flow. Once a month, run a normal brew cycle with no grounds and a solution of one part white vinegar to two parts water, then follow with two cycles of plain water.

TIME FOR A NEW ONE IF: Your coffee isn't really hot right after you brew it. The pot's heating element has probably died.

LIFE SPAN:
7-10 YEARS



microwave

KEEP IT ALIVE LONGER: Always use microwave-safe cookware to prevent overheating. To keep the turntable rotating properly, wipe up spills right away.

TIME FOR A NEW ONE IF: It takes longer to heat food than it used to, or the machine won't turn on. The cause may just be a burned-out fuse, which a technician can replace, but if the problem is a broken capacitor—a high-voltage part that powers the microwave—the cost to fix it could equal the price of a new machine.



range

KEEP IT ALIVE LONGER: Wipe up messes right away. Spills on the burner can prevent proper gas flow on gas ranges, and they can cause a fire on electric models. Spills in the oven can smoke or even ignite.

TIME FOR A NEW ONE IF: Touching the electronic buttons that control your range (on newer models) gets no response, none of your gas burners will light, or your oven won't heat up. Those repairs will likely cost as much as a new range.

LIFE SPAN:
13-15 YEARS

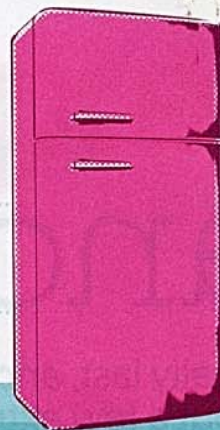


dishwasher

KEEP IT ALIVE LONGER: Check the filter—usually at the floor of the machine, under the bottom rack—every two months to make sure nothing is blocking it, which could keep the dishwasher from draining properly.

TIME FOR A NEW ONE IF: The machine is cracked or rusted beyond repair, or the dishwasher is leaking from the bottom (but not from the front door, which probably indicates a faulty seal—an easy fix). Also if the pump or motor isn't working, the new part can run around \$250, so most people opt to buy a new one instead.

LIFE SPAN:
10-14 YEARS



refrigerator

KEEP IT ALIVE LONGER: Once or twice a year, use a vacuum to clean the coils that protect the refrigerator's compressor. You can usually find them along the bottom of the fridge or in the back. Also periodically test the door seals to make sure cold air isn't escaping, which makes the machine work harder than it should.

TIME FOR A NEW ONE IF: Your fridge and freezer aren't staying cold, a sign the cooling system has called it quits. Almost every part on a refrigerator is replaceable or repairable, but not the cooling system.

LIFE SPAN:
10-12 YEARS



dryer

KEEP IT ALIVE LONGER: Clean the lint screen after every load. Hire a service technician to clear out the vent duct and the inside of the dryer's front panel at least once a year.

TIME FOR A NEW ONE IF: You need two repairs at once, like a new motor and a new timer. In that case, it's more cost-effective to replace the whole thing.

LIFE SPAN:
8-12 YEARS



washing machine

KEEP IT ALIVE LONGER: Make sure the machine is level—excess rocking can damage the motor. Never use more detergent than the manual suggests, and make sure to empty your clothing's pockets. Sharp objects can leave the drum walls with cracks, which can lead to leaks.

TIME FOR A NEW ONE IF: The washer sounds like a freight train during the spin cycle. That means the back support bearing has failed. It's a pricey replacement part and an all-day job for the technician.

OUR EXPERTS

- Chris Hall, cofounder and president, repairclinic.com
- Paulette Heller, vice president of marketing, Conair
- Eric Henderson, director of sales and training, Hoover
- Mary Rodgers, director of marketing communications, Cuisinart