

Fall checkup means inspecting the roof

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Windows are often the big culprit when it comes to drafts and loss of heat in the house. Windows should be caulked every two or three years. Putty where it's necessary. Take down the screens and put up the storms. Replace any loose weather-stripping around the doors.

The cold can cause extreme damage to water lines, so insulate any pipes that might be subject to freezing. While you're still outside, check the driveway for any cracks and seal them.

Beyond checking the efficiency of the heating system, people often save much of the interior work for a spring overhaul. But cleaning experts say the fall is one of the best times to get the house in shape for vigorous winter use.

JEFF CAMPBELL, founder of the Clean Team, a San Francisco housecleaning service, and the author

of "Speed Cleaning" and "Spring Cleaning" (Dell Publishing), said pre-winter cleaning is a must for homes today because of the heavy usage.

"People don't realize how important it is to use the right kind of cleaning tool and to follow a step-by-step procedure to get their homes clean," he said. "There's no such thing as a quick tip to get a house clean."

However, Campbell offers much education in his books: Work from top to bottom always. Keep your cleaning tools in an apron and keep them in good shape.

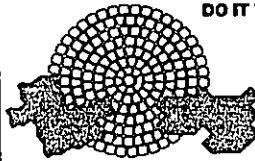
One important fall chore is waxing the floor. Make the flooring squeaky clean and then place two very thin coats of wax on the floor, Campbell said.

"The floor has to be cleaned first before it's waxed, otherwise every piece of dirt will be immortalized," he said.

There are many ways to keep the house looking sharp during the long days of winter.

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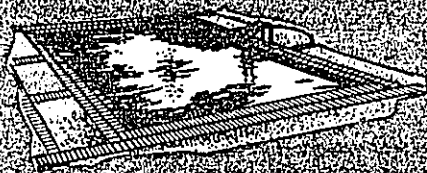
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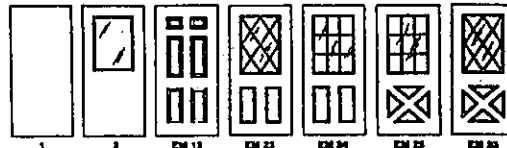
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