

Common Dripping Faucet Causes

For most dripping faucets, the causes are relatively simple to diagnose and solve. One of the most common household plumbing issues, most homeowners experience a dripping faucet at least once over their many years of homeownership. Listed below are the most well-known causes of a dripping faucet.

- **Water pressure.** The most extreme cause of a dripping faucet is a water pressure issue. Pay attention to the dripping when you turn on other water fixtures – does the dripping start or increase when another fixture is turned on? If so, water pressure is the likely cause of the drip. In this circumstance, a plumber is needed.
- **Cartridge.** In a cartridge faucet, the cartridge keeps the amount of water going through the faucet regulated. When the cartridge wears down or loosens, water leaks through the fixture. Invest in a second cartridge to keep at home for a quick fix if the problem arises.
- **Seals.** Seals are important on a faucet because they keep water from leaking through the fixture. When the seals—both the inlet and outlet seals—wear down, water leaks out. Water sediment collects on these seals, which speeds up the seals' deterioration.
- **Valve seat.** Valve seats often cause a dripping faucet because water sediment typically collects in this location. The valve seat connects the faucet to the spout, which means drips stemming from the valve seat usually occur near the spout.
- **O-ring.** O-rings help the faucet handles stay put, but they loosen and wear down over a fixture's years of use. A dripping faucet with leaks near the handle likely needs a new O-ring to stop the leak.
- **Loose or broken parts.** This goes without saying, but when parts of the faucet are broken or too loose, drips are more likely to happen. If any part on the faucet breaks, replace it as soon as possible to both prevent a drip from starting and to stop an existing drip.
- **Washers.** Lastly, bad washers are another common cause of a dripping faucet. Incorrectly installed washers allow water to leak through the faucet. Washers

rest against the valve seat, which causes the washer to deteriorate quicker than other parts of the faucet.

Problems Caused by a Dripping Faucet

A dripping faucet leads to big issues for the homeowner. Dripping faucets seem like a minor inconvenience, but they have large consequences when not quickly remedied. These are the problems associated with a prolonged faucet leak:

Water damage. Damage from a dripping faucet is possible whenever water leaks and collects where it shouldn't. Sometimes, faucet leaks are due to pipe leaks, which cause water damage under the faucet, within your walls, under the house, or elsewhere depending on the pipe leak's location in the home.

Wasted water. When a faucet drips, about 3,000 gallons of water are wasted per year. A dripping faucet negatively affects the environment due to how much water it wastes. It also causes local water supplies to deplete, which forces local governments to put restrictions on water usage to conserve the supply.

Possible septic system failure. Homeowners with septic systems should take extra precaution against leaking fixtures such as toilets or faucets. Excessive water use from leaky faucets and fixtures in your septic system can cause disastrous results. The steady flow of water from a leaky toilet or faucet day and night can quickly flood your septic tank as well as the ground around the drain field, making it impossible for water to flow out of your septic system, eventually leading to septic system failure.

Mold and mildew growth. Finally, mold and mildew grow when water drips from the faucet for extended periods of time. Mold and mildew thrive where water collects, which means a leaking faucet allows mold and mildew to easily grow. This growth contaminates a faucet as well as leads to damage and health hazards throughout the home.

A dripping faucet doesn't take much to fix. Neglecting the issue and leaving the drip for too long causes possible long-term damage. Homeowners need to address their leaky faucets in a timely manner to remove the threat of the problems mentioned above. Fortunately, homeowners of all skill-level are able to carry out DIY fixes to remedy a dripping faucet.

Fix Your Dripping Faucet the DIY Way

Many homeowners try to fix problems around the house on their own whenever the option is available. For a dripping faucet, the solutions are fast, easy, and reliable. The only prep work necessary is to go to the hardware store to purchase replacement parts. Luckily, the parts are common and almost all hardware stores carry replacement faucet components. Bring along the old parts to make sure you purchase the right size.

- **Turn off the water.** Your dripping faucets must be addressed, but only after you turn off the water supply. With the water on, you aren't able to implement any fixes because water just shoots out if you try. As soon as you remove the first part, you get a jet of water in your face and all over the place. Make sure to turn off the water before you start to avoid needing a wet suit!
- **Sink drain cover.** Next, cover drains with a drain cover. If you don't have one, a towel, old t-shirt, or something similar will work. Small faucet parts are hard to keep a hold of, which makes them prone to falling down the drain. Keep something over the drain to avoid old or new parts from becoming lost in the pipes.
- **Handles, packing nut, and stem.** Handles, the packing nut, and stem need to be removed first before you access the parts causing the leak. Though rare, these initial three parts have the potential to cause a dripping faucet. To eliminate them as the cause, check for damage and clean them.
- **O-ring, washer, and valve seat.** O-rings, washers, and valve seats are the most common causes of a faucet dripping, so check them carefully as you remove each. Keep an eye out for corrosion, wear and tear, and any other damage. Check for sediment deposits, as water sediment buildup is noticeable on these parts.

- **Clean with white vinegar.** After all the parts are removed, clean them with white vinegar. White vinegar cleans off any water sediments on the parts. Water sediments corrode pieces of the faucet, which leads to dripping.
- **Replace parts.** The last step is to replace the worn or corroded parts with new ones. Make sure the new parts are an exact match to the old component to prevent leaks caused by incorrectly sized parts. The order of replacements goes washer, O-ring, stem, packing nut, screw, handle. When you finish reassembling, turn the water supply back on to see if the faucet drip has been eliminated.

Get Professional Help for a Dripping Faucet

Despite the homeowner's best efforts, at-home fixes sometimes fail. However, a professional plumber is able to pick up where the homeowner left off. When a dripping faucet refuses to stop leaking after the method mentioned above, it's time to call an experienced plumber for assistance.

- **Valve seat corrosion.** A seat wrench is used to remove the valve seat on your dripping faucet. However, most homeowners don't own this piece of equipment. Professionals carry seat wrenches with them to practically every job, so they are able to remove the valve seat, clean it, and replace it quickly and with ease.
- **Broken plumbing pipes.** Broken plumbing pipes aren't the most common cause of a dripping faucet, but still they are a serious concern. Fix dripping faucets caused by this problem with assistance from the professionals. Plumbers are trained to handle all kinds of plumbing problems, which means they tackle difficult issues with ease. If you suspect broken plumbing pipes, call a professional immediately before further damage occurs.
- **Loose parts.** Occasionally, the faucet's loose parts are farther down than the homeowner is able to reach. A plumber is able to look deeper than homeowners, which means he or she is able to tighten parts far down in the system. After the parts are tightened, faucets stop dripping and are less likely to leak in the future.
- **Worn seals.** Over time, seals wear away, but unfortunately most homeowners don't know how to properly replace them. Incorrect installation runs the risk of future drips. Because of this, a plumber needs to be contacted to install new

inlet and outlet seals. The process doesn't take long and the drip gets fixed instantly.