



ALL HANDS ON DECK FOR SPRING

A checklist for getting your deck spring-ready

After the winter season it's important you give your deck an overall check to make sure it's safe and ready for spring and summer. Throughout winter, your deck is often unused and neglected, but with proper maintenance you can save thousands of dollars in repairs and prevent accidents too!

Use the checklist below to help make sure you're checking it right. And remember to wear protective gear, such as gloves, safety glasses, a long-sleeve shirt and pants to reduce the risk of injury.



Clean floorboards

Start by using a broom to sweep off all debris from the deck. To remove debris from between the floorboards, you can attach an L-hook or scraper to the end of the broomstick.



Inspect deck boards

Inspect wooden boards by walking on them and checking for any "hollow" sounding boards and soft spots. You can also tap them lightly using a screwdriver. Use a knife or any other sharp object to poke in-between the decking to check for any areas affected by mould.



Check for cracking or decay

Check all wood components, including deck boards, railings, stairs, posts and columns for cracks, decay and over-notching.



Inspect for popped nails

Not only are they an eyesore but also an injury risk. Carefully examine each board for popped nails. When one is found, you can either hammer it down, or depending on how far it's popped out, use the claw of your hammer to remove it and reset it in a more secure area.

Note: Mike prefers to see approved exterior deck screws instead of nails to secure deck boards.



Check for corrosion or rust

Look for any visible signs of red rust on hardware (fasteners and connectors) and replace as necessary. Make sure all the holes in connectors are filled with the appropriate fastener.

Note: Screws are not approved fasteners for joist hangers.



Replace old screws

Replace loose or corroded screws that are weakening your deck's structure with stainless steel or coated screws.



Look for missing and loose connections

Important connections could have degraded over time, especially along stairs, railings, joists and deck boarding. If they feel loose or wobbly they must be tightened or replaced.



Check ledger board attachment

The ledger board connects the deck to your house. It should not be attached to stucco, brick or masonry veneer, or over siding. It must be attached to structural framing, the blocking within an I-joist, a rim joist or to a cantilever.



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- Secure the ledger board**

Make sure the ledger board is properly attached to your home using bolts and/or proper structural screws—not nails or regular screws! Any gap between the house and the ledger is a serious issue and needs to be addressed right away. Consulting with a professional inspector or contractor is highly recommended.
- Inspect the ledger board**

Take a screwdriver and tap it with a hammer around the area where the joists attach to the ledger board. If the screwdriver sinks easily into the wood, there's a good chance it's been compromised with dry rot and should be replaced.
- Do the rail test**

If you can wiggle your deck railing system in and out significantly, chances are it's unsafe. The point where the railing and deck surface connect is usually where most railings fail. Make sure wood isn't rotten in this area and fasteners are snug.
- Check Posts**

Look for any visible signs of decay or cracks if the posts are made from wood, or post corrosion if they are metal. Decay or corrosion can be found on the post near ground level. Cracks and decay can appear at the corner of the top of a notched post.
- Check dryer vent location**

If the dryer vent is located below the deck it should be moved whenever possible. Moisture expelled from the dryer vent over winter can cause that area of the deck to deteriorate at a faster rate than other parts of the deck. The area can also become slippery as a film can build up on the deck boards from dryer sheets and dryer additives.
- Clean hard to reach areas**

Scrub small areas with a cleaning brush to get rid of mould and mildew. When cleaning vertical surfaces, start from the bottom and work your way up to avoid an uneven appearance.
- Use the right cleaner**

Not all decks can be cleaned the same way, and choosing the wrong cleaner will drastically reduce its lifespan. Use cleansers that are made specifically for that type of deck material (i.e., wood, composite, vinyl, etc.).
- Test your deck for refinishing**

Sprinkle droplets of water on the wood. If they stay on the surface, the finish is fine. If the deck soaks up the water, it's time to re-finish.
- Sand rough edges**

If you have a large deck, use a pole sander to smoothen the surface and eliminate splinters.
- Wait for good weather conditions for staining**

Do not apply stain to your deck if rain is in the forecast over the next few days. You need at least three consecutive rain-free days to allow it to set properly.