New Homeowner Guide

What to do after closing - and how to protect your investment

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Welcome Home: What This Guide Is For

Closing day is exciting, but homeownership really begins after the keys are handed over. This guide is designed to help new Minnesota homeowners get settled, stay organized, protect the home, and avoid common first-year surprises.

Use it as a first-year roadmap. You do not need to do everything at once. Start with safety, utilities, insurance, records, maintenance basics, and a realistic plan for future repairs.

The goal

A good first year is not about making the home perfect. It is about learning the home, preventing avoidable damage, building good records, and creating routines that protect your investment.

Keep this guide with your home documents

- [ ] Closing disclosure and settlement statement
- [ ] Purchase agreement and amendments
- [ ] Inspection report
- [ ] Homeowners insurance policy
- [ ] Warranty information and appliance manuals
- [ ] Receipts for repairs and improvements
- [ ] Mortgage servicer contact information
- [ ] Utility account information

1. First Week Priorities

The first week is about safety, access, utilities, and avoiding easy-to-miss problems. Do these before getting too deep into furniture, paint colors, or cosmetic updates.

Priority	What to do
Locks and access	Change exterior locks, garage codes, keypad codes, and smart lock access.
Utilities	Confirm electric, gas, water, trash, internet, and any city services are active in your name.
Safety basics	Test smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors. Replace batteries if you are unsure.
Water shutoff	Find the main water shutoff and make sure adults in the home know where it is.
Breaker panel	Label the electrical panel if it is not already clearly marked.
Insurance	Save your homeowners insurance contact information and know your deductible.

Do this early

Walk through the home with your inspection report and make a simple list: urgent safety items, maintenance items, future upgrades, and cosmetic projects.

Quick first-week checklist

- [ ] Change locks or rekey doors
- [ ] Update garage and keypad codes
- [ ] Test smoke and CO detectors
- [ ] Locate main water shutoff
- [ ] Locate gas shutoff if applicable
- [ ] Label breaker panel
- [ ] Confirm trash/recycling schedule
- [ ] Set up mail forwarding and update key addresses

2. First 30 Days

Once the move is under control, shift into setup mode. This is where you organize paperwork, learn how the home works, and start building a maintenance rhythm.

Area	Recommended action
Mortgage	Confirm when the first payment is due and whether servicing will transfer to another company.
Taxes and escrow	Understand whether taxes and insurance are escrowed with your mortgage payment.
Insurance	Review coverage, deductible, roof/wind/hail details, personal property limits, and any optional endorsements.
Maintenance	Replace furnace filter, clean dryer vent area, check gutters, and note appliance ages.
Budget	Start a home repair fund. Even newer homes need maintenance.
Records	Create a digital folder for invoices, manuals, photos, and improvements.

Insurance reminder

If you make major updates, finish a basement, buy expensive valuables, add a dog, rent part of the home, or start a home business, ask your insurance advisor whether your policy should be updated.

First-month checklist

- [ ] Confirm first mortgage payment date
- [ ] Create home document folder
- [ ] Review insurance declarations page
- [ ] Replace furnace filter
- [ ] Check water heater temperature and age
- [ ] Clean dryer lint path and vent area
- [ ] Photograph major appliances and mechanicals
- [ ] Build a simple repair and maintenance budget

3. Seasonal Maintenance Basics

Minnesota homes deal with freeze-thaw cycles, snow, rain, humidity, wind, hail, and big temperature swings. A basic seasonal routine can help prevent expensive damage.

Season	Homeowner tasks
Spring	Check roof and gutters, inspect grading/drainage, test sump pump, look for water intrusion, service AC if needed.
Summer	Trim branches away from roof/siding, monitor exterior caulk, clean dryer vent, check deck/railings, review storm readiness.
Fall	Clean gutters, disconnect hoses, winterize exterior faucets, service furnace, test detectors, prepare snow removal tools.
Winter	Watch for ice dams, keep vents clear of snow, monitor humidity, know shutoff locations, shovel safely around walkways and exits.

Minnesota tip

Water is one of the biggest enemies of a home. Pay attention to gutters, grading, sump pumps, roof condition, plumbing leaks, and ice dams.

Annual habits worth building

- ☐ Review homeowners insurance at renewal
- ☐ Save receipts for improvements
- ☐ Take photos of exterior condition
- ☐ Check caulking around windows and doors
- ☐ Flush or service systems per manufacturer guidance
- ☐ Review your emergency fund and deductible comfort

4. Insurance, Records, and Protecting Your Home

Good records can help when you refinance, sell, make an insurance claim, dispute a bill, or plan future projects. Start simple and keep it organized.

Keep a record of	Why it matters
Repairs and upgrades	Shows what was done, when, and by whom. Helpful for resale and claims.
Appliance details	Model and serial numbers can help with warranty, service, and replacement.
Insurance documents	Know your coverage, deductible, claim contact, and policy renewal date.
Photos and videos	A simple home inventory can help if there is a major loss.
Contractor info	Makes future service faster and easier.

Claim caution

If damage happens, take photos, prevent further damage if safe, keep receipts, and talk with your insurance advisor before assuming whether something is or is not covered.

Simple home inventory starter list

- ☐ Photos/video of each room
- ☐ Electronics and serial numbers
- ☐ Appliances and mechanical systems
- ☐ Furniture and major purchases
- ☐ Jewelry, collectibles, tools, and specialty items
- ☐ Receipts for high-value items when available

5. First-Year Planning Sheet

Use this page to keep your first-year priorities realistic. Not everything needs to be fixed or upgraded immediately. Separate urgent needs from future wants.

Category	Notes
Urgent safety or water issues	
Repairs from inspection report	
First projects to budget for	
Contractors or vendors to call	
Insurance questions to ask	
Maintenance reminders	

Who to call

Need	Contact
Mortgage / payment question	Loan servicer or lender
Insurance coverage or claim question	Insurance advisor
Property tax question	County property tax office
Utility issue	Utility provider
Home repair or emergency	Qualified contractor or service professional
Neighborhood/city question	City office, HOA, or local authority

Your next step

Keep learning the home. The more you understand about your roof, plumbing, electrical, heating, cooling, drainage, and insurance, the more confident you will feel as a homeowner.

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