



# happy homes

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monthly



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## 6 Things Every Homeowner Should Know

Owning a home can be a dream come true. At the same time, being a homeowner comes with huge responsibilities related to maintenance and upkeep. Here are some essential tips for every seasoned and inexperienced homeowner.

**1. Fix a Running Toilet.** Lift the top of the tank and check the flush valve assembly. Try re-positioning it to see if this solves your problem. If you have no luck, you may need to visit the hardware store to buy a new assembly.

**2. Unclog Drains.** Start by plunging the drain. If this doesn't work, you can snake the drain with a hanger. After you've removed the clog, clean out remaining gunk by pouring a cup of baking soda down the drain, followed by four cups of boiling water. Finish by pouring in a cup of vinegar to create a chemical reaction that will jar remaining debris loose.

**3. Clearing Gutters.** It's important to clear gutters of leaves, pests and ice dams at least twice a year. If you neglect this important responsibility, you could end up with roof leaks, rotted wood, insect infestations and even foundational problems due to improper drainage.

**4. Manipulating your thermostat.** The U.S. Department of Energy recommends setting thermostats to 78 in summer and 68 degrees in winter for optimal energy efficiency. If you live in a warm, humid climate, do not set your thermostat higher than 80 degrees.

**5. Install Weather-Stripping.** You can lower your heating and cooling costs by 15 percent by installing weather-stripping around your doors and operable windows. Measure the perimeter of your windows and doors to determine exactly how much you should buy.

**6. Dripping Faucets.** Start by turning off the water to the sink and stop up the drain to keep from losing small, essential parts. Dismantle the faucet and add a new rubber washer to seal a compression faucet. If you have a drippy washerless faucet, you may need a new O-ring.

## Valentine's Sugar Cookies

### Ingredients

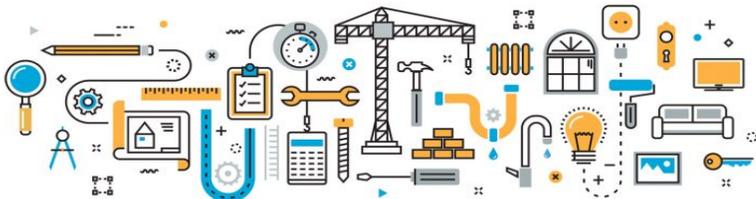
- 2/3 cup butter, softened
- 7 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 cups white sugar
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 1/2 cups shortening
- 3 teaspoons almond extract
- 1 cup milk
- 3 eggs



### Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.
2. In a large mixing bowl, mix together flour, sugar, salt, and baking powder. Mix in shortening. Once the shortening is well blended, stir almond flavoring and milk into the dough at the same time, followed by eggs. Roll out dough onto a floured surface, using a floured rolling pin. Roll the dough thick. Cut out cookies and arrange them on a cookie sheet.
3. Bake at 375 degrees F (190 degrees C) for 8 to 10 minutes, or just until bottom is golden.

Recipe courtesy of [allrecipes.com](http://allrecipes.com)



### WARRANTY WISDOM

HVAC breakdowns occur in 1 out of every 2.2 homes each year. A Home Warranty Service Agreement from 2-10 Home Buyers Warranty® gives homeowners protection against unexpected system and appliance breakdowns.

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