



End of Winter HVAC Check-In Checklist

Use this checklist to look back on how your heating system performed this winter and to spot early warning signs. Most sections take about 5 minutes. Check boxes that apply and jot quick notes.

Part 1: Comfort and Performance Check (about 5 minutes)

Temperature consistency

- Some rooms were consistently colder or warmer than others.
- I had to keep raising the thermostat to feel comfortable.
- The house felt like it swung between “too hot” and “too cool.”

Notes: _____

Airflow at registers

- Airflow felt weaker than last year at one or more vents.
- Some vents barely pushed air at all.
- I noticed whistling at vents or doors pulling shut (airflow/pressure clues).

Notes: _____

Cycle behavior

- The system turned on and off frequently (short cycling).
- The system ran a long time and still struggled to reach set temperature.
- The system seemed to stop early and then restart again soon after.

Notes: _____

Part 2: Filter and Return Air Check (about 5 minutes)

Filter check

- Filter was dirty (gray/fuzzy) when checked.



- Filter needed changing faster than expected.
- I am unsure what filter size/type the system needs.
- Filter change date is written on the filter frame.

Notes: _____

Return air basics

- Return grilles were clear (not blocked by furniture, rugs, or storage).
- One or more returns were partially blocked at some point this winter.
- I can feel strong suction at the return(s) when the system runs.

Notes: _____

Part 3: Sounds, Smells, and “Feels Off” Clues (about 5 minutes)

Sounds to note

- New rattling, buzzing, or vibration noises.
- Blower sounded strained or louder than normal.
- Start-up sounded different than it used to (bang, thump, or delay).

Notes: _____

Smells to note

- Dusty smell at start-up that fades quickly (common).
- Persistent burning/electrical smell (not normal).
- Musty smell or damp odor.
- Exhaust-like smell near the furnace area.

Notes: _____

Part 4: Energy Bill and Runtime Reality Check (about 5 minutes)

- Utility bills were higher than expected compared to last winter.
- The system seemed to run longer to get the same comfort.



I noticed more drafts/cold spots during windy days than usual.

Notes (bill/running time): _____

Part 5: Furnace and Mechanical Area Look-Over (about 5 minutes)

Around the furnace (visual only)

- No water on the floor and no rust streaks.
- I saw water, dampness, or rust near the furnace.
- Venting looked secure (no loose joints) and no unusual condensation.
- I noticed soot, scorch marks, or black staining (needs attention).

Notes: _____

If you have a high-efficiency (condensing) furnace

- Condensate drain tubing looks secure and is draining properly.
- I saw signs of dripping, backing up, or a clogged drain.

Notes: _____



End-of-Winter Reflection Guide (Score Yourself)

Score each item: 0 = no issues, 1 = occasional, 2 = frequent. Check one box per row.

Item	0	1	2
Uneven temps room-to-room			
Weak airflow at vents			
Short cycling or odd cycling			
New noises			
Unusual smells			
Filter gets dirty fast			
Bills higher than expected			
Thermostat frustrations (overshoot, lag, constant tweaking)			

Total score (add your checks): _____

What your total suggests:

0–3: Likely in good shape. Keep up filter checks and plan your normal maintenance rhythm.

4–7: Something is trending the wrong direction. Worth addressing before it becomes an emergency.

8+: Strong signal that the system needs a closer look soon, especially before shoulder season and spring weather swings.

Tip: If you're unsure what you're seeing, snap a quick photo of the filter, thermostat settings, or the furnace area so you can reference it later.