

To Repair, or To Replace?

10 basic rules to help you decide whether to repair or replace your old furnace



Looking to make a smart and comfortable decision?

These 10 basic rules will help you to better understand whether you should repair your existing furnace, or purchase a shiny new heating system:

Is my present furnace over 15 years old?

Most gas forced-air heating systems last about 15 years. A new high-efficiency furnace can save up to 35% on heating costs.

BASIC RULE # 1

Consider replacing your furnace if it's older than 15 years and the repair bill is greater than \$300.

Does my furnace need frequent repairs?

Gas furnaces need annual maintenance, but they shouldn't need annual repair. Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me...right?

BASIC RULE # 2

Fix it the first time. Consider replacing the furnace if it fails more than once within a 2-year period.

Is my heating system covered under warranty?

About 20 years ago, furnace manufacturers started to offer extended warranties. Today, many warranties cover parts & labor repairs for up to 10 years.

BASIC RULE # 3

Get the furnace repaired if it's covered by a service company, manufacturer or home warranty. Duh, free is good!

What is the general condition of my furnace?

Furnaces that are cleaned and tuned-up annually can last for more than 20 years. Neglected furnaces often rust out, fall apart and can eventually become safety hazards.

BASIC RULE # 4

The eye test: If the furnace looks brand new, consider the repair. If it looks like it's falling apart and you're afraid to let the kids near it, consider replacement.

Is my furnace a "natural draft" or "condensing" model?

Many older furnace models in homes today are what we call "natural draft" furnaces. When these furnaces were brand new, they were around 70-80% efficient. Most furnaces installed today are called "condensing" furnaces. They operate with a secondary heat chamber that squeezes another 15% of heat out of the furnace and delivers it into the home - not out the chimney. Many of these new condensing furnaces also come with variable speed blowers that can save up to \$300 per year in electricity.

BASIC RULE # 5

If saving money on your utility bill is important to you, consider replacing an older natural draft furnace or a furnace with an "old style" blower motor. It's not uncommon of homeowners to save \$600/year on gas and electricity after installing a new variable speed, modulating gas furnace.

Is my furnace quiet or noisy?

Not all furnaces produce the same noise levels, and not all people have the same sensitivity to sound. The best furnaces today come with variable speed motors which adjust automatically to deliver the precise amount of air necessary. Since variable speed motors are meant to run continuously, these new furnaces operate with fewer start-up cycles - which are the primary source of noise complaints with older models.

BASIC RULE # 6

You don't have to live with a noisy furnace. If your old furnace keeps you up at night when it runs, consider installing a new one.

Is my home comfortable in the winter?

A furnace in Minnesota needs to keep your home warm - even if it's 20 below zero. However, if the furnace is too big, you'll end up with big temperature swings - as well as hot/cold spots throughout the home. Newer "modulating" furnaces have up to 60 stages - and they always put out the perfect amount of heat. It's like having a different furnace for every outdoor temperature.

BASIC RULE # 7

If it feels like the Sahara Desert when the furnace is on, and the North Pole when it's off, consider a new furnace. Modulating furnaces will automatically adjust the heat output and dramatically improve the comfort of your home.

Am I into having the latest technology?

There's an app for everything – including your furnace. Most new heating systems come with a new WiFi thermostat, which can be controlled with a smartphone or tablet and anywhere you're connected to the Internet. Imagine being able to control your home temperature remotely - pretty slick if you're into that sort of thing.

BASIC RULE # 8

If you want to control the heating settings from outside your home, consider a new furnace or simply upgrade your old thermostat to a WiFi thermostat.

Are some rooms in my home too hot or too cold?

Many homeowners live with those "uncomfortable" rooms for years and they just figure "it's always going to be that way." Recent advances in technology have allowed contractors to solve the "hot or cold room" problem.

BASIC RULE # 9

If the existing furnace does a fantastic job keeping the entire home comfortable then don't mess with it. If you have rooms in your home that you can't use because they're too hot or cold, consider arranging a home survey with a heating contractor. They should do it free of charge 😊.

Will it cost more long-term to repair or replace the furnace?

Everyone wants to make smart financial decisions. Here are some money factors to consider when deciding between repair and replacement:

- ✓ Furnace repair cost
- ✓ Heating utility expense
- ✓ Maintenance expense
- ✓ Future repair costs
- ✓ Inflation vs. Investment in a new furnace

BASIC RULE # 10

If you're completely happy with your existing furnace, and the expected costs of keeping the old furnace for the next 5 years are less than a new furnace, then simply repair it. If the cost of the repair, the inflated heating bills and future service/maintenance is too high, then replace it.

So how do I select the right heating company?

The best way to feel comfortable with a heating company is to ask the right questions.

The only trouble: What are the right questions? So pushing for the trouble-free experience, we offer this additional guide:

How to Select the Right Heating Company

Remember, with warranties lasting up to 10 years, you're embarking on a relationship.



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