

How to Change Your Air Filter Step by Step

A clean air filter is one of the simplest ways to keep your HVAC system running efficiently. It also helps improve indoor air quality and can reduce strain on your system. Most homeowners can handle this in just a few minutes once they know where to look.

Why Changing Your Air Filter Matters

Your air filter traps dust, dirt, pet hair, and other particles before they circulate through your home or into your HVAC system. Over time, it gets clogged and starts to restrict airflow.

When that happens, you may notice:

- Reduced airflow from vents
- Higher energy bills
- More dust around the home
- The system running longer than normal
- Increased wear on your AC or heater

A dirty filter doesn't just affect airflow. When too much dust and debris get past the filter, it can build up inside your system and even contribute to clogged condensate drain lines. This can eventually lead to water backups and potential damage if not addressed.

How Often Should You Change It

It depends on your home, but a general guideline is:

- Every 30 days for best performance and system protection
- Monthly is especially important if you have pets or allergies
- More frequently during heavy AC or heating seasons

Replacing your filter every 30 days helps prevent dust and debris from getting into the system and clogging components like the drain line, which can lead to backups and costly issues.

What You'll Need

You don't need any tools for this job, just:

- A replacement air filter of the correct size
- A clean place to dispose of the old filter

The most important thing is making sure you buy the correct size, which is usually printed on the side of your current filter.

Step by Step: How to Change Your Air Filter

1. Turn Off Your System (Recommended)

While not always required, it's a good idea to turn your HVAC system off at the thermostat before replacing the filter. This prevents dust from being pulled into the system during the change.

2. Locate Your Air Filter

Your air filter is usually found in one of these places:

- Inside the return air vent on a wall or ceiling
- Inside the HVAC unit itself (commonly near the blower compartment)
- In a slot where the return duct connects to the system

If you're unsure, look for a removable panel or a slot labeled filter.

3. Remove the Old Filter

Slide the filter out carefully. Pay attention to how it's positioned. Most filters have an arrow printed on the side showing airflow direction.

Be prepared for a little dust when you remove it.

4. Check the Size and Airflow Direction

Before inserting the new filter, double check:

- The size matches exactly (example: 16x25x1)
- The airflow arrow points toward the HVAC system, not away from it

Installing it backward can reduce efficiency and airflow.

5. Install the New Filter

Slide the new filter into the slot, making sure it fits snugly and is seated properly. There should be no gaps around the edges.

6. Turn Your System Back On

Once the new filter is in place, turn your HVAC system back on and confirm everything is running normally.

Simple Tips to Keep in Mind

- Set a reminder to replace your filter every 30 days
- Keep a spare filter on hand so you're not caught off guard
- If your filter looks gray or clogged, don't wait
- Regular filter changes help prevent drain line clogs and water backups

A clean filter helps your system breathe easier, protects key components like your drain line, and can extend the life of your equipment.