

TEMPLATE · MAINTENANCE

Deck maintenance schedule by material

Pin this inside the garage door. The routine fails when it's out of sight. Cross-reference the year column with your build year.

§ I. PRESSURE-TREATED LUMBER

Annual cleaning. Sealant every 1-2 years. Plan for selective board replacement around year 10-12 on cuts exposed to weather.

- Spring: pressure-wash at low setting, inspect ledger and joist hangers for rust
- Fall: clear debris from between boards, check fasteners for back-out
- Year 2 onward: apply oil-based or water-based stain/sealant every 12-24 months
- Year 10-12: budget for 5-10 board replacements on the most exposed runs

§ II. WESTERN RED CEDAR

Weathers faster than PT. Refinish every 2-3 years if you want to keep the colour. Otherwise it greys to silver, which is a legitimate look.

- Spring: clean with cedar-safe cleaner, inspect for cupping or end-grain checking
- Fall: clear, dry, photograph any boards that are starting to warp
- Year 2-3: oil or semi-transparent stain cycle, expect 2-3 cycles per decade
- Year 8-12: plan for selective board replacement on the most exposed runs

§ III. COMPOSITE (TREX-TIER)

Wash twice a year. No refinishing. Watch for grease stains around the BBQ — most warranties exclude oil damage.

- Spring: deck-safe cleaner with a soft-bristle brush, rinse thoroughly
- Fall: clear leaves between boards before they decay and stain the surface
- Year 5 inspection: check that hidden clips haven't worked loose at joist crossings
- Year 10-12: warranty review, photograph any fade or pitting before the warranty window closes

§ IV. PVC (AZEK-TIER)

Most stable of the four. Wash twice a year. Surface scratches buff out with the manufacturer's repair kit.

- Spring + Fall: standard wash, inspect colour for any UV-related shift on south-facing runs
- Year 5: confirm fastener torque on the substructure (PVC moves more than composite with temperature)
- Year 10+: capped surface is stable; substructure becomes the limiting factor, inspect framing

§ V. WHEN TO STOP DIY-ING AND CALL A CONTRACTOR

- Soft spot near the ledger — water infiltration behind the flashing
- Wobble in a stair stringer — bottom anchor or top hanger failure
- Rust streaks under fasteners — structural fastener corrosion
- Joist hanger nails backing out visibly — framing is moving
- Any board flex you can feel underfoot that wasn't there last year