

To Repair, or To Replace?

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



Looking to make a smarter and cooler decision?

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

Is my present air conditioner over 12 years old?

Most central air conditioning systems last between 12 to 15 years. A new high-efficiency air conditioner can save up to 50% on cooling costs.

BASIC RULE # 1

Consider replacing your old air conditioner if it's older than 12 years and the repair bill is greater than \$300.

Does my air conditioner need frequent repairs?

Air Conditioners 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 AC if it fails more than once in a 2-year period.

Is my air conditioner covered under warranty?

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

BASIC RULE # 3

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

What is the general condition of my air conditioner?

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

BASIC RULE # 4

The eye test: If the air conditioner 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.

What type of refrigerant is in my air conditioner?

There are basically two types of refrigerants used in residential air conditioners. The "old refrigerant", called R22, is a HCFC based, ozone-depleting refrigerant that's being phased out by the US government. The "new refrigerant", called R410A or Puron, is a more environmentally safe refrigerant & almost all new residential ACs run on it.

BASIC RULE # 5

Consider replacing an air conditioner that runs on R22 (often identified by a lime green sticker on the outdoor AC). The price of R22 refrigerant is 4 to 5 times more expensive than R410A and repairs on R22 systems are almost always very expensive.

Is my air conditioner quiet or noisy?

Not all air conditioners produce the same noise levels, and not all people have the same sensitivity to sound. The best air conditioners today run at around 66 decibels. Conversational speech is around 60 decibels, in the event you were curious.

BASIC RULE # 6

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

Is my home comfortable in the summer?

An air conditioner has two jobs. Its first job is to remove heat from the home. Its second job is to remove humidity. And a properly functioning air conditioner should accomplish both while making the home feel comfortable. On the other hand, an air conditioner that always leaves the home cool but sticky is only doing half the job.

BASIC RULE # 7

If it's always humid & sticky in your home, consider a new air conditioner. Many new air conditioners come with a "humidity reduction" setting that will dry out the home without making it too cold inside.

Am I into having the latest technology?

There's an app for everything – including your air conditioner. Most new air conditioners come with a new WiFi thermostat, which can be controlled with a smartphone or tablet and anywhere you receive an internet connection. 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 air conditioner settings from outside your home, consider a new air conditioner 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 AC 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 an air conditioning contractor. They should do it free of charge ☺.

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

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

- ✓ AC repair cost
- ✓ Cooling utility expense
- ✓ Maintenance expense
- ✓ Future repair costs
- ✓ Inflation vs. Investment in a new AC

BASIC RULE # 10

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

So how do I select the right AC service company?

The best way to feel comfortable with an AC service 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 AC Service Company

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



Pronto Heating & Air Conditioning
7415 Cahill Road
Edina, MN 55439
952.835.7777

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