



Rivergum

Home
Maintenance
Guide

11 steps to a lasting finish

Now that you've moved in, there are some important things you need to do while you finish your new home.

These are things that will help maintain your warranties, and ultimately ensure the ongoing comfort, durability and value of your beautiful new home.

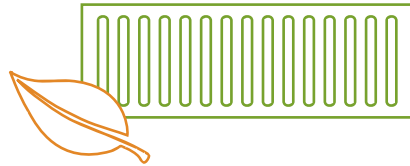


Washing machine and dishwasher



If you are arranging for your own dishwasher or washing machine to be installed, it is important to ensure that either you or the installer drill out the S Trap so that water can flow through the pipes to avoid damaging your new appliances and surrounding cabinetry.

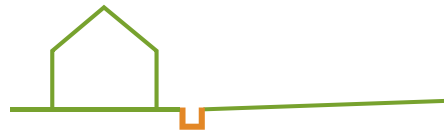
Stormwater



Stormwater is rainwater plus anything else the rain carries with it. Stormwater can cause issues with the footing of your new home if it isn't correctly redirected away from your home effectively.

To ensure that all the water has somewhere to go, check that gutters and downpipes as well as lawn, path and garden drain grates remain clean and clear of leaves, soil, and grass.

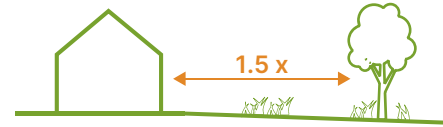
Sloping sites/site drainage



Paths with spoon drains are required if the ground of your site slopes towards your home. An agricultural drain may also be necessary at the base of the slope to collect surface water run-off. It is important to place drains uphill of the footing to direct water around the house and away from the footings.

Be sure to follow engineer's drainage recommendations especially if a retaining wall is to be constructed.

Landscaping



The roots of trees and shrubs can affect footings in two ways. They can grow under and lift footings, as well as cause sinking by removing moisture from the soil.

As a rule of thumb, single trees should be planted at a distance of at least 1.5 x their mature height away your home. And if you're planning to plant them in a row, increase this distance to double their mature height. Similarly, shrubs can also have aggressive root systems, so avoid planting large concentrations, if any, near your footings.

Too much moisture in the soil can also cause footing problems, so garden beds should be kept away from the home, as they are generally the most heavily watered parts of a yard. All lawns placed near the home must grade away from it and sump grates should be in place to catch surface water and prevent ponding.

Perimeter paving and concreting

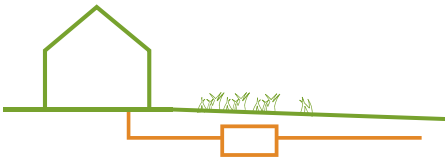


Paving and concrete around new homes can, and often do, move. While that's expected to some degree, there are a few things you can do to help minimise this effect.

Paving should fall away from the house to allow drainage to stormwater discharge points. It is recommended that paving levels be a minimum of 75mm below the top of the footing rebate. Where raised above this height, i.e. for driveway access, the area must include white ant treatment. Avoid large expanses of concrete against one side of the house and heavily watered garden beds on the other. The water-saturated soil in the garden beds will expand while the dry soil under the concrete will shrink. This can generate pressures on the footing system and cause it to fail.

If your driveway slopes towards your home, ensure a grate, connected to stormwater drains, is installed at the front of the garage.

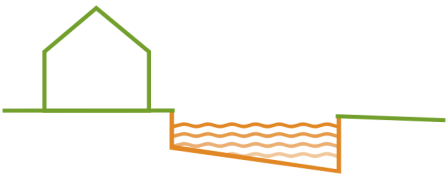
Septic systems



Septic systems should remain free of footpaths, roads and large rooted trees above, to ensure the tank's structure remains sound for years to come. It also helps to keep the site well-grassed, to assist with the absorption process. In the disposal areas, only recommended shrubs should be planted.

The manufacturer should commission the aerobic waste water systems approximately 2–3 weeks after first usage.

Swimming pools & ponds



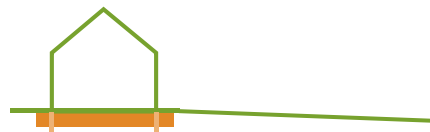
If you decide to install a pond or a swimming pool, get advice from an engineer before starting any site work. They will be able to advise how best to ensure the water stays well clear of your home's foundations.

Elevated homes



If your home is raised, wind passing through can erode soil from underneath. This effect can be minimised by using good base infill around the perimeter of your home. A stormwater system should also be installed to help direct water away from the foundations.

Concrete slab



Rivergum Homes relies on our quality engineer reports to build your home on differing soil types. Some shrinkage and small cracks in concrete foundations are perfectly normal, so there's no need for concern as these will not have a detrimental effect on your footings.

White ant/termite protection



A barrier will have been applied to your new home to prevent termites, so it's important to maintain that protection. If you plan to add an extension or alteration (i.e. verandah, paving, deck or pergola), please be sure to contact a termite barrier installer, in case any additional pipework or retreatment of the chemical barrier is required following construction.

Plasterwork



To preserve your plasterwork, avoid suspending fixtures such as heavy fittings, paintings or ornamental items from it. Heavy light fittings can be fixed to the ceiling frame. It's best to nail hanging pictures and paintings into studs, not plasterboard. Similarly, curtain rails or blinds can be very heavy, so they should be mounted onto the window frames or wall studs.

! Concrete slab tips:

Flexible tile adhesive is recommended when laying tiles in living areas to allow for a little movement.

The best way to maintain your slab is to keep moisture content around the home even.

! White ant/termite tips:

Annual inspection by appropriate experts is recommended.

Avoid storing materials around the base of your home as this will provide a path for white ants to access the timber structure.

! Plasterwork tip:

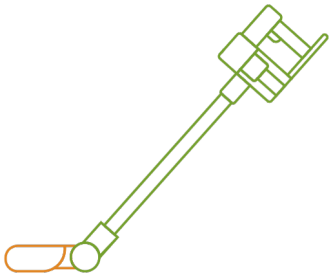
A stud finder, available at hardware stores, can help you easily locate framing studs behind plasterwork.

Regular maintenance

We understand the excitement of living in a brand new home and the temptation to keep everything as new. However, some old cleaning habits can spoil the look and feel of modern finishes, so here are a few tips on how to keep your home looking its best.



Carpets



Regular vacuuming and cleaning up spills quickly will ensure your carpets look great for longer. Be careful to avoid revolving vacuum heads as these can potentially cause your carpet to get that fuzzy look.

It's well worth using mats at the entrance doors to your house. It's better to have dirt and grit from outside left on the mat, rather than traipsed across your carpet.

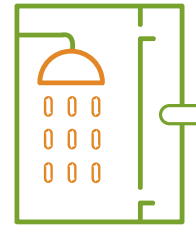
Timber and laminate floors



Wood or laminate floors not only look great, they're also easy to look after. All they require is a regular static or microfibre mop.

It's a good idea to use protective pads on the legs of moveable furniture. And don't forget to lift, not drag, heavy objects into position. The last thing you want on your beautiful floors is scratches.

Wet areas



New homes move slightly as they settle and adjust. It's important to check all wet areas on a regular basis to ensure movement doesn't create gaps in silicone or grout around tiles, especially in wet areas like kitchens and bathrooms.

Silicone is an important part of waterproofing, and must be maintained to prevent issues including leaking, mould and other damage around wet areas.

If you notice any silicone that is peeling or cracked, replace it promptly, not just to protect your home from damp or mould but also to help preserve your Rivergum warranty.



Carpet tips:

If you have a spillage, dab instead of rub. This helps keep the fibres from felting and becoming frayed or fuzzy.



Timber and laminate floor tips:

Rugs and floor mats are great for comfort and adding interest to a room. But avoid rubber-backed mats as they can affect the floor finish.

If you spill anything on your floors, be sure to wipe it up straight away to avoid discolouration and expansion in the material beneath. For stubborn dirt, damp-mop the floor using a well-rung mop. Avoid using steam mops.



Wet area tips:

Always use your exhaust fan when taking a shower to prevent excess condensation from collecting around windows and walls, creating mould.

Check for leaks around toilets, sinks and appliances that use water regularly.

Aluminium windows/doors



Sliding windows are designed to allow water to drain out through 'weep holes'. By cleaning the bottom of your door or window tracks regularly, water can drain out when it needs to.

Smoke Detectors



It's a good habit to test your smoke detectors monthly. As our smoke detectors are hardwired, we recommend replacing the batteries annually to ensure they remain in optimal working condition.

Smoke Detectors tip:

Test by pressing the test button on the alarm with a broom handle. If it's working, you'll hear a loud alarm.

Internal paintwork



The interior of your home has been painted with washable paint. This means that accidental marks on walls can be cleaned off, with proper care.

To remove a mark, simply rinse off with detergent and water (avoid using abrasive pads or cleaners). Be careful not to rub too hard as this can leave a flat mark on the surface, which can really stand out. Once finished, pat the area dry to prevent a spotty appearance. If your wall or ceiling requires a paint touch up, the best result will be achieved by using a roller rather than a brush, as this will match the existing texture.

Internal paintwork tips:

Regular dusting of walls and skirtings will prevent dirt build up.

If cracks appear in your architraves, door frames and skirtings, this is perfectly normal. Simply fill the gaps with flexible filler and touch up with matching paint or varnish as required.

Joinery and benchtops



Your rangehood exhaust fan isn't just for getting rid of kitchen smells. It's also an important tool when it comes to protecting the beauty and longevity of your kitchen.

Ensuring your exhaust is turned on when using benchtop hotplates is a must.

You should also use your exhaust fan to help prevent heat, hot gases and fumes produced by wall ovens and dishwashers affecting surrounding doors and panels.

Avoid using appliances directly beneath overhead cabinetry, including toasters, kettles and electric frypans as they can leave marks on the cabinetry.

When it comes to your benchtops, there are just a few things to remember. Never chop directly on your benchtop as it could damage the surface; use a chopping board or mat.

Avoid excessive heat on your benchtops, such as that from hot saucepans and oven baking dishes and trays and always remember to wipe up spills as they occur.

Joinery tips:

Avoid opening your dishwasher at the end of the wash cycle to prevent excessive steam from causing delamination of your kitchen benchtops and cupboards.

Clean or replace the filter in your rangehood to help dissipate cooking moisture efficiently.

Benchtops tips:

You can remove fine scratch marks on benchtops by applying a good quality car polish. Be sure to patch test in a discreet area first.

Avoid all contact with highly aggressive cleaning agents like oven cleaners.

To prevent dulling the surface of your benchtop, use a gentle, non-abrasive detergent.

Avoid rubbing in one spot when cleaning. When cleaning stone benchtops don't use the cloth you use to wash the dishes as it will transfer oils from your dishes.

Retaining walls



Retaining walls require little maintenance, but there are things you can look out for to ensure they stay in tip top condition.

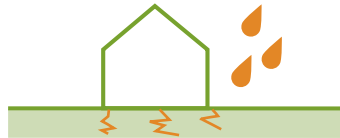
Retaining walls have soil beneath and behind them. Having a quick look at your wall every now and then to avoid pooling of water in low spots can prevent problems later on. If there is a low point, just fill it with soil.

Keep an eye out for weeds and pull them out to prevent them from growing and affecting the integrity of your wall.

Silicone sealant

New homes move slightly as they settle into the land. In some cases, this can open gaps around sealant used around your roof gutters, rain heads, flashings and downpipes. To ensure that water is kept from causing leaks and moisture-related issues such as mould, check the silicone sealant around these areas on a regular basis. If you find any peeling or cracks appearing in the silicone, replace it with more sealant as soon as you can.

Foundations/ soil movement



The foundation is the base (or load bearing portion) of your building within the soil that your home sits on. The sub-surface soil will expand and contract with the weather and seasons.

Clays will expand when wet, and contract when dry, so structural damage can result from clay movement. Regularly inspect the soil around your home to make sure moisture content remains consistent around its perimeter.

Foundations/soil movement tips:

Avoid excessive watering of gardens near to your home, as this can make way for clay movement around footings and cause structural damage as a result.

Be sure to repair leaks from gutters and downpipes, as soon as they occur.

More information on how to take care of your foundations can be found in your engineer's report, included in your handover pack.

Roofing, guttering and downpipes



Gutters and downpipes can be overwhelmed by heavy rainfall. To help water flow freely, clean the gutters, downpipes and valleys of your roof regularly. Additionally, leaves and twigs can back up and potentially cause flooding or serve as fuel in a bushfire.

Areas that don't get washed by rainwater should be hosed down about every 6 months, or more frequently if you live by the coast to minimise discolouration and salt damage.

Roof tips:

To protect your home from water damage and preserve your Rivergum warranty, check for gaps or cracks in the sealant around your roof, replacing it with more silicone sealant as necessary.

External metal fixtures

If your home is near the coast, a little extra care for any outdoor metal fittings will keep rust at bay. Use a silicone-based spray lubricant on clean door handles, hinges, locks, awning winders and sliding window tracks will help protect them against the elements.

Garage door

Garage doors are relatively maintenance free. However, it's good to get into the habit of washing painted metal, COLORBOND® steel and aluminium garage doors when residue builds up.

External metal fixtures tip:

To keep the stainless steel wire on your balustrade beautifully bright, wash it with fresh water and apply silicone spray.

Garage door tips:

Have your garage door inspected by a trained specialist every 2 years.

If your home is in a coastal area, doors should be rinsed every few months to avoid salt damage.

Termite protection



Even though your home has termite protection, there are still things you need to do to ensure the destructive pests stay away from your place.

Avoid storing materials at the base of your home as this can act as a path for white ants to travel to the timber structure, which could void your warranty.

Regularly inspect the perimeter of your home for signs of termites including earth tubes or tubes running up the side of the house. If you think you might have a problem, don't touch anything, as the termites could flee to another part of your home. Contact a professional, straight away.



Termite protection tip:

Have your home inspected each year by a professional pest controller.

Brickwork



Brickwork is strong, but it still needs a little care and attention.

Weep holes are the vertical gaps left between the bricks. They're usually sited at the first or second brick from ground level to allow the drainage of moisture that penetrates the masonry via wind driven rain. They also help to ventilate and prevent the build up of moisture in the cavity of your home. Inspecting weep holes to ensure they're free from obstruction is a must. Make sure that soil build up or garden beds are never in their way. From time to time, you may notice white powder on the face of your bricks. This happens quite naturally as a result of moisture evaporating from the brick and salts (a process known as efflorescence) appearing. Simply remove the white powder by scrubbing with water and a stiff brush.

External cladding and paintwork



External cladding is generally maintenance free. However, dust and grime that gathers on the fascia and guttering, and under eaves and posts, can cause pitting of paint and eventually lead to peeling.

Timber posts and beams can sometimes have sap runs, which can show up on paintwork. Oregon in particular has naturally occurring sap pockets. Resin from the pockets can leach out of the timber and cause a blistered effect on paintwork. To remove resin, simply use a scraper and wipe down with some mineral turps, then touch up with paint.



External cladding and paintwork tips:

While external cladding is generally maintenance free, you may need to reapply silicone if splitting in the cladding occurs.

Wash down your external paintwork at least twice a year by using a hose and a soft brush.

Septic System



Soakage septic systems break down household waste in a septic tank. These systems require live biological enzymes to break waste down, so avoid flushing or pouring non-biodegradable materials and chemicals down the drain. As the waste breaks down, it runs into trenches. Keep trenches clear of debris (and large rooted trees) so that your septic system can do the job it's there to do.

Annual maintenance

To keep your home in great condition, there are a few small tasks that come around once a year that will go towards years of worry-free living. You can either do it all at once, or spread them throughout the year.



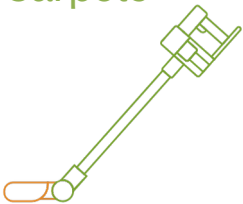
Air conditioning



If you have a roof mounted air conditioner with an overflow hose, overflow water can stain roofing material and corrode guttering. To minimise staining, simply run water from your hose inside the gutter to the downpipe. This will flush out alkaline water from the air conditioner.

If you have ducted air conditioning, clean or replace filters before the start of the summer season.

Carpets



It's recommended that you have your carpets professionally cleaned every year. This will ensure they look and smell good, for longer.



Garage door tip:

Have your garage door inspected by a trained specialist around every 2 years.

Smoke detectors



For your safety, you must replace the back up battery in your smoke alarm each year.

Once a year you should also vacuum around your smoke alarm vents. It's also a good idea to apply a surface insect spray around the smoke alarm to prevent insects nesting inside it.

Earth leakage devices



Your new home is fitted with earth leakage devices (ELDs) to protect your electrical power and light circuits. These devices are designed to detect an electrical current deviation of 30 milliamps, to protect you from the possibility of electrocution.

In the event of ELD tripping, unplug (don't just turn off) all electrical items connected to that particular circuit. Then reset the ELD and plug in appliances one at a time until the ELD trips. This will help you to determine which appliance is faulty and must be removed and repaired.

Roofing, gutters and drainage



When it rains, take note of the flow of rainwater on and around your home, ensuring that it flows away from, and not towards the house. Take the opportunity to look up at the connections in your guttering, and ensure that there's no visual leak.

Garage door

Being careful not to touch anything for your own safety, have a look over the garage door springs, cables, rollers, pulleys and mounting hardware for signs of wear or damage such as fraying or cable wear.

If something doesn't sound or look right, call in a trained service technician.

Termite protection



Arrange annual inspections of your home by licensed pest control experts. Keep a record of all inspections.



Smoke detectors tip:

Make it a habit to change your smoke detector batteries whenever a memorable yearly event occurs. This can be the anniversary of your move in date, or when daylight saving starts.



Roofing, gutters and drainage tips:

Hire a professional gutter cleaning service on an annual basis. They can keep note on when they last visited and schedule reminders for you as the seasons change.

Arrange to have your roof checked by an expert tradesperson every 5 – 7 years.



Earth leakage devices tip:

While ELDs provide a measure of protection against electrocution, common sense safety awareness with all electrical devices is the best protection against injury.

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