

HOW TO FIX A LEAKY FAUCET

As much as 13 gallons of water can be wasted in one day by one leaky faucet. Most leaks are easy to repair without calling a plumber. Repairing faucet leaks is a little more tricky than toilets, but can be done by the do-it-yourselfer. It is recommended that you check faucets in your household periodically. If any of your faucets drip once you have tightly turned off the water, then you may have to do the following to fix the problem.

Before beginning to fix your faucet:

- Check whether the faucet is dripping hot or cold water (you may only have to fix one instead of both)
- Wrap some layers of tape around the shiny parts of the faucet so the wrench does not scratch it
- Shut off water supply valves beneath sink or, if not there, shut off main valve for the house. Turn both faucets on to let water drain out
- Determine what kind of faucet you have (these are the two most common types):

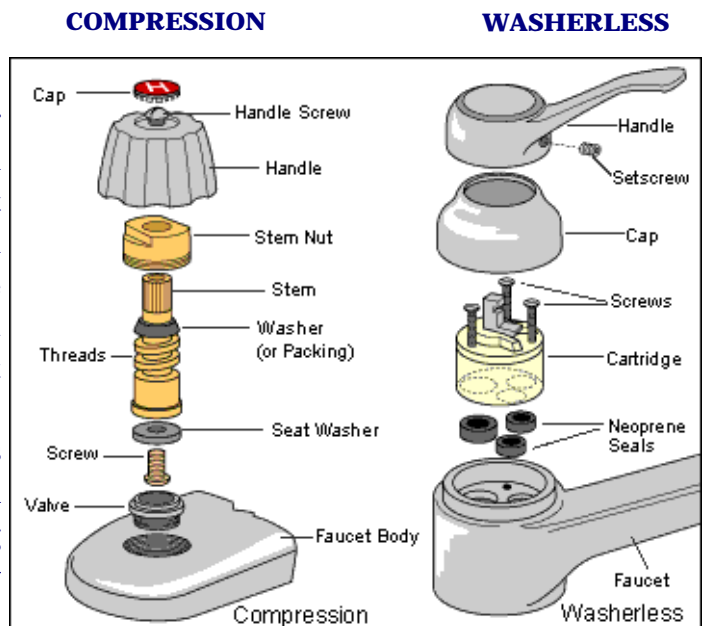
Repairing *Compression* Faucets

Most faucet leaks are caused from worn washers. Compression faucets are more common in older homes and have the hot and cold controlled with separate handles. They have a washer or seal that cuts off the water flow by closing against a valve when the faucet is turned off. As water flows through the washers and seals and are under pressure, they tend to wear out and drip from the spout. This can result in very persistent dripping, and can stain sink bowls, corrode fixtures, and waste a lot of water! To fix this problem, all you may have to do is replace the worn washers: on the bottom of the stem is a screw holding a rubber washer in place. Unscrew it, put in a new washer of the same size and replace screw (if necessary). Using a little petroleum jelly may also make screwing the stem back in place a little easier.

Repairing *Washerless* Faucets

Washerless faucets have O-rings instead of washers that provide a seal, and a cartridge, ball, or disc mechanism that controls the water flow. Disc faucets have a movable upper disc and a fixed lower disc; raising the upper disc makes the water flow, and lowering the disc shuts it off. Cartridge faucets have a metal or plastic insert that seals the spout. Ball faucets are operated by a lever that aligns a slotted ball with inlets in the faucet. Most washerless faucets mix cold and hot water and have a single handle, though disc faucets may have two separate controls. Since all of these are washerless, they are not as prone to dripping as much as the compression faucets. Disc faucets leak when the inlet and outlet seals wear or when sediment builds up in the faucet inlets. Cartridge faucets leak when the O-ring cushioning the cartridge stem wears or breaks. A dripping cartridge faucet might need its cartridge replaced. Be sure the replacement cartridge matches the original. Ball faucets drip when the inlet seals wear and leak when the O-rings wear or break.

To fix, pinch the O-ring on the stem to get a fingerhold, then pull it off.



HOW TO FIX A LEAKY TOILET

Toilets are notorious for hidden leaks. Over 50 gallons of water can be wasted each day due to an undetected toilet leak. Fixing toilet leaks can potentially save each household hundreds of gallons of water per month. Below are a few suggestions on how to identify and repair leaky toilets, and a picture to help identify parts of a toilet.

Repairing Silent Leaks:

To check for silent leaks, put a few drops of food coloring in the tank. Wait for 10 minutes—don't flush! If there is coloring in the bowl, you have a silent leak. This type of leak is usually caused by a worn plunger ball or flapper valve in the bottom of the toilet tank. Replacing the plunger ball or fixing the alignment will most likely solve the problem. If you are not sure how to repair this type of leak, you should call a plumber to avoid any further problems or before the leak gets worse.

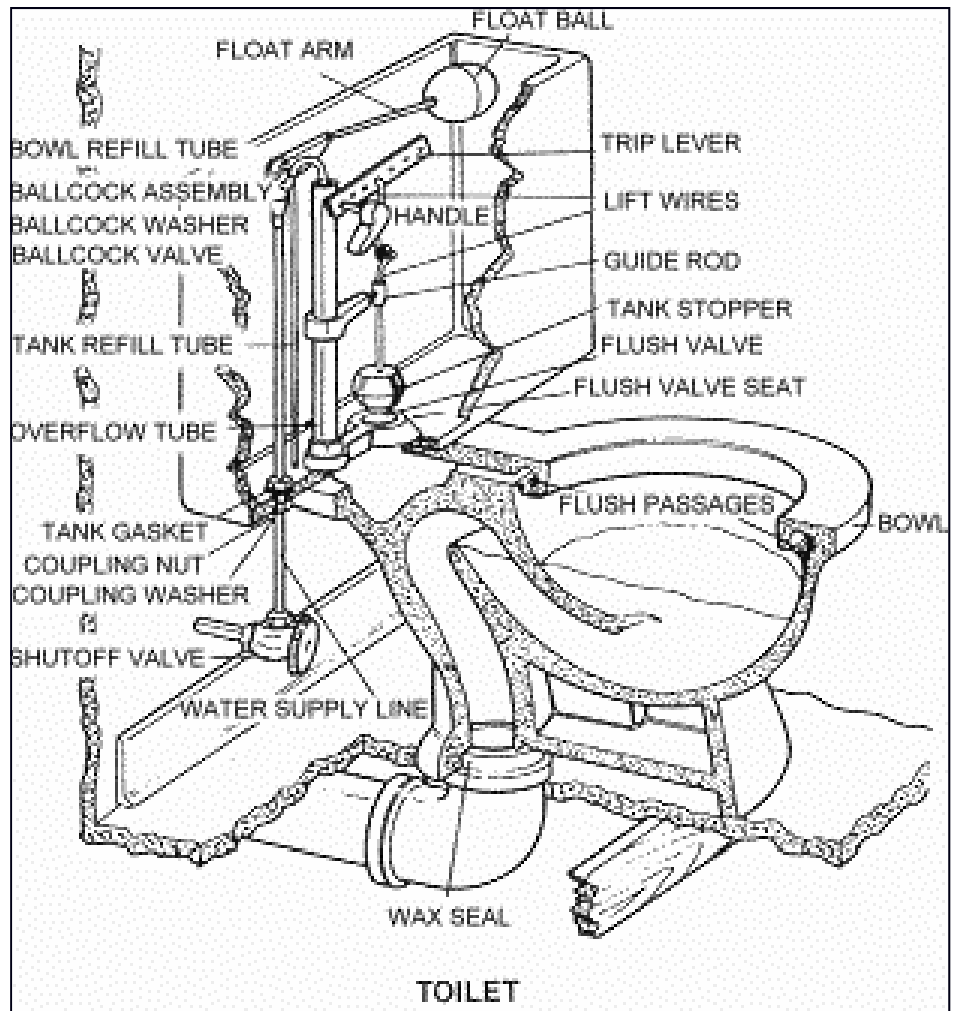
Repairing Running Toilets:

If you hear water trickling after you've flushed, then your toilet is leaking. The most common place to look is in the tank bowl; it may be something as simple as the chain being tangled. If that's not it, look at the drain (flush valve seat) underneath the tank ball (stopper). If there is any debris there, clean it out. If that doesn't fix the problem, you may have to replace the tank ball.

Another cause could be the float ball; if you pick up the float ball and the water shuts off- you know the problem is right here. Bend the tube connected to the float ball down until the natural level of the water does shut the valve off - about an inch and a half below the overflow tube.

Sometimes the float ball fills up with water and loses its buoyancy. In that case, buy a replacement and simply screw it on, which will restore the toilet to good working order.

Also, a toilet leaks due to worn parts (eg valve), which can be replaced by yourself or by calling a plumber.



Graphics courtesy City of Renton



For more information, contact the Public Works Department at (360) 676-6850, or email at waterconservation@cob.org