

HOW TO FIX A LEAKY FAUCET

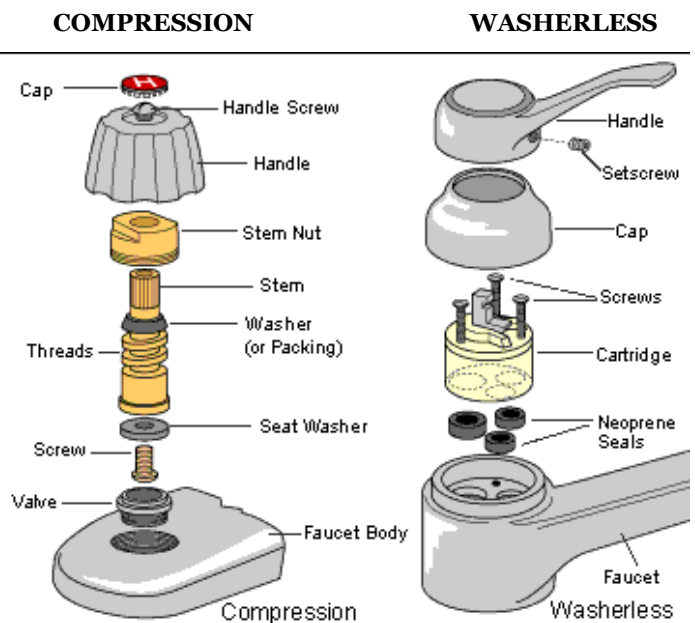
As much as 13 gallons of water can be wasted in one day by one leaky faucet. Most leaks are easy to repair without calling a plumber. Repairing faucet leaks is a little more tricky than toilets, but can be done by the do-it-yourselfer. It is recommended that you check faucets in your household periodically. 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 non-toxic lubricant can 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.