

Why Modern Appliances Don't Last

Think your new appliance isn't as good as the old one? You might be right. Here's what you can do to minimize the repair cost.

By [Angela Colley](#) | 5 hours ago

Appliances, both large and small, just aren't what they used to be. Case in point: I'm using a 10-year-old food processor borrowed from my mother because the blade in my one-year-old KitchenAid stopped spinning.

Here are some disturbing statistics from Consumer Reports (<http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/magazine-archive/2011/august/shopping/repair-or-replace-it/appliances-what-breaks-what-doesnt/index.htm>) . In three to four years, here are the odds of an appliance breaking down:

- Side-by-side fridge with an ice maker — 36 percent.
- Dishwasher – 20 percent.
- Washing machine (front load) – 25 percent.

Buy one of those appliances and you have about a 1-in-4 chance of calling a repairman in the next few years.

What causes modern appliances to be so risky? In the video below Money Talks News founder Stacy Johnson (<http://www.moneytalksnews.com/author/stacy/>) explains. Check it out and then read on to see what you can do to keep the repair costs down.

Let's talk more about today's appliances and how you can repair them at less cost.

Why appliances aren't what they used to be

Three months ago my old gas dryer finally called it quits. I bought it used almost 10 years after it was manufactured and it lasted another two years. Instead of calling a repairman, I opted to buy a slightly used, less than two-year-old model with all the bells and whistles. Less than a month later, it stopped working. The dryer won't turn on anymore, which left me wondering how something practically brand new didn't hold up as well as a 12-year-old appliance.

The answer turned out to be all those bells and whistles. Modern appliances have gone digital with electronic motherboards and LED screens, and features like moisture sensors and energy-efficient cycles. They do more, but also have a lot more that can go wrong.

Another problem we're facing: Things aren't made as well as they once were. A report on The Huffington Post (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/19/why-appliances-need-repai_n_1778690.html) from Next Avenue (<http://www.nextavenue.org/>) said:

As (MIT lecturer Daniel) Braunstein tells it, many consumer-product companies have moved their manufacturing offshore, delegating design and engineering to contractors, which can create a conflict of interest.

A contractor, Braunstein says, might try to lure corporate customers by keeping the cost of its design and engineering services low. "The result becomes focused on the factory's bottom line instead of the interests of the consumer," he explains. Trimming costs can mean taking shortcuts that negatively impact the appliance's quality.

Learn how to DIY

According to reference site Homewyse (http://www.homewyse.com/services/cost_to_repair_appliances.html) , the average cost to repair an appliance ranges from \$254 to \$275. That's not exactly pocket change, but there is something you can do about it – learn how to make some repairs yourself.

Some modern appliances aren't too difficult to repair. Stacy Johnson installed an ice maker in his refrigerator. I repaired the switchboard on my dryer. Check out these sites for DIY instructions:

- The Family Handyman – Appliance Repair Projects (<http://www.familyhandyman.com/DIY-Projects/Home-Repair/Appliance-Repair>)
- YouTube – The Samurai Appliance Repair Academy (<http://www.youtube.com/samurairepairman>)
- Home Depot How-To Community (<http://community.homedepot.com/t5/Appliances/bd-p/appliances>)
- Lowe's How-To Projects (http://www.lowes.com/cd_How+To+Library_615580068_)

Find cheaper parts

When buying replacement parts, compare prices at two or more sources to make sure you're getting the best deal. While the manufacturer might sell the part you need, you can probably find it cheaper at another retailer. Check out:

- Lowe's Appliance Parts (http://www.lowes.com/cd_Appliance+Parts_731455312_)
- Home Depot Appliance Parts, Filters and Accessories (http://www.homedepot.com/Appliances-Appliance-Parts-Filters-Accessories/GE/h_d1/N-5yc1vZc35v/h_d2/Navigation?catalogId=10053&Nu=P_PARENT_ID&langId=-1&storeId=10051&searchNav=true)
- PartStore.com (http://www.partstore.com/?k_clickid=122acd72-a989-8da9-ba90-00000e85e40e&gclid=COyhkr-PubcCFS5p7Aodv2QARg)
- ApplianceZone.com (<http://www.appliancezone.com/?gclid=CJ-ktLuPubcCFQ5p7Aod9xwARw>)
- RepairClinic (<http://www.repairclinic.com/>)

Before you buy, make sure the company has a return policy in case you accidentally order the wrong part or it arrives damaged or doesn't work.

Know when to let go

First, don't count on an extended warranty to cover repairs. According to a study by Consumer Reports (<http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/magazine-archive/2011/august/shopping/repair-or-replace-it/overview/index.htm>) , appliances typically don't break until after the standard extended warranty expires, meaning you'll have spent \$142 or so and will still end up paying for service calls when the appliance breaks. Skip the warranty.

When your appliance breaks down, get estimates for the repair cost rather than just calling the first repairman in the phone book. I made this mistake once and ended up paying \$92 for a service call just to have the repair guy tell me he couldn't fix it that day. Instead, call three or more service companies and ask what they charge.

Once you know the likely repair cost, consider this rule of thumb from Consumer Reports: Replace the appliance if the repair will cost more than half the cost of a new one. Otherwise, you might end up paying for the repair now, only to have the appliance break again later on.

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