Baseline Home Maintenance

Repair or Replace?

A common rule of thumb: replace a unit when it is past the halfway point of its typical lifespan **and** the repair costs more than half the price of a comparable new one. If only one is true, repair usually makes sense.

Typical lifespans

Unit	Typical life	Halfway point
Refrigerator, top freezer	14 years	7 years
Refrigerator, side-by-side	11 years	5.5 years
Dishwasher	12 years	6 years
Washer, top-load	11 years	5.5 years
Washer, front-load	9 years	4.5 years
Dryer	13 years	6.5 years
Range, gas	14 years	7 years
Range, electric	12 years	6 years
Furnace	15 to 20 years	7.5 to 10 years
Central AC	10 to 15 years	5 to 7.5 years
Heat pump	16 years	8 years
Water heater, tank	10 years	5 years
Water heater, tankless	20+ years	10+ years

Run the numbers

Age of the unit ÷ typical life	_____ ÷ _____ = _____ %
Repair quote ÷ price of a new one, installed	$_____ ÷ $_____ = _____ %

Both over 50%: replacing is usually the better value. Either one under 50%: repairing is usually the better value.

Lean toward repair when the unit is still under warranty, has had few problems so far, or is a higher-end model.

Lifespans are averages. Sources: Assoc. of Home Appliance Manufacturers 2019 (appliances); National Assoc. of Home Builders 2007 (HVAC, water heaters); Consumer Reports (50% rule).