

Skill Level: BEGINNER These how-to's are suitable for people who are new to DIY and who have a basic knowledge of tools. If you've painted a room or re-potted a plant, you can probably complete one of these projects by yourself in a few hours or less.

✓ MATERIALS

- Drop Cloth
- Work Gloves
- Open End or Box Wrenches
- Socket Wrenches
- Cleaning Brush
- Putty Knife
- Shop Rags
- Blade Removal Tool or Piece of 2x4
- Blade—if necessary
- Used-Oil Container
- Fresh Oil
- Oil Filter
- Oil Filter Wrench
- Fuel Stabilizer
- Fresh Gas
- Gas Can
- Fuel Filter
- Spray Lubricant
- Tarp
- Belts—if necessary
- Air Filter
- Sparkplugs

A great investment for homeowners with large yards is a riding lawnmower. And it's a good idea to keep your mower well-maintained—not only to protect your investment, but also to keep your lawn looking great season after season. Follow these steps to help keep your mower in top working condition.

SAFETY

Perform any maintenance in a well-ventilated area. Open the garage door for maximum air circulation.

FALL MAINTENANCE

After a season of mowing, perform these steps before storing your lawnmower for winter.

- 01 Run the mower for about a minute. The oil will be easier to change while it's warm.**
- 02 Turn off the mower.**
- 03 Cover the work area with a drop cloth.**
- 04 Brush off any grass clippings, dirt and debris with a cleaning brush.**
CAUTION: The engine will still be hot, so be careful.
- 05 Disconnect the battery by first removing the black negative cable, then the red positive cable.**
- 06 Remove the mower deck and blades according to manufacturer's instructions.**
 - The blades should be sharpened once a year. Take them to a professional for sharpening. If you want to do this step yourself, you can purchase a blade sharpener and balancer at Lowe's.
 - If the blades are a few years old and have deep gouges, replace them. Stop by Lowe's with the make, model and serial number for your mower.



IMPORTANT

Every lawnmower is different, so always follow the manufacturer's instructions. Also use proper safety precautions. If you don't feel comfortable performing maintenance on your lawnmower, call a professional for help.

FALL MAINTENANCE (cont.)

07 Clean the deck with a putty knife and cleaning brush.

- Most manufacturers don't recommend using a hose because the water will rust the mower.
CAUTION: Never use a shop-vac near gasoline.

08 Clean the belts and belt covers, too. If they appear worn or cracked, replace them.

09 Replace the mower blades.

10 Change the oil.

- The oil lubricates, cools and cleans the engine.
 - Remove the oil fill cap and open the cap on the drain valve.
 - Slide the manufacturer's drain tube onto the valve, if supplied.
 - Many mowers have different valve mechanisms. Open the valve and drain the oil into the used-oil container.
 - Once the oil has drained, close the valve and recap the port.
 - Then remove the oil filter with an oil filter wrench and add a new one.
 - Add the manufacturer's recommended oil.
 - Wipe up any excess oil with a shop rag.
 - Never pour oil down the drain. Contact your local recycling center for oil disposal instructions.



11 Reattach the mower deck according to the owner's manual.

12 Treat the gasoline in the mower.

- Pour fuel stabilizer in a gas can, then fill the gas can with gas following the stabilizer directions.
- Fill the tank on the mower with the treated gas. A full gas tank is less of a fire hazard than an empty one.
- Change the fuel filter according to the manufacturer's instructions.

13 Keep small moving parts working.

- Lubricate any moving parts on the mower with the manufacturer's lubricant.
- Avoid getting any oil or grease on the nylon bearings—the grease may attract dust that will damage the bearings.



14 Change the air filter.

- Paper filters will need to be replaced.
- Pre-cleaners on air filters should be changed, too. Some manufacturers require a light coating of engine oil to help filter out dust and debris.

FALL MAINTENANCE (cont.)

- 15 Replace the sparkplugs with a socket wrench.
- 16 Check the tire pressure and adjust according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- 17 Reconnect the battery starting with the positive cable then the negative cable.
- 18 Let the tractor run for about a minute so the fresh oil can lubricate any internal parts.
- 19 Disconnect the battery again.
- 20 Store your mower where it won't be exposed to any heat source or gas appliances, and cover with a tarp.



SPRING MAINTENANCE

When it's time to mow again in the spring, follow these steps to prepare your mower.

- 01 Wipe off any excess lubricant with a shop rag.
- 02 Make sure all moving parts are working properly.
- 03 Look for any debris, especially near the exhaust. Be careful of any debris left behind by small animals.
- 04 Reconnect the battery.
- 05 Check the oil level, tire pressure, air filter and any moving parts on a regular basis.

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