

DIY Septic Tank Troubleshooting Checklist

Use this downloadable checklist to troubleshoot common septic system issues before calling a professional. It's a simple, step-by-step guide to help you identify and respond to early warning signs. Always use caution, and never enter your septic tank.

Step 1: Identify the Symptom

- ☐ Check if drains are slow, gurgling, or backing up.
- ☐ Note if one drain is affected or multiple.
- ☐ Record when the issue started and how often it happens.

Notes

Step 2: Do a Basic Drainage Check

- ☐ Perform a bucket test on sinks or tubs.
- ☐ Flush a toilet and watch for bubbling or backups.
- ☐ Check if issue persists across multiple drains.

Notes

Step 3: Walk the Yard

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- ☐ Look for sewage odors outside.
- ☐ Check for soggy patches or standing water.
- ☐ Observe if grass is especially green over the drainfield.

Notes

Step 4: Check the Septic Tank (If Safe)

- ☐ Locate and carefully remove the inspection port lid.
- ☐ Check sludge and scum levels (should not be near top).
- ☐ Inspect and rinse effluent filter if clogged.

Notes

Step 5: Check the Alarm System (If Applicable)

- ☐ Check if alarm light or sound is active.

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- ☐ Identify alarm type: high water level, power, or pump issue.
- ☐ Test float switch if comfortable and safe to do so.

Notes

Step 6: Rule Out Electrical Issues

- ☐ Check if the breaker for the system is tripped.
- ☐ Inspect any outdoor GFCI outlets related to the system.
- ☐ Confirm any timer controls are functioning properly.

Notes

Step 7: Monitor System Behavior

- ☐ Limit water usage for 24-48 hours.
- ☐ Observe if symptoms improve (e.g., gurgling stops).

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[] Note any changes in behavior or drain performance.

Notes
