

A photograph of two outdoor air conditioning units. They are light-colored with a grid-like pattern on the front and a circular fan on top. They are sitting on a stone patio next to a brick wall. The background shows a house with a porch.

Should You Repair or Replace Your A/C?



Having an a/c that's not working as it should can be stressful. A proper diagnosis of your a/c's issues is the key to making the repair (or replacement) process as streamlined as possible. And while a/cs can seem complicated to anyone who has attempted a DIY repair, most a/c problems stem from just a few components. This guide will explore some of the most common a/c repairs, replacement factors, and a step-by-step questionnaire to help you decide whether to repair or replace your unit.

Common A/C Repairs

Some of the most common (and repairable) a/c problems include:

- Clogged or dirty air filters
- Poorly-located thermostats
- Coolant leaks
- Clogged drain lines
- Blown breakers or fuses
- A burned-out start capacitor
- An overheated compressor
- Corroded evaporator coils
- Dirty or frozen condenser coils
- Electrical problems like worn contactors



How Can You Diagnose Your A/C Issue?

Narrowing down these possible causes is usually as simple as asking a few questions:

- **Is your a/c cycling on and off constantly?**
 - If so, it may be low on refrigerant, the thermostat may be malfunctioning (or in direct sunlight), or it may be suffering from icy or frozen coils.
- **Is your a/c producing only warm air?**
 - This is likely due to a refrigerant leak.
- **Is your a/c refusing to turn on?**
 - You may be dealing with electrical problems, an overheated compressor, or a blown breaker.

Troubleshooting your issues before calling an a/c repair service can give you a far better idea of what problem(s) you're dealing with and what the repairs will entail.



A/C Replacement Factors

Temperature inconsistencies often mean that your a/c no longer has the power to keep your home cool—either because of its advancing age or because your home's ductwork is better equipped for a/c "zones" instead of using a single unit to cool your entire home. While some minor repairs (like cleaning filters or replacing thermostats) may temporarily solve this problem, as your a/c continues to age, it's time to consider replacement.

A/cs that are more than a decade old may also take a type of refrigerant (R22) that has been phased out effective January 1, 2020. While R22 a/cs don't need to be replaced if they're working correctly, because any escaping refrigerant can't be replenished, an older a/c that stops cooling may not be a candidate for repair.

How much does replacement cost?

The cost of a new a/c unit will vary based on the size of the unit, the unit's energy efficiency, and even the time of year you're having it installed (as the peak of summer is usually a busy time for a/c technicians). A few things you can do to reduce your out-of-pocket cost include:

- Look for rebates or tax credits on a new, energy-efficient unit.
- Calculate the right size unit for your home. You don't want to pay too much for a unit that's larger than you need, but purchasing a too-small unit can increase wear and tear by forcing it to work harder than it should.



Should You Repair or Replace Your A/C Unit?

Your answers to the following questions can guide you through the “repair or replace?” decision.

- **How old is your a/c unit?**

- 1-5 years old? 6-10 years old? More than 10 years old?

Generally, the older your A/C, the more sense it can make to replace it. If you've already been quoted an estimated cost for repairs, you may want to multiply your system's age in years by this cost—if this number exceeds 5,000 (such as a 10-year-old unit that needs a \$600 repair), replacement is usually a better option.

- **Are you currently on an a/c maintenance plan?**

A well-maintained a/c unit can last for years beyond its expected lifespan. If you've been on an a/c maintenance plan since your unit was installed, any issues that arise may be repairable.

- **Are your energy bills higher than you expect?**

One of the most common signs of an a/c issue is a sky-high energy bill. And while certain issues can contribute to this inefficiency (such as a blocked air filter that forces the unit to work harder), if your energy bill stays high even with regular a/c maintenance, it may be time to replace the unit.

- **Does your a/c make strange noises?**

An a/c unit that knocks, hisses, whistles, or gurgles can often have a problem that's easily diagnosed. By using the price-and-repair-cost calculation above, you'll then be able to determine whether repair or replacement is a better option.

- **Are you frequently calling (or researching) a/c companies for repair needs?**

If it seems as though you're making repairs to your a/c every month (or even every season), it may be time to consider replacement.

- **Does anyone in your home suffer from allergies, asthma, or other respiratory conditions?**

A poorly-maintained or malfunctioning a/c can harm the quality of air inside your home. If anyone in your household has respiratory sensitivities, replacing your a/c with a more energy-efficient unit can improve air quality and boost your household members' health.

Contact A/C Designs

Whether you're in the market for a whole new a/c unit or just want a quote on repairs, A/C Designs can help. Our experienced technicians can quickly get to the root of your issue and work with you to decide whether repair or replacement is your best option. Just fill out the short contact form on our website or give us a call at **(904) 829-8898** to learn more about the services we offer.