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Log Cabin Maintenance

Maintaining Your Log Sided Zook Cabin

Now that you have the pre-built log cabin you have wanted for so long, here are some simple log home maintenance and cleaning tips we have found that will preserve the look of your cabin for years to come. Log home maintenance is very important, but keep in mind that this information can be helpful to you no matter what structure you have. Whether you own a pre-built log cabin or are looking into a kit, you will need to know about log cabin care in order to get the most out of your investment.

6 Easy Steps to Maintaining Your Cabin's Exterior

Maintaining your log cabin involves several important steps. The most crucial are staining the logs and sealing the joints and gaps to protect against the elements. Additionally, small daily habits can help extend your cabin's lifespan, such as keeping it clean, checking regularly for water and insect damage, clearing gutters, and maintaining a tidy landscape.

Step 1: Remove Fixtures

Before you clean, stain, and seal your log cabin, you will want to remove any exterior fixtures so you have access to the most log siding on your home and so that your outdoor fixtures are not stained or damaged during your log cabin upkeep process.

Remove all fixtures from the log home, like our Mountaineer Deluxe, that will get in the way of cleaning the log siding. Typically, this consists of shutters and mailboxes. We do not recommend removing electrical items, as working around exposed wires can be dangerous. If you want to go the extra mile, you might consider shutting off the power to the exterior of the home.

Step 2: How to Seal a Log Cabin: Find and Fill Checks and Butt Joints In Your Log Home Siding

As you prepare to reseal your home, you will need to make sure to fill in any checks or butt joints. Without these spaces being correctly filled in, your logs will be prone to deterioration, and

in the worst-case scenario, it will cause your log to rot. Let's look at how you can fill these to create the best environment for your log cabin.

1.) Gather Your Supplies

To correct the checks, you will need a backer rod, Frog Tape, color-matched caulk, a caulk gun, and a razor blade (tape measure optional). We recommend Sashco Big Stretch Caulk. Once you have these supplies, we can get started.

2.) Mark Of Checks In Your Siding

Go around your home and mark off each check, a ⅛ inch or greater split, with a piece of frog tape. If the split is less than ⅛", you do not need to mark this off as a check to be filled. These checks are too small to hold anything (backer rod or caulk), so we would recommend that you use a brush to fill in this space with sealer.

3.) Fill In the Checks with Backer Rod

Once you have identified the checks in the siding, find the check you want to start with and get out your backer rod. Take the backer rod and measure from one end of the check to the other, and, using the razor blade, cut off our backer rod at the end of the check. Using the razor blade to push the backer rod into the check. Depending on how wide or deep the check is, you may need to do this multiple times.

The goal of this is to bring it close to flush with the siding. You do not want it to be flush, as you will be going over the area with caulk.

Repeat this process until all checks are filled with backer rods. Doing this kind of project yourself is relatively easy on a one-story cabin like our Musketeer Cabin. However, if you have one of our two-story cabins, like our Glacier Cabin, it may be a bit more challenging to manage independently, and you may need to use a scissor lift or extension ladder.

4.) Frog Tape Along the Edge of The Checks

Once all of your checks have been filled in with the backer rod, use your frog tape to tape along the edge and end of the check. Repeat this process for all the checks you have filled out with the backer rod. By doing this, you are giving yourself a clean edge from where the caulk has been applied so that there is no excess caulk on the log siding, as the caulk will not hold stain as the log siding will.

5.) Caulk Your Checks

Once you have completed steps 1-4, you can now caulk your checks using the big stretch caulk and caulk gun. After you apply the caulk, smooth over the caulk with your finger. Once you have done this, remove the tape so it does not become stuck under the caulk as it dries.
This same process can be used when fixing spaces in between log ends, known as butt joints.

Step 3: Repair Damaged Chinking in You Log Home Siding

Chinking Repair on a log-sided home is not something you may need to do as you would in a traditional log home. However, some people enjoy the look that having chinking in place may offer. You would need a Permachink and a sizable caulking gun to do this. To complete the chinking, start with a loaded chinking gun, start from the left-hand side, and go halfway through the length of the log.

Once you get to the halfway point, switch directions and go from the right-hand side to the left-hand side until you meet in the middle.

Once you complete this, get a 1-inch damp sponge brush and gently run the length of the area that you have chinked to have a smooth and even look.

Once you have given your home three days to dry after you finish the caulking and chining process, you may proceed to step four.

Step 4: How to Wash Your Log Home

After all the prep work of getting your log home ready for its washing maintenance, you can finally get to the point where you can wash your home. You can wash your log home in two ways: pressure washing and soft washing. Both of these practices involve using a pressure washer, but they are slightly different, so let's dive into that a bit more.

Pressure Washing

Pressure washing machines use a motor to force water out of a small hole at the end of a wand, which in turn allows you to blast away dirt and grime from a distance of only a few inches. However, when used to maintain the siding on your log home, it is easy for those surfaces to become chipped, dented, or splintered due to too much pressure. For this reason, we say that it is best not to pressure wash your home.

Soft Washing

Soft washing your log home involves using a pressure washer, but from a safe distance of 12–18 inches, along with a cleaning solution. This is our recommended method because the cleaner does the primary work, reducing the risk of damage to the log siding. The pressure washer then helps reach high areas and mix the cleaner into the water for effective cleaning.

In this process, you will clean the home with the mixed soap solution, let it set to work for about 5-10 minutes, and then rinse it clean with water only. Not only does this clean your log-sided home safely, but it is also much more time-efficient than if you tried to pressure wash your log-sided home.

Once you have completed this maintenance step for cleaning your home, let it rest for at least 3 days before sealing it. Without giving your home the opportunity to dry before sealing it, your home can become waterlogged, resulting in logs that will rot.

Once you have completed these steps, it's time to prepare to re-seal your home.

Step 5.) Tape Off Windows, Doors, Light Fixtures etc.

Before you prepare to stain or seal your log home, you need to tape off all the windows, doors, light fixtures, or anything else mounted to the home that can not be removed or that you choose not to remove during step one. By covering these fixtures, you will prevent them from becoming stained when you seal your home. Take a look at the video above on how you can cover your windows quickly. The same process can be used for doors as well.

Step 6.) Apply Your Log Cabin Stain

As part of your log house maintenance and to preserve the natural beauty of your home, you need to re-stain the exterior periodically. Fresh log cabin stain shall be applied approximately every 5 years. The stain that was factory-applied to your Zook Log Cabin home is **Haley Paint's Wilderness Ultra Log Stain 701** *(since 2019)*. Our standard color is *Butternut*; however, re-staining with this same color will significantly darken the color of your home, so we highly recommend re-staining with ***Natural***, which is a lighter tone. Test the color on a small patch in an inconspicuous location.

To begin log cabin staining, we recommend that you use a paint sprayer and a brush for back brushing. Spray the sealer in a back-and-forth motion, going by sections. When you come to a spot that has a small check in it that is too small to fill with caulk; we recommend that you use the brush to back brush in additional sealer so that the cabin logs are covered appropriately.

Log Cabin Stain Maintenance Tips

- Apply stain only when air temperature is between 55° and 100° Fahrenheit.
- Do not apply in direct sunlight.
- Apply consistently. Adjusting the amount of stain you apply will affect the final color.
- Work the entire length of a log as you go to prevent unsightly overlap lines.

Zook Log Cabins Exact Match Cabin Stain:
Haley Paint's Wilderness Ultra Log Stain 701 *(since 2019)* in Butternut

As alternative products, we recommend the following for log cabin maintenance:

Olympic Maximum
available at Lowes
Toner or Semi-Transparent stain, “Cedar Naturaltone” color
Sikkens / PPG ProLuxe
available at many paint stores
“Natural Oak” color
Woodgaurd
available at Blairstown Distributors (800) 524-1093
“Tamarack” color

All the alternative products are deeply penetrating oil-based stains. The colors are similar to the original product on your cabin. All of these stains can be used to re-coat your cabin, provide excellent protection, and are very water-repellent.

REMEMBER: Your cabin color will darken slightly with each application.

Zook Cabins Log Cabin Stain First Coat

We have our stain custom-mixed locally to achieve our unique color. If you’d like, we can include the stain needed for the first application when your building is shipped. Many customers prefer this option to avoid the hassle of sourcing stain themselves.

If you choose a log cabin kit, note that the first coat is not included. Some manufacturers may offer it for an additional fee. After that, you should follow a staining schedule similar to the one in our log cabin maintenance plan.

How To Maintain the Interior Of Your Log Cabin

Maintaining the inside of your log cabin is just as important as the outside! After all, inside your log cabin is where you’ll really enjoy it! To keep your cabin cozy, safe, and looking brand-new, you’ll want to be sure to clean your walls and floors, prep your cabin each year for cold weather, and ensure the inside of your cabin doesn’t tempt rodents or insects.

How to Clean Interior Log Cabin Walls

Your pre-built log cabin’s interior will be finished with a clear coat finish. This gives the wood of your interior a beautiful, bright glow while at the same time making cleaning up very easy.

You can perform log cabin upkeep by cleaning your walls and floors with a gentle household cleaner and a wet rag.

Similarly, you may find that some wood floor cleaners will work very well and help your floor to maintain its original shine.

How to Winterize Your Log Cabin

Make sure that if your cabin is located in an area where the temperature drops below freezing, you either leave a small amount of heat on (the interior should be at least 60 degrees) or blow all of the water out of your pipes. Ensure that if you are blowing out all the water, you do not forget about the hot water heater. Speaking of that water heater, if you want to avoid any icy January shower, get it checked out before the snow and cold sets in to ensure it will work throughout the winter.

Other steps you can take to winterize your log cabin include

- Ensure any gaps are sealed before cold air has the chance to leak in, and install draft stoppers to make sure air can't get into your cabin underneath doors.
- Add extra insulation if needed, especially in the attic or around windows.
- Make sure your heating system, whether it's your furnace, fireplace, or both, is clean, inspected, and in good working order.
- Prepare for snow and ice. Consider adding a large roof overhang to protect your home from snow and ice build-up, and install gutter guards so ice dams can't form.

Log Home Maintenance: Hardwood Floors

Here are some essential care tips to keep your hardwood floors and log cabin in top shape!

- **Sweep** wood floors often with a soft, fine bristle broom.
- **Vacuum** once or twice a week to remove dirt and sand. Use a soft brush attachment to minimize scratching.
- Since water is a wood floor’s worst enemy, **get rid of water** right away! Remove wet spills ASAP with soft towels or a wet/dry vacuum, then dry thoroughly.
- Use a very **dry, damp mop** when mopping polyurethane wood floors since excess water can seep into seams and ruin a wood floor.
- Consider using **carpet runners** (with non-skid pads) over wood floors in high-traffic areas.
- **Vacuum area rugs and runners** often so dirt doesn’t filter down through the weave and scratch the wood underneath.
- If possible, **do not wear heavy shoes or high heels** on hardwood floors, as some heels can cause dents.
- **Never drag furniture** or other objects across a wood floor. Instead, clean the floor thoroughly to remove dust and grit, then use “gliding” furniture pads underneath the piece to aid in sliding it across the floor.
- Install **floor mats** at each entrance so you don’t track in dirt from the bottoms of shoes.
- Be sure to **follow manufacturer recommendations** to treat flooring scratches and dents. If an area of the finish is damaged by water, it may be difficult to fix it.
- **Use furniture pads** under table and chair legs and on the feet of dressers and armoires. They can be purchased at a local hardware store or home center.
- Some floors may require periodic **waxing and buffing**. Get recommendations from the manufacturer for the specific procedures for your floor.

Zook Cabins Log Cabin Upkeep Helpful Hint:

It is important to make an effort not to track over your wood floors with dirty shoes or boots. When the dirt, stones, and sand build up in the soles, they can be left around the cabin. Over time, feet grind across them, acting almost as sandpaper, and can damage the finish on your flooring. Simply taking your shoes off at the door can increase the life and beauty of your floor!

FAQs About Log Cabin Maintenance:

How often do you need to seal a log cabin?

On average, a log home should be resealed every 3-5 years. You can tell you need to seal your log cabin if the logs on the exterior of your cabin lose their sheen, turn gray, or if the current stain is chipping. Another easy way to tell if it's time to seal your log cabin is if you notice water soaking into the logs instead of beading and running off.

What maintenance is required on a log home?

Staining and sealing your log cabin are the most important maintenance steps you can take to protect your log home. Ensuring you regularly stain and seal your log cabin will help extend its life span by preventing moisture penetration and wood rot.

Otherwise, basic cleaning and insect and rodent prevention, like with any home, will help to keep your log cabin safe and welcoming.

What is the life expectancy of a log cabin?

The life expectancy of a log cabin depends on many factors, such as the construction quality and upkeep. A well-maintained cabin can last for many decades and even last over a century.

Is Taking Care Of A Log Cabin Exterior Difficult?

No. Taking care of a log cabin exterior is not really all that difficult, but just like anything else, log cabin maintenance takes a little effort. Log cabins do not need a lot of maintenance but still do require regular upkeep and commitment.

Simply keeping your cabin clean and keeping an eye on the exterior is the easiest way to maintain your cabin and know when it's time to seal or stain your cabin.

How Often Should I Restain My Cabin?

After the first year of owning your cabin, you should restain your cabin. At this point, the logs will still be fresh enough to absorb more sealer after one year’s weather cycle.

After this initial restain, we recommend restaining your cabin every 2-5 years. Cabins in high sun areas will often need to be restained closer to the 2-year mark, while cabins in more shaded

areas may be closer to the 5-year mark. It is a good idea to make your cabin care a scheduled routine.

Can I Paint My Log Cabin?

We do not recommend painting your log cabin with paint. Paint does not allow you to see if there is any rot going on with the logs themselves. Additionally, paint will flake off, making your home look cheap and broken down.

Are there cabins that require less maintenance than log-sided cabins?

Yes! Our Modern Cabin Line offers homes that are not made from logs. These homes require less exterior maintenance but are built to the same rigorous standards as our log cabins.

Can I have My Logs done In A Custom Color?

At this point, our log homes are all stained in one color. However, we do offer a vast array of interior customization options.

See our Log Cabin Options*

Log the Work, Love the Cabin

Log cabin maintenance is an important part of keeping your place as beautiful as the day it was delivered. If you have any log home maintenance questions or need help tracking down the right stain to put on your cabin, give us a call at (610) 593-4556.

With a little TLC, you can keep your cabin looking as good as it did on day one and continue enjoying lovely log cabin life.

Find Your Cabin *Contact Us* *Return to Planning*