



**There is nothing more annoying than a leaky faucet.** While it may be intimidating the idea that you would have to fix a leaky faucet, you can save a lot of money by fixing a leaky faucet yourself. The trick is to learn what type of faucet you have and how to fix a leaky faucet like the one you have.

While there are many different varieties and models of faucets, there are two basic kinds of faucets: **washer-type (compression)** and those **faucets without washers**. This article will explain how to fix a leaky faucet with a washer, which is the most common. You can also learn [how to replace a faucet](#)

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## ***Materials and Tools:***

- Smooth-jaw adjustable wrench
- Brass screws
- Silicone grease or petroleum jelly
- Seat
- Silicone rubber sealant or pipe compound
- Packing
- Repair Kit
- Cleaning cloths
- Screwdrivers, standard and Phillips
- Faucet washers
- Stem
- Seat dressing tool
- Seat wrench
- Socket wrench
- O-rings
- Manufacturer's instruction sheet
- Locking plier/wrench
- Hand cleaner

## ***How to Fix a Leaky Faucet – Washer Type*** □

A washer type faucet has a rubber or composition washer that closes onto a metal washer seat. The washer can become hardened or worn, which causes the faucet to leak. You could close the faucet tighter to stop the leak, but this can cause internal damage to the faucet.

1. Turn off the water to fix a leak at the main house shut off valve located in the basement, utility room or crawlspace. Also, shut off the hot water supply at the water heater.
2. Take faucet apart by taking off the handle. Loosen the Phillips-head screw that is generally beneath a decorative cap in the center of the handle. The cap will snap off or unscrew as you pry it with a knife blade.
3. Pry the handle off of its broached stem.
4. Unscrew the packing nut that is located beneath the handle. This will expose the rest of the stem.
5. Remove the stem. Do this by rotating it in the "on" direction. It will thread out.
6. Clean chips from the faucet cavity, but be sure not to use abrasive cleaners.
7. Look at the stem. If the threads are badly corroded or worn, you can purchase a new stem to match. If it is simply dirty, then clean it.
8. Look at the washer. This is located on the lower end of the stem and held in place by a brass screw. If the washer is squeezed flat or has a groove worn in it, replace it. The dripping should stop. Make sure to take the washer with you to a dealer to make sure you have the correct size and style. Replace the brass screw if it is damaged.
9. Check the washer seat that is located inside the faucet body. You can tell if it is damaged if you have to replace a lot of washers. The seat should be refaced with a seat dressing tool. This does not cost too much. Use as directed by the manufacturer. Place in the faucet along with the packing nut. Rotate until the seat is smooth and blow out the chips.
10. There are some washer seats that can be unthreaded and replaced. If it has a square or hexagonal hole through its center, or it is slotted for a screwdriver, it is likely replaceable. If it has a round hole through its center and no slots, it is NOT replaceable. If it is not replaceable, you will have to dress it with a seat-dressing tool.
11. If you are able to replace it, purchase a faucet seat wrench that comes with square and hex heads to fit most faucet seats. Turn washer seat counterclockwise to loosen. Turning it clockwise will tighten it. Add a silicone rubber sealant or pipe joint compound around the threads of the seat before you install it. This will make it easier to remove if you need to make future repairs.
12. Install the right type of faucet washer. A swiveling washer is common. To install a swiveling washer, file the shoulder off of the end of the stem. Drill out the threads of the screw hole. A swiveling washer closes with a straight-down, frictionless action. This is why it is more preferred, because it will outlast other washers.
13. Now it is time to put everything back together! Simply put back together in the reverse order you took them apart. Put some petroleum jelly or silicone grease on the threads of the stem to lubricate the faucet.

### ***What if the Leak is coming from the Stem?***

To fix a leaky faucet where the leak is coming from the stem rather than the spigot, you will need to install new packing or O-rings, depending on what your stem uses. It is recommended that you install a newer nylon-covered or graphite-impregnated packing. This is because they have lubrication that allows the faucet handle to turn more freely. Note that some stems will use O-rings, instead of packing.

1. Wrap one turn of this packing around the stem right below the packing nut. If you are using string type packing, you will need to wrap three times.
2. For faucets that use O-rings, replace the O-ring with a matching one.
3. Tighten the packing nut by hand and then tighten it another half turn.

Repairing the seat and replacing the washer or adding new packing or O-rings are generally the most common ways to fix a leaky faucet.

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