

FREE HOMEOWNER FIELD GUIDE

The Gator's *Mold* Guide



If you live around here, moisture is part of the house. This guide shows you where to look, what numbers are worth tracking, and when a small leak, rusty AC pan, recurring stain, or musty room needs a closer look.

LOOKING FOR WATER

Start with what is getting wet.

Mold needs moisture. The job is to figure out whether something is wet now, was wet recently, or keeps getting wet again. Before you buy another cleaner, paint over a stain, or run a dehumidifier all week, slow down and look for the water pattern.

NOTICE THE PATTERN

Where does the clue show up?

Start with the room, wall, cabinet, ceiling, smell, stain, or dampness that made you wonder. Connect the clue to a moisture source.

CHECK LIKELY PLACES

Elevated Humidity?

Notice humidity first, then check bathrooms, kitchens, HVAC closets, attics, crawl spaces, and bedrooms.

RESPOND TO WHAT YOU FIND

Then handle water or growth.

If something got wet, use the 48-hour guidance. If you see visible mold, decide whether it is small or time to call.

30-50%

Target range

A practical indoor range for comfort and moisture control. You need a pattern that comes back down.

50-60%

Watch zone

Start looking for the reason: crawl space, bath fan, AC, blocked drain line, damp contents, or poor air movement.

60%+

Action zone

If it stays here, do not shrug it off. If odor, staining, or symptoms are part of it, do not wait for visible growth.

WALK - THROUGH

Start where water, condensation, and poor air movement tend to meet.

Check the rooms where moisture gets a head start.

Bathroom

STEAM + LEAKS

Run the fan during showers and leave it on afterward. Check the vanity base, toilet supply line, tub caulk, grout edges, and the ceiling above the shower.

- ☐ A mirror that stays fogged or a weak fan is a ventilation clue.
- ☐ Soft trim near the tub deserves attention.
- ☐ Bath fans should move air outdoors, not into an attic.

Kitchen

HIDDEN PLUMBING

Look under the sink, behind the refrigerator, around the dishwasher, and under ice-maker or water-filter lines. Cabinet floors hide leaks well.

- ☐ Check cabinet floors for swelling or staining.
- ☐ Check the ice-maker line area for standing water or staining.
- ☐ Cooking creates steam, so run the range hood.

HVAC closet

CONDENSATION

AC systems pull moisture out of the air. A clogged drain, dirty pan, wet insulation, or growth near the air handler can become a whole-house issue.

- ☐ Keep drip pans clean and drain lines flowing.
- ☐ If suspected growth is near the air handler or vents, avoid fan-only mode and call quickly.
- ☐ Replace filters on schedule and use a proper fit.

Attic + ceiling

ROOF PATHS

Roof leaks often show up far from the actual entry point. Look for stained decking, damp insulation, rusty fasteners, and darkened areas around penetrations.

- ☐ Check after heavy rain, not only on sunny days.
- ☐ Wet insulation should not be ignored.
- ☐ Staining that grows over time means active moisture.

Crawl space

GROUND MOISTURE

Moist soil, poor drainage, missing vapor control, and dead air can keep the underside of a home damp even when the living space looks fine.

- ☐ Look for standing water or damp soil after rain.
- ☐ Watch for musty odor entering through floor penetrations.
- ☐ Make sure grade slopes water away from the foundation.

Bedrooms

SYMPTOMS + STORAGE

Check exterior walls behind furniture, windows, closets, carpet edges, and stored cardboard. A room that smells different after the door stays closed matters.

- ☐ Leave space between furniture and exterior walls.
- ☐ Avoid storing cardboard on slab floors.
- ☐ Compare the room with the main living area.

AFTER WATER

The first 48 hours matter.

The clock starts when materials get wet. EPA guidance points to drying water-damaged areas and items within 24 to 48 hours when possible. That does not mean panic. It means stop the water, open up what needs to dry, and do not paint, caulk, or cover wet materials before they are dry.

STOP THE SOURCE

Stop the water before you start cleaning.

Turn off the supply valve, put a pan under the drip, tarp the roof spot if needed, or move belongings out of active water. Fans do not help much if the leak is still feeding the room.

- ☐ Photograph the damage before moving items.
- ☐ Check the room below, the baseboard, and the wall behind the leak.
- ☐ Do not rely on surface dryness alone.

REMOVE WHAT HOLDS WATER

The top can feel dry while the inside stays wet.

Carpet face dries faster than carpet pad. Drywall paint can feel fine while the paper backing stays damp. Cardboard, ceiling tile, insulation, and pressed wood can hold moisture long after the puddle is gone.

- ☐ Lift rugs and check the underside.
- ☐ Separate wet contents from dry rooms.
- ☐ Do not try to save wet cardboard, cheap particleboard, or soaked padding.

MOVE AIR WITH A PLAN

Dry the material, not just the air.

Fans and dehumidifiers can help after clean water damage. If you already see growth, do not blast air across it. If the HVAC system may be involved, stop and get guidance first.

- ☐ Do not aim fans at visible mold.
- ☐ Use a dehumidifier in the affected area.
- ☐ Watch whether the room dries without the odor returning.
- ☐ Recheck for odor after the room dries.

HOME RESET

A simple plan for a drier home.

Use this when the house feels damp, one room smells off, or you want a seasonal reset before the wettest stretch of the year. Write things down. A short log beats trying to remember what changed.

VENTILATION

Vent

Check bath fans, kitchen exhaust, and the dryer vent.

DRAINAGE

Drain

Clean gutters and redirect rainwater away from the foundation.

STORAGE

Lift

Open closet corners and get cardboard or fabric storage off the floor.

WET SPOTS

Inspect

Look under sinks, around the HVAC closet, and below windows after rain.

SMALL FIXES

Correct

Run the dehumidifier and fan where wetness appears.

FOLLOW-UP

Recheck

If wetness isn't resolved quickly or could have wicked up in the walls, do not cover it up. Time to call a pro.

VISIBLE MOLD

What happens if you spot *visible mold*?

A tiny spot on shower caulk is not the same as growth spreading across drywall. The question is not just, "Is there mold?" It is: how much is there, what got wet, and will cleanup stir up more than it fixes?

Do not start with bleach.

Bleach can make a spot look better for a minute. It does not tell you why the material got wet, whether the wall or trim behind it is still damp, or why the same stain keeps coming back. Before you clean, decide whether this is a small surface issue or a moisture problem that needs assessment.

OFTEN MANAGEABLE

Small, isolated surface growth.

A small patch on shower caulk or another hard, cleanable surface may be a housekeeping and ventilation issue. Fix the moisture, clean carefully, and watch whether it returns.

CALL IF

It is around 10 square feet or more.

As a rough EPA marker, once visible growth is around 10 square feet or more, many homeowners should pause and get guidance. A 3 ft. by 3 ft. patch is 9 square feet.

CALL IF

Odor, HVAC, sewage, or health concerns are involved.

Do not guess when you smell mold but cannot find it, growth may be near HVAC, sewage water was involved, or asthma, allergies, immune concerns, or repeated symptoms are part of the story.

Usually not an emergency, or worth checking?

USUALLY NOT AN EMERGENCY

- ☐ A musty outdoor smell right after rain that clears when the windows and doors are closed.
- ☐ An old water stain from a repaired leak, as long as you know the source has been resolved.
- ☐ A little mildew on shower caulk that stays limited and improves with cleaning and ventilation.

WORTH CHECKING

- ☐ One room staying above 60% humidity.
- ☐ Odor that returns when windows & doors are closed.
- ☐ Staining that comes back after paint. Soft trim, or damp carpet edges.

SOURCE NOTES

Public guidance behind the checklist.

This checklist is based on public mold and moisture guidance. It is educational, not a medical diagnosis or a substitute for a site-specific assessment.

EPA, A Brief Guide to Mold, Moisture and Your Home: moisture control, 24-48 hour drying guidance, humidity targets, cleanup thresholds, hidden mold, and HVAC cautions.

CDC, Mold: common health concerns and higher-risk groups, including people with asthma, allergies, and weakened immune systems.

Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation, Mold Assessors and Remediators: Texas mold assessment and remediation licensing context. Licensing rules vary by state.

TDLR, Laws and Rules: Texas Occupations Code Chapter 1958 and Texas Administrative Code Chapter 78 references for Texas mold assessors and remediators.

WHO WE ARE

Licensed assessors. Clear answers.

EnviroGator Environmental Services provides mold and allergen assessments for homeowners in Texas, Arkansas, and Oklahoma. We document what is there, look for the moisture path behind it, and explain the next step without turning every concern into a sales pitch.

No pressure Plain-spoken reporting Local next steps

READY WHEN YOU ARE

Not sure what you are looking at?

If you have a musty room, recent water damage, visible growth, or symptoms that seem worse at home, EnviroGator can identify the condition, the moisture path, and give you a plain-English next step.

Call (903) 710-1964

