

Repair a Leaky Washer-Type Faucet

Washer-type faucets work with a rubber or composition washer that closes onto a metal washer seat. When the washer becomes hardened, worn, or the seat wears, your faucet begins to leak. Closing the faucet tighter may temporarily stop the leaking, but in the long run you're just increasing the internal damage. Here's how you fix it.

Checklist:

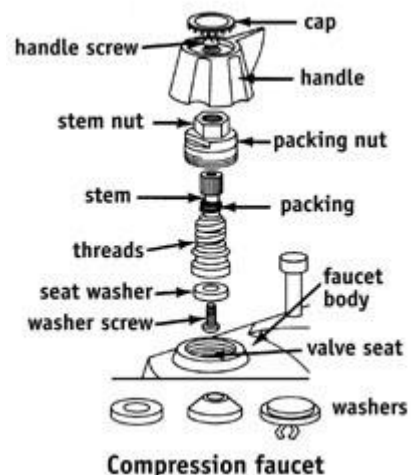
- Smooth-jaw adjustable wrench
- Screwdrivers, standard and Phillips
- Pliers
- Faucet washers
- Brass screws
- Stem
- Silicone grease or petroleum jelly
- Seat dressing tool or Seat and Seat wrench
- Silicone rubber sealant or pipe compound
- Socket wrench
- Packing
- Cleaning cloths
- Hand cleaner

One: Turn off water.

- If there's a shutoff valve underneath the fixture, turn off the water there.
- Otherwise, turn off the water at the main house shutoff valve. This is usually located in the basement, utility room, or crawlspace.
- Turn off the hot water supply at the water heater.

Two: Take the faucet apart.

- Remove the handle.
- Loosen the Phillips-head screw. This is usually located underneath the decorative cap in the center of the handle.
 - The cap either unscrews or snaps off when you pry it with a knife blade.
- Lift to pry the handle off its broached stem.
- Unscrew the packing nut under the handle. This will expose the rest of the stem.
- Remove the stem by rotating it in the "on" direction.



- It will thread out.
- Reinstall the handle if you're having difficulty turning it.
- ☐ Clean chips away from the faucet cavity.
 - Do not use harsh abrasives or a file.



TIP



If you have to use pliers on decorative faucet parts, pad them with electrical tape or cloth to protect the finish. Take special care with plastic parts found on many modern faucets.

Three: Examine the stem.

- ☐ If the threads are worn or corroded, bring it to your local Shagbark to get a new stem to match. If the stem is dirty, simply clean it.

Four: Check the washer.

- ☐ The washer is near the lower end of the stem. It's held in place by a brass screw. If the washer is either squeezed flat or has a groove worn in it, replace it. This should stop any dripping.
 - Take the washer to your local Shagbark to make sure you get the right size and style.
 - If the brass screw is damaged, replace it as well.



TIP



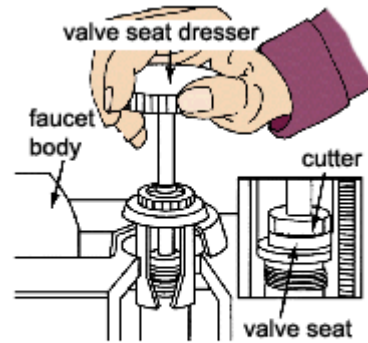
It's important to install the correct type of faucet washer. Refer to the bottom three images in [figure 1](#). A swiveling washer, the last in the set of three, is the most preferable. To install this style, file the shoulder off the end of the stem, and drill out the threads of the screw hole. This kind of washer outlasts fixed washers because instead of rubbing against the seat as it closes, it closes with a straight-down, frictionless action.

Five: Look at washer seat.

Take note that a faucet that seems to require frequent washer replacement usually has a damaged seat. The washer seat is located inside the faucet body. The seat should either be refaced with a seat-dressing tool or replaced.

1. Replace washer seat.

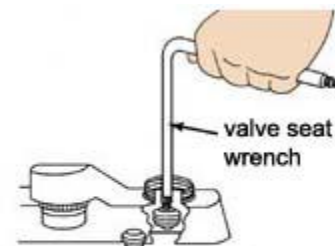
- Some washer seats can be unthreaded and replaced. Check the faucet body with a flashlight to see if it has a square or hexagonal hole through its center, or is slotted for a screwdriver.
 - If this is so, the washer seat is replaceable.
 - If, instead, it has a round hole through its center with not slots, it isn't replaceable. You would have to reface it with a seat-dressing tool.
- In order to replace the washer, you need *a faucet seat wrench*, which comes with square and hex heads to fit most faucet seats.
- Turn the washer seat counterclockwise to loosen it, and clockwise to tighten.
- Add some silicone rubber sealant or pipe joint compound around the threads of the seat before you install it to make it easier to remove in the future.



To use a valve seat dresser, place the tool in the valve seat and turn until the seat is smooth.

2. Reface washer seat.

- Seat dressing tools are relatively cheap, and every home with washer-type faucets needs one.
- Use the tool according to the manufacturer's directions.
- Place it in the faucet along with the packing nut.
- Rotate until the seat is smooth, and blow out the chips.



To remove the valve seat, insert a valve seat wrench into the faucet body and turn counterclockwise.

Six: Put back together.

- Put the parts back together in the reverse order of taking them apart.
- Spread some petroleum jelly or silicone grease on the threads of the stem to lubricate the faucet's action.

Seven: If faucet leaks around the stem.

- If your faucet is leaking around the stem, rather than from the spigot, install new packing.
 - You may want to install the new nylon-covered or graphite-impregnated packings.
 - Their lubrication allows the faucet handle to turn more freely.
- Wrap one turn of the packing around the stem beneath the packing nut.
 - Use three complete wraps if you're applying string-type packing.
- Some stems use O-rings, not packing.
- Replace the O-ring with a matching one to stop a leak.
- Hand-tighten the packing nut.
- Tighten it another half-turn.

For this information and more refer to www.truevalue.com