

Evaluation #1 Tame Your Home

Hello Eric!

Congratulations on completing your manuscript and thank you for sharing it with me. It must feel good to have written down your thoughts about this topic. Your approach is informational, which is great, and you demonstrate professionalism and expertise in your tone. I enjoyed reading it. Here are some of my thoughts on where your strengths lie and what areas can benefit from revision.

Strengths:

This book is a comprehensive list of elements found both within and outside the home that can break down or become problematic with time and poor maintenance. I think your target audience will be looking for something just like this. Though I live in an apartment, I was really interested in a lot of these things and I learned a lot, including understanding more about different lightbulbs, as well as how to take care of wood and tile flooring. The average new homeowner will be able to find nearly everything they are looking for amid the pages of this manual.

The use of checklists at the end of the book is fantastic. I wonder if you intend to have them be tear-out checklists or whether they are meant to stay in the book. I also wonder about how you want the book to look: Will it be a vertical or horizontal book? Horizontal might be easier for checklists since writing serial numbers and other things may require more horizontal space.

I think having a feedback form at the end of the book is a great idea. I imagine this will have a tear-out option for those people who will send it to you via traditional mail. That being said, if you are targeting new homeowners, many of whom will be young, it is important that you have a link to an online survey. Many younger generations will not make the effort to send feedback via mail. You probably already thought of that, but I thought I would mention it just in case. If you are planning to still have a tear-out option for this feedback form, think of making it a kind of postcard that is easy to rip out and send in one go, with your postal address already stamped on it and space for a stamp.

Potential Areas of Improvement:

Title

I noticed that you specifically asked for feedback on your title. I think *Tame Your Home* is a great title. It's intriguing and it anthropomorphizes the house, which is fun. It alludes to the home having a kind of personality. I think this would appeal to a younger audience. However, the *You Can Do It* part of the title seems superfluous and a bit flowery. Consider replacing it with more practical wording.

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Here are a few suggestions to get you thinking:

Taming your home: A new homeowner's manual

Or

Tame your home: How to maintain a healthy house and avoid breakdowns

The sub headline you currently have, Homeowner Care and Reference Manual, is a bit clunky and heavy. You use that title throughout your book and it unnecessarily weighs down the manuscript. Rather than repeat those words, which are pretty generic anyway, just writing "manual" is perfectly fine. When people talk about your book, they are more likely to say, "I bought Taming Your Home and it's great manual for new homeowners. You should check it out." Not many are likely to say, "I got the Homeowner Care and Reference Manual and it's great. You should buy it." There is nothing there that stands out, and it's a mouthful. I recommend keeping the beginning part of your title: It's fun. But consider changing the second part and making it more dynamic and easier to remember.

Structure

After reading the book and going back and rereading certain sections, there are a few things that gave me pause, most of which have to do with structure:

Table of Contents

I'm afraid that the way you structured the sections was not clear to me. I was confused as to why you had #9-16 separate from the Alphabetical Reference Index. Those sections seem like they would fit better in the reference list. Perhaps you wanted to separate the "set-up" chapters from the meat of the book, but in my opinion #9-16 could and should be part of the meat of the book.

There would need to be a bigger conversation on how you want the book to be laid out, but as a first impression, it would seem logical to me as a consumer and potential new homeowner that the meat of the book, after the preliminary information has been delivered, be separated into two main sections:

- Indoor
- Outdoor

You have naturally occurring sections that fit into each of those categories. If I'm having issues with my gutters, then I can easily flip to the section on outdoor maintenance/issues and then

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find gutters via an alphabetical search. Once you have that big separation done, you can do subcategories based on the alphabet, like you did in your index.

Indexes and lists

I'm not sure why you started an index halfway through the book. Perhaps that was an oversight? An index is usually at the end of a book, as a reference to find what is in the book. I see that you put the index at the end, but then in the middle too. I would remove that mid-book index completely to avoid confusion.

Another thing I noticed that I think was distracting was the list of things that could be found in each section.

- Ex. **Asphalt**
Chemical Spills
Hot Weather
Non-residential Vehicle Traffic
Seal Coating
Repairs
Alligator Cracking
Settling
Thermal Cracking

I can understand the reasoning for providing a list at the start of the section, but considering that each section is pretty short and every small heading is usually a paragraph or two, it would be simpler for the reader to just scan the next page or two to find what they are looking for. Since each element will be highlighted, it'll be easy to see it on the page. I would leave that list out and keep the page cleaner and more open.

Repetition

There is a lot of repetition between two sections of the book: #9-16 and the Alphabetical Reference Index. For example, #13 on fire prevention has repetitive phrases under practice prevention, which is just one page later. You also talk about erosion at the beginning of the book and then later in the reference section. The same is true about humidifiers. There are ways we can clean that up. Perhaps you want to provide access to those things in different sections because not everyone will read the whole book, but we can minimize repetition without giving up on valuable information.

Eco-conscious elements

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The conservation tips you have toward the beginning of the book can also be integrated into the overall meat of the book, unless you decide you want to add a separate section on conservation, which could be a good idea.

That being said, the sections on conservation are excellent and I would recommend having more of them. With climate change in the forefront of people's minds and considering younger generations tend to be more conscious of the environment, it is reasonable to assume that more people will want to refurbish their homes and/or incorporate more eco-friendly elements to their homes, like solar panels, geothermal heating and low pressure water fixtures. You address a few of these things, but you may want to consider expanding on that. Perhaps it's an idea for another book or an updated version of this one, but something to think about.

Consistency

Although you are quite detailed in your explanations through much of the book, there are some moments where you don't go into enough detail. Here are just a few I noticed:

- **Ex. Tank Care: "Avoid abnormal pressures against the sides of the tank."**
 - It would be good to have examples for that. I can't think of what kinds of pressures would exist and having examples makes visualizing it clearer
- **Ex. Grounded System: "Most recently installed electrical systems use a three-wire grounded system. Never remove the bare wire (ground wire) that connects to the box or device."**
 - You explain other things very well, but this is vague, in my opinion. Perhaps some people don't know what you mean by grounded system, or they know another name for it. This would benefit from a few more sentences to explain in more detail
- **Ex. Wood Burning Fireplace: "Never use liquid fire starters, such as charcoal barbeque starter fluid, in an indoor fireplace."**
 - This may seem obvious, but I would recommend explaining why this should be avoided. You give reasons for other "obvious" things, like talking about the dangers of ladders and falling off of them, but in examples like these you don't give an explanation. Remember, consistency is key

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Checklists

The checklists you have toward the end of the book would benefit from actual checkmark boxes being placed next to each numbered element so that people can physically mark that element off their list. I would suggest a series of boxes so the lists can be used more than once.

- Ex. If it needs to be done four times a year, you can have four boxes; or if it's once a year, you can have four boxes, one for every year.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 1. Check windows and doors on the exterior for possible air or water leaks.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 2. Inspect caulking inside and outside around windows and door frames for cracks or separation from the house framing.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ 3. Inspect caulking in kitchen, bathroom (tub and shower), and laundry room surfaces, for cracks or separation from the walls or at the seams, and repair where required.

Grammar

Though your writing is pretty straightforward and easy to read, I have noticed a few grammatical or stylistic errors.

- **Punctuation:** Sometimes commas, semicolons, and other punctuation are used incorrectly or not at all.

- Ex. If your water heater is on the older side, ~~Make~~ make a habit of turning off the water supply to the water heater when you are absent for a longer period of time.

- Ex. Ensure ~~first~~ that it is compatible with the existing paint or stain finish that is on your deck, before applying the repellent or preservative. Be aware that when ~~a refinishing of the deck becomes necessary~~, the presence of the repellent or preservative may require that the deck be completely stripped before ~~hand the refinishing~~.

- Ex. Drainage patterns and plans will make use of swales at shared lot boundaries in order to direct storm water and snow melt into storm sewers, or onto an adjacent street, or a drainage ditch.

- **Long, sometimes awkward, sentences:** Sometimes shorter is sweeter. It's a good idea to mix up long sentences with shorter sentences. You do that quite naturally already, but sometimes when we have a lot to say, we tend to add

Commented [LB1]: The alternative here would be to not use the word "or" before "onto an adjacent street." The commas would be appropriate at that point.

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more to the equation than is necessary. This can lead to confusion for the reader. In the examples below, I've removed things that could cause the sentences to be clunkier than necessary.

- Ex. In the basement of a newer home, there is a flexible collar around the top of the furnace plenum. ~~This collar will which gives in the event of shifting of if~~ the concrete floor shifts. ~~holding the furnace itself.~~
- Ex. ~~Whatever the sources of your design, it is~~ ideally, if you ~~should can~~ plan to install the basic components of your landscaping as soon ~~after closing of the purchase of your home~~ as weather permits.
- Ex. Over time, the rubber stopper at the bottom of the tank may ~~wear out and~~ deteriorate from use or from the mineral content in of the water. Replacement kits are readily available at hardware stores, ~~if this should occur~~. Replacing The ~~replacement of~~ the stopper can be finicky ~~work~~, for a number of reasons, such as including working in a tight ~~working~~ space.

Commented [LB2]: What do you mean by this? It shifts? It falls apart? It moves slightly, a lot?

Commented [LB3]: I've removed elements to the sentence that cause it to be heavy and awkward. They are not essential to the information you are trying to convey. If, however, you feel strongly that these things should be mentioned, consider separating this sentence into two sentences so it's easier to digest.

Editorial Service Recommendation:

Based on the comments made above, the bulk of what I think needs help is related to the structure of the book. As such, I would like to offer one of two options moving forward:

Option 1: Developmental editing + copy editing

Option 2: Content editing

The advantage of Option 1 is that we can tackle the structure in a first round. This would allow for a clear vision of how the manuscript can be better organized to maximize on your goals for the book. Then, once the structure has been sorted out, we can do a second round, which is to go back and tackle the more finicky aspects of the writing. This two-pronged approach will give you an opportunity to see how the book looks with a new reconfiguration before the nitty gritty editing begins.

The advantage of Option 2 is that you get all the editing done in one go. If you are in a bigger rush to publish, this may be the better option for you, though the changes may seem more extreme because both structural and content editing will be done at the same time.

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The choice is yours. You can discuss the specifics of each option with your publishing specialist if you have any questions.

Conclusion:

Thank you for entrusting me with this first look into your book. I would be happy to work with you on the next steps if you choose to move forward with us. The topic has a lot of value and I would love to help you present your ideas in the clearest and most effective way possible.

I hope this evaluation has helped in some small way. I wish you all the best with bringing *Tame Your Home* to the public.

Sincerely,
Your Editor