

Roof Check

Roofs are meant to keep out the rain, wind and animals. Most people will put up with problems in their buildings, but no one likes a leaking roof. Besides, a leak can cost you a fortune if it damages paintwork, carpet or those irreplaceable mementos. So every year and after any really wild weather (especially hail) it pays to carefully check your roof for problems. Usually any major problems will be obvious because the roof will leak. Minor problems can take time to show especially if they only leak when the rain comes from a particular direction. Other issues will occur as materials age and need maintenance or replacement.

What to look for

From inside

- obvious leaks or damp patches on the ceiling
- mould and staining to paint
- staining/blistered paintwork around chimneys, skylights
- water marks/leaks under joints between original building and any extensions
- cracks in skylights or roof glazing

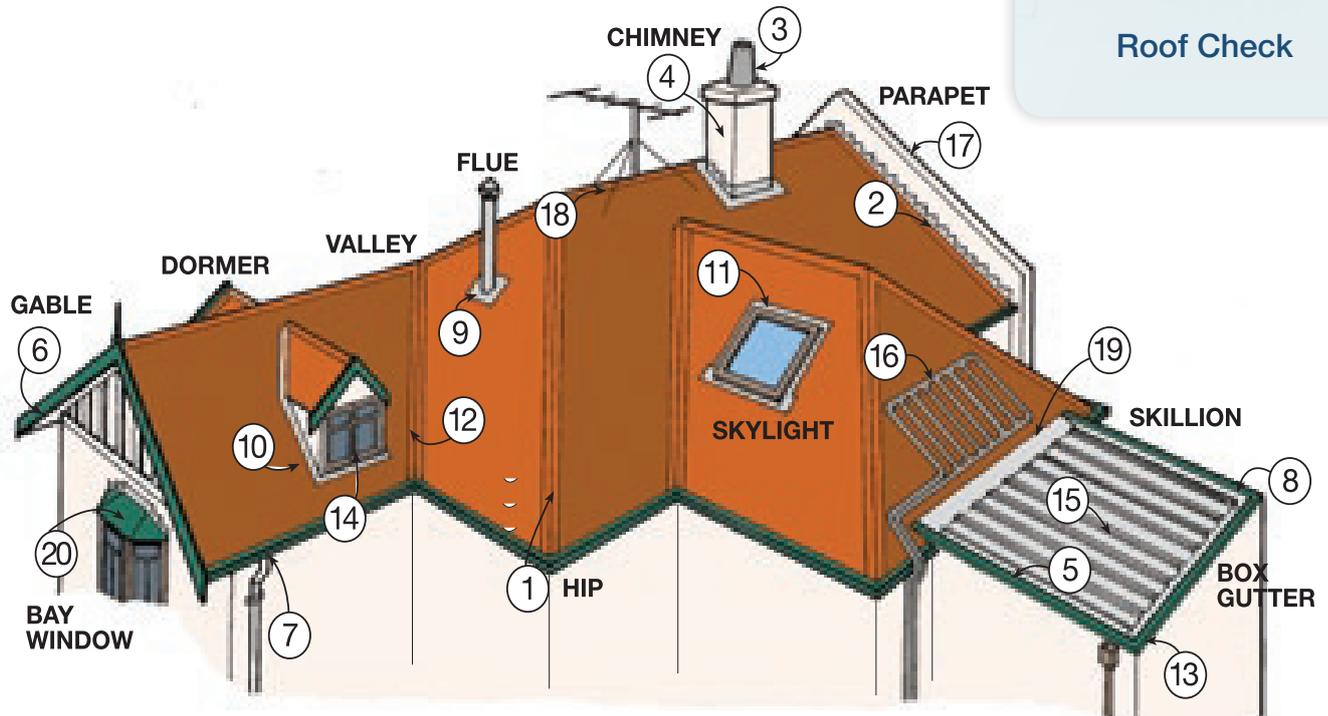
It helps to look more closely at the areas directly above these signs for the cause of the leaks. In the most difficult cases, it may be necessary to inspect the underside of the roof during rain.

From the ground (use binoculars if necessary)

- slipped or missing tiles/slates
- big gaps under edges of tiles which will let water blow in – this can mean the tiles are eroding
- 1 slipped capping especially at lower end of corners (called hips)
- lifting edges of metal sheets
- 2 loose or lifted flashings
- 3 missing or leaning chimney pots
- 4 gaps in chimney mortar
- stains to the lining under the edge of the roof
- 5 severe corrosion to any sheeting or capping
- 6 rot to ends of timber/loose timber edges where nails have rusted
- condition of paintwork especially ends of rafters and fascias
- 7 drips/staining from joints in gutters or downpipes
- sagging of gutters especially at corners
- 8 plants growing in gutters or out of the roof especially at edges If you are brave enough to get inside



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If you are brave enough to get inside the roof

WARNING

It is easy to slip off ceiling joists or bump your head. Be careful not to drop in unexpectedly!

Looking at the underside of a roof can help you work out where it might be leaking

- if you can easily see daylight through any part of the roof, rain will probably easily get in and birds certainly will
- the top surface of the ceiling insulation for spotting of drips of water from leaks through roof
- the crushed orange dust on the surface of the ceiling especially under any cut tiles is a sign of terracotta tiles falling apart
- deterioration to underside of slates (and their nails), tiles, metal roofing/valleys that can be impossible to spot from the outside

On the roof

WARNING

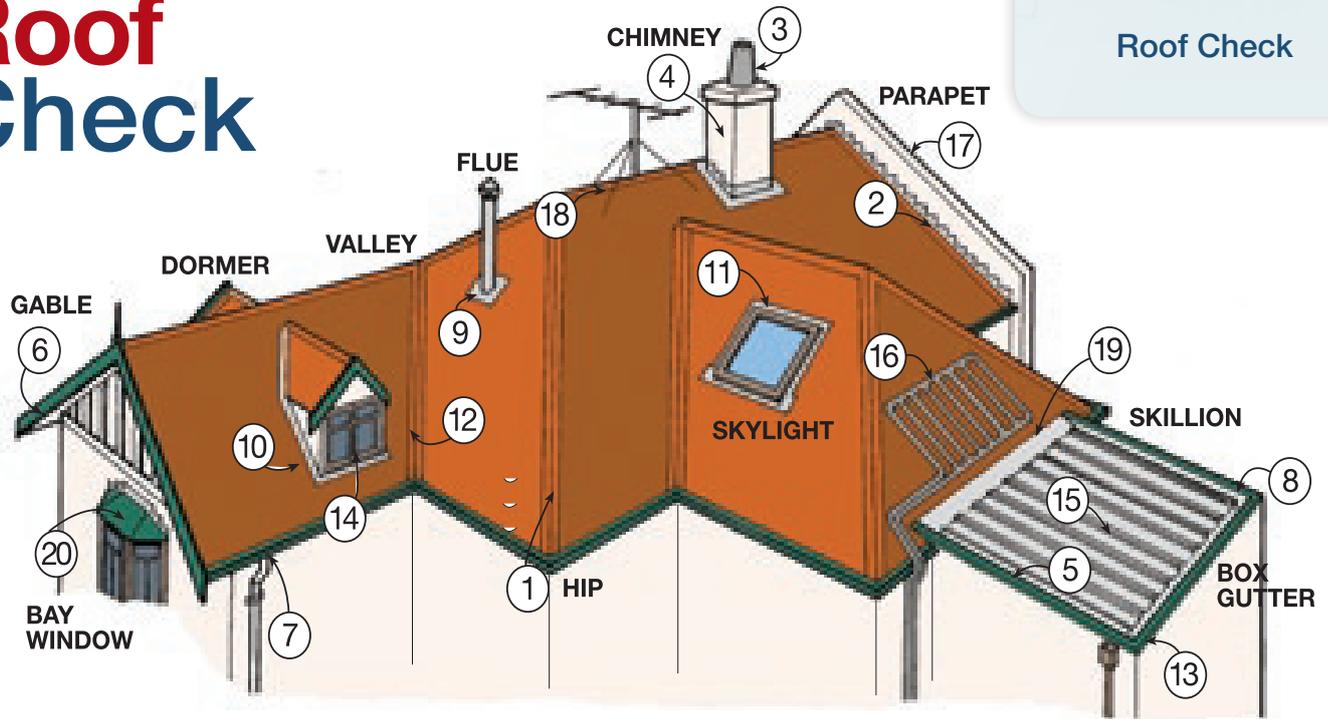
Experts rarely get on a roof without a safety harness (called a fall arrest system). Slate, shingles or older terracotta roofs should not be walked on. Do not get onto a roof unless you are trained to use ladders and are used to working on roofs. Wear non slip rubber soled shoes such as Dunlop Volleys.

Look more closely for the problems you have already looked for from the ground.

- 9 cracks in flashings and sealants around any pipes, flues, TV, skylights/roof windows/roof vents penetrating the roof
- condition of mortar pointing to tile capping
- 10 cracks in long length lead flashings
- 11 leaves/rubbish stuck behind or down the side of skylights, chimneys or in box gutters (and eaves gutters) and valleys, annex fascia gutters, and at the flashing or joint between two different roofs, or where the slope of the roof changes
- balls/plastic bags stuck in gutters
- 12 any rusted surface/pipe or flue where the rust is powdery/very rough and uneven especially older valleys and box gutters or frames around skylights
- 13 cracks in sealants to joints in box gutters especially where joined to downpipes
- 14 condition of hard to get to rotted timber especially sills/frames around dormer windows or highlight windows
- crush damage/breakage to soft or brittle roofs, eg aluminium, fibreglass, metal tiles, asbestos sheeting
- severely weathered asbestos cement sheeting or gutters/downpipes
- 15 loose or corroded screws, fixings
- support to air conditioning and solar hot water systems mounted on the roof



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- 16 leaks/corrosion from solar pool heaters or water heaters – salt water quickly rusts steel products
- 17 loose bricks/render to chimneys and parapets
- 18 condition of paintwork to parapets, walls above roofs, chimneys, gables
- 19 loose or missing support wires to TV antennas, flues, flagpoles
- 20 poorly detailed flashings between 2 different roofs
- 21 condition of awning/bay window/porch roofs especially size of drainage

Membranes

- bubbles/blisters/splits in the surface of membranes
- missing or displaced gravel topping on top of membrane
- bird damage to membranes
- weatherproofing of any joint that looks complex

And what do you do if something is wrong

- Fix it yourself if it is safe to do so and you have the appropriate skills and tools.
- Seek advice from a licensed roofing plumber or tradesman experienced with this type of work.

Basic tools and materials for roof maintenance

- Ladders
- Roof anchor bolts
- Safety harness
- Sealant gun
- Tinsnips
- External acrylic paint
- Silicone sealant for flashings and metals
- Polyurethane sealant for flashings and masonry
- Rivet gun and stainless steel or aluminium rivets
- Cordless screwdriver with roofing screw socket
- Drill bits for removing rivets
- Scrapers and aluminium oxide sandpaper
- Anticorrosive primers, eg zinc or aluminium

Numbers relate to items on drawings