

## How to fix a drippy faucet

The primary cause of faucet leaks or drips is a bad rubber washer. Sometimes the bad washer is accompanied by a bad faucet seat as well. In single handle faucets the cause is the same, the solution is different.

The small rubber parts that seal the water in your faucet wear out. They get crushed between the faucet stem and the seat over and over again, and as they age, they get crushed harder and harder as you tighten the knob tighter and tighter to make it stop dripping. Name brand newer faucets have attempted to solve this problem by making ever more complex stem systems, but they are nonetheless dependent on rubber seals to stop the water.

This article will address the older style, two handle faucets, and touch on the newer two handle styles as well. Single handled or lever type faucets will be looked at in a future article.

Older two handled faucets use pretty much the same style of stems, all based on the Price Pfister design. There are variations, but the principle is the same. The knob is attached to the stem. When you turn the handle, the threaded stem moves up or down inside the faucet body.

At the end of the stem is a rubber washer. When turned all the way in, the rubber washer seals against a brass seat which has a nice edge on it to ensure a good seal. Over time the rubber gets brittle and breaks, gets crushed so hard against the seat that it cuts, or just gets so pitted that it won't seal any more.

To solve the leak you will need the following tools:

1. A screw driver to remove the handle after gently prying out the button which covers the screw.
2. An adjustable wrench to remove the stem.
3. A faucet seat tool, available at most hardware stores for around \$12.00. Pick it up when you go to get the parts.

Turn off the water by closing the angle stops under the sink. By turning off one side at a time, you will be able to determine which one leaks, but I always just replace them both.

Once the water is off, open both hot and cold sides to bleed off any water still in the lines, then remove the knobs. I always put the screws in the knobs and set them away from the sink.

Next you will remove the stems using the adjustable wrench and turning counter clockwise. Be sure to save the nylon washers which seal the nut to the faucet body.

Once you have the stem out, you can look at the rubber washer on the end. Notice how it's all messed up? Next stick your pinky finger down into the hole the stem came out of. You will notice a rimmed seat the rubber closes against. The top edge of the seat should be smooth. If it is rough or has chips in it, you'll need to replace the seat too.

Inspect the end of the stem. If the brass is damaged, you will need to buy a new stem. If this is a newer model faucet, the rubber will be facing up and caged inside the stem assembly, and the stem closes against the rubber. In that case there is no seat.

In plastic faucets, there are a number of different stem designs, but once they start to drip, you basically need to replace the stem cartridge.

In all three cases, I recommend you take the old parts with you to the hardware store, in order to ensure you get the right parts.

When you get back, reassemble the faucet in the reverse order. If you need to replace the seats, they come out by inserting the tool through the hole in the middle and turning counter clockwise. For some reason they always seem to have been installed by Hercules. When you put the new ones in, make sure they are set tight.

After reassembly, remove the aerator from the end of the faucet arm. Then turn on the water and check to see that the drip is cured. Let the water run for a minute while you clean the aerator. Reinstall the aerator after it is clean.

Now you know how to fix a drippy faucet! You don't have to pay a plumber or handyman to do it for you. You have saved \$80 or \$100 or so, so you should be proud of yourself. Now you can splurge on a new pair of shoes or a new fishing pole.