My Reverse Osmosis Record & Care Guide

The paper that lives at your drinking-water tap: your install-day numbers, the one calculation that tells you when the membrane is done, when each filter is due, and what to check before you call. Print it, fill it in, keep it under the sink.

1. Your system — fill this in on install day

Installed on _____ **Installed by** _____

System model _____

Membrane size (gal/day) _____ **Tank size** _____

Feed water: city / well _____ **Softener ahead of it? Y / N** _____

Shutoff valve for this system is at _____

That last line matters. Under-sink systems sit over cabinets and wood floors — knowing which valve stops this system, before anything ever leaks, is the cheapest insurance in the house.

2. Your two numbers — your starting point

Total dissolved solids (TDS) is the total amount of dissolved stuff in the water, in parts per million (ppm). On install day I take two readings and write them here, because a number months later means nothing without the starting point:

Tap water TDS (install day) _____ **RO water TDS** _____

Percent removed _____ **Your red line (see below)** _____

The math is plain: percent removed = (tap - RO) ÷ tap × 100. Worked example, using the Pinellas County Utilities 2025 average: tap reads 343, the RO tap reads 34, so the system removed 309 of 343 parts — about 90 percent. That example is arithmetic, not a promise for your house; your two numbers are the ones that count.

> **Your red line — when the membrane is done**
> Watts, the maker these systems come from, recommends replacing the membrane when TDS reduction falls below 75 percent. Turn that into your personal number once: red line = your tap reading × 0.25. On the Pinellas example, 343 × 0.25 = about 86 — if your RO reading climbs past that with fresh pre-filters in place, the membrane is due, whatever the calendar says. Write your red line in the blank above.

One honest limit, same as on the website: TDS is a total. It tells you how much is dissolved, not what it is — a low number is not a safety verdict and a high one is not a violation. The United States Environmental Protection Agency's 500 parts per million figure for TDS is a taste-and-deposits guideline, not an enforceable health limit. What the number does well is change over time — a steady climb from your install-day number is the signal. One odd reading is not; compare readings taken the same way, a few months apart.

3. When each part is due

These are the intervals in the Watts installation, operation and maintenance manuals for systems like yours. Water conditions and how much water you use move them — the manuals say so themselves — so treat the calendar as the outer limit, and a rising TDS reading at a service visit as the early warning.

Part	Change every	What it does
Sediment pre-filter	6 months	Catches grit and rust before they can reach the membrane.
Carbon pre-filter(s)	6 months	Takes chlorine and taste/odor chemicals out ahead of the membrane — chlorine is hard on membranes.
Final carbon filter	12 months	Last polish before the tap, for taste. (Some models: 6–12 months.)
Membrane	2–5 years	The heart of the system. Due sooner if a service-visit reading crosses your red line in section 2.

Hard water note, straight: calcium and magnesium shorten membrane life. If your home has no softener ahead of the RO, expect the membrane toward the short end of that 2-to-5-year range — that's chemistry, not a sales line, and it's why the free test checks hardness before I recommend a membrane size.

4. Slow, weak, noisy, or tastes off — check in this order

1. How long since the pre-filters were changed? Overdue sediment and carbon filters are the first suspect for slow flow — they are also the cheapest fix on the system.
2. I re-check the TDS reading and compare it to your red line (section 2). Watts' own manual names the same two membrane warnings: a drop in water production, or an unpleasant taste in the RO water.
3. Look under the sink with a flashlight. Any drip, damp cabinet floor, or a drain line that runs and runs is not a wait-and-see item.

Call instead of checking when: there is any active leak, the system drains non-stop, the tank fills but almost nothing comes out of the tap after a filter change, or the taste problem starts right after a filter change. Call or text (727) 342-0091.

5. If the house sits empty

Plenty of Tampa Bay homes sit unused for months. The Watts manual carries a separate restart procedure for a system that has sat unused for more than 2 months — it is a sanitize-and-check job, not a run-the-tap-for-a-minute job. If the house was empty that long, book a service visit before you drink from the RO tap again, and write the restart in the log below.

6. Once a year, the rest of the house

While you're booking annual filter service: your water heater needs the sediment drained out of its tank once a year to stay on the right side of its warranty — skipping it hands the manufacturer a reason to deny a claim when sediment or scale is what killed the heater. That job has its own Aqua Pro paper (Water Heater Flush — Owner's Guide, on the Print & Save page at aquapro.services). I can do the flush for you on a service visit, or that guide walks you through doing it yourself with a garden hose. Ask to add it when you book the filter change and it's one trip.

7. Your service & readings log

Every visit and every reading goes here. This log is what turns those readings into proof — yours, for a warranty question, a home sale, or your own peace of mind.

Date	What was done	Tap	RO	% out

Sources: Watts installation, operation and maintenance manuals (models PWRO5MAN, PWROKC4, PWRO4ZRO, H2O-DWRO300) for intervals, the 75-percent membrane rule, and the extended non-use procedure; United States Environmental Protection Agency, Secondary Drinking Water Standards (TDS guideline 500 mg/L); Pinellas County Utilities 2025 water quality report (TDS average 343 ppm, range 293–392).