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Fabulous Cleaning Tricks

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NOTICE: The information contained within has been carefully researched, and all efforts have been made to ensure accuracy and safety. The author, assumes no responsibility for any injuries suffered or damages or losses incurred during or as a result of the use of the information. All information and advice contained within should be carefully studied and clearly understood before taking any action based on it. Further, we recommend you test any new or unusual cleaning method before applying it broadly, or on a highly visible or valuable space or item.

For Faster, Better Cleaning...

The tips on the following pages will show you some clever ways to speed up your cleaning. But don't overlook these general rules:

- **Eliminate clutter.** Getting rid of clutter not only makes it easier to clean; it also cuts down on the need to clean because an uncluttered home, even though it's not spotless, looks better than one that is dust-free but strewn with odds and ends.
- **Start with rooms that go fast.** If you want to see real progress quickly when you are cleaning—and get a psychological boost—start with the areas that tend to go the fastest—the living and dining rooms and the halls. They're usually less cluttered and less dirty.
- **Clear out a room first.** Before cleaning a room, go through and get rid of all the trash and clutter. Carry a plastic trash bag with you to catch the contents of wastebaskets and other trash. Then follow up with a laundry basket for out-of-place items. You can sort these after you've finished cleaning.
- **Cluster your activities.** Do as many tasks as you can in one place before you move on to the next. You'll find that you clean faster that way.
- **Begin with dust-raising cleaning.** This is just simple logic: You don't want dust floating back on surfaces that you have already cleaned.
- **Work systematically.** To make sure that you don't miss anything when dusting a room, start at the door and work around the room in one direction.

Time-Saving Cleaning Gear

Make a carry-all

Don't keep running back to the cleaning closet every time you need something. Carry all your supplies from one room to the next in a "maid's basket"—a plastic bin with a handle—or cleaning cart.

Have paper towels handy

For spills and daily cleanup, install paper-towel racks in key places—the garage, workbench, baby's room, and bathroom, as well as the kitchen.

Keep it in the dustpan

To prevent dust from rolling out of your dustpan, dampen the pan before you start dusting.

BONUS TIP ▶ *If the edge of your dustpan becomes bent, take time to straighten it out, or you'll end up chasing dirt across the floor every time you use it.*

Shaking out your dust mop

Once you've collected dirt and dust, you need to get rid of it without redepositing it. If you can't shake the dust mop outdoors, try shaking it into a paper or plastic bag.

Make your cleanser last longer

Cover half the holes in the top of a can of scouring powder with masking tape, and the can will probably last twice as long as it would normally.

Two-bucket technique

When mopping floors or washing walls, use a two-bucket technique to make your cleaning solution last longer. Rinse and squeeze the dirt from your mop or sponge into a bucket of plain water before dipping it into the bucket with the cleaning solution.

Don't spread dirt

To avoid redepositing dirt on the surface, always make sure that your cleaning solution is not dirty. Mix up a new bucket of cleaner and water as soon as the first bucket becomes even moderately dirty.

CLEANING COMPOUNDS FROM YOUR PANTRY

Ammonia: Dilute ammonia with 3 parts of water in an empty pump-spray can, and use it to clean windows, appliances, and countertops. Use full-strength ammonia to remove wax from floors or to clean an oven that is moderately dirty. Wear vinyl gloves when using an ammonia solution, and when using it full strength, make sure the area is well ventilated.

Vinegar: An excellent substitute for metal cleaner to scour copper and brass is 1/2 cup of vinegar mixed with 1 tablespoon of salt.

Pine oil: Full-strength pine oil makes quick work of cleaning and deodorizing garbage pails as well as bathroom and kitchen floors. If you dilute the pine oil, you won't have to rinse.

Baking soda: This is milder than harsh scouring powders for cleaning kitchen and bath fixtures. It also removes odors and washes stains from refrigerators and freezers, microwaves, coffeepots, teapots, and thermos bottles. Try it to deodorize diaper pails and kitty litter. A sprinkling of dry baking soda before vacuuming will freshen carpeting as well as any commercial carpet deodorizer. Half a raw potato dipped in baking soda makes a great silver polish.

Fresh and Clean Walls

Cleaning nonwashable wallpaper

Is your nonwashable wallpaper soiled? Rub it gently with an art-gum eraser, dough-type wallpaper cleaner (found in paint and hardware stores), or crustless slices of fresh, “doughy” bread.

BONUS TIP ► *Transform regular wallpaper into washable wallpaper by giving it a coat of wallpaper sizing, then one of clear shellac.*

Cleaning washable wallpaper

Here's a novel way to clean washable wallpaper with dry detergent suds. Mix 1/4 cup of liquid dishwashing detergent with 1 cup of warm water and beat it with a rotary beater into a stiff foam. Scoop up only the dry suds and apply with a cloth or sponge.

Crayon on wallpaper

Remove crayon marks on wallpaper by sponging them with dry-cleaning solvent. If the dye remains on the wall, mix 1 teaspoon of liquid bleach in 1 cup of water and apply it to the stain. (Test an inconspicuous area first to make sure the solution won't damage the paper.)

BONUS TIP ► *Silver polish, applied with a clean cloth, will remove crayon marks on vinyl wall coverings. Concentrated dishwashing detergent also works well.*

Spots on wallpaper

Clean fresh spots on wallpaper as soon as possible. Blot a new grease spot with a clean paper towel. Then, holding a fresh piece of absorbent paper on the spot, press with a warm (not hot) iron. Change the paper when it becomes greasy. To remove old grease spots, use a commercial stain remover (available at wallpaper stores).

Ink spots on wallpaper

Use chlorine bleach to remove ink spots on washable wallpaper. Pat the spots with a cloth or a cotton swab dampened with bleach, then rinse with a cloth or sponge dipped in clear water. Test an inconspicuous spot first; the bleach may remove color.

Hard-to-reach corners

To dust hard-to-reach corners, slip an old sock over a yardstick and secure it with a rubber band.

Removing cobwebs

Cobwebs can be sticky and can stain surfaces if you don't remove them carefully. Use a vacuum cleaner tool or a cloth-covered broom, and lift them away from the wall rather than pushing them onto the surface.

Preventing vacuum scratches

When vacuuming trim, plasterwork, or woodwork, protect them from scratches by attaching a “bumper,” a strip of foam rubber secured with a rubber band, to the head of your vacuum's crevice attachment.

Renewing painted walls

Washing painted walls is faster and cheaper than painting them. Begin at the bottom of the wall, and work rapidly in small areas with a well-wrung-out cloth or sponge. Use only white, off-white, or colorfast cloths or sponges. Wipe walls dry to prevent streaking.

BONUS TIP ► *Before washing a painted surface, dust it with a broom covered with a flannel cloth. Change the cloth when it gets dirty. When washing, tie a washcloth around your wrist to catch wall-washing drips. An athlete's terry cloth wristband will work well too.*

Spotless Floors

Dust-mopping tips

- Dust mops pick up more dirt than brooms and are easier to use than vacuums. They are especially suited for smooth, glassy wood and no-wax floors. To make the work go faster, buy a commercial 18-inch dust mop at a janitorial supply store.
- On a waxed surface, use a dry dust mop or, if the room is very dry, one slightly dampened with water (a few sprays will do the trick). Never use an oiled dust mop.

Mopping floors

- More floors are washed away than worn away, so wring out your mop until it's almost dry. Excess water can penetrate vinyl seams, dissolve wax and paint, and raise wood grain.
- Use your kitchen trash container as your mop bucket; that way you can clean it at the same time.
- Keep one mop just for rinsing; it's almost impossible to get all the cleaning solution out of a mop.

Fast shine

For a quick shine between waxings, place a piece of wax paper under your mop and work it around the room. (Be sure to dust-mop thoroughly first, because grit under the paper will scratch the waxed surface.)

Preventing wear

- Stop dirt at the door to prevent floor wear and tear. A pair of rough-textured mats—one on the outside, the other inside the entryway—will catch a lot of it.
- Use area rugs to protect carpets and waxed floors in areas where traffic is heavy—the dining area, family room, and hallways, for example.
- To prevent worn spots on the polished floors in doorways or at the bottom of stairs, try this treatment once

or twice a month: Apply a thin coat of paste wax with a cheesecloth, let it dry for 15 minutes, and then polish; repeat the procedure an hour or two later.

Stop damage from furniture

- Glue bunion pads on the feet of tables and chairs so that they can be moved without scratching the floor.
- When moving heavy furniture, slip a piece of plush carpet, pile side down, under the furniture legs. You'll protect the floor, and the furniture will slide easier.
- Before moving furniture, slip heavy socks onto the legs, or place each leg into a "shoe" made from the bottom half of a clean milk carton.

Prevent rocking chair wear

To keep a rocking chair from wearing the finish off a wood floor, place a strip of adhesive tape along the bottom of each rocker.

Mold on wood floors

Remove mold from wood floors with dry-cleaning fluid. If the mold is deeply embedded in the wood, use bleach or disinfectant. Rewax to restore the shine. Since mold needs a damp environment to thrive, keep it from coming back by making sure the area is well ventilated.

Cleaning dark wood floors

For a quick cleanup of a wood floor that's naturally or stained dark, try damp-mopping with cold tea instead of water. Go over a small area at a time with a well-wrung-out mop, wiping the area dry before moving on.

Alcohol stains on wood

Rub alcohol stains on a wood floor with silver polish or an ammonia-dampened cloth; then rewax floor.

Removing scuff marks

To remove a scuff mark from vinyl flooring, smear a drop of baby oil over it, wait a few minutes, then wipe clean. Remove black heel marks with a typewriter eraser.

Got white spots after waxing?

Get rid of white spots that show up on wood floors after waxing: Pour liquid wax over them, rub gently with fine steel wool, following the grain. Then polish with a cloth.

Down-and-out resilient floors

- If your floor is in bad condition, apply two or more thin coats of a self-polishing water-base wax, letting each application dry at least 8 hours before recoating.
- To restore pitted, rough asphalt tile, first smooth the surface with very fine steel wool. Then wash with a mild detergent solution, and wax with a self-polishing water-base wax (use several coats if pitting is severe).
- Disguise bad scratches in vinyl flooring by rubbing them with a worn screwdriver blade and then waxing.

Easy masonry floor care

To make cleaning easier, seal stone, brick, and concrete floors with a penetrating masonry sealer, available at hardware stores and home centers. Left unsealed, a masonry floor absorbs cleaning materials.

BONUS TIP ► *After sealing your garage's concrete floor, wax it. Sounds crazy, but it makes sweeping easier and reduces the dust that gets tracked into the house.*

Grease stains on the patio

To remove grease stains on concrete, wet them and sprinkle with dishwasher detergent. Let stand a few minutes before rinsing with boiling water.

Clean Carpets and Rugs

A quickie carpet-shampoo substitute

Here's how to brighten a nonwool carpet without shampooing it. First, vacuum the carpet. Then mix 1/2 cup of clear ammonia in 1 pint of water. Test the solution on an inconspicuous part of the carpet. If there's no color change, dip a sponge mop into the solution, wring it almost dry, and lightly run it over the carpet's surface.

How to stop fraying

- Want to prevent carpet seams and edges from fraying? Brush them with a liquid resin that locks the yarns in place as it dries. It's sold at fabric and craft shops.
- The outermost braid of a braided rug usually wears out first. Save the rug from this fate by sewing a strip of bias binding around the edges of the rug.

Removing a discoloring spill

If a spill causes carpet discoloration, dip a clean, white towel into a solution of 1 tablespoon of liquid hand-dishwashing detergent (or 1/2 cup white vinegar) in 1/2 cup of warm water. Alternately dab the spot with the solution and then blot it with a clean, white towel. Repeat until all of the spot's color transfers to the towel. Then cover the area with a clean, white towel until it's dry. (If this fails, consult the stain-removal chart on page 30.)

Removing furniture imprints

To remove deep indentations left in your carpet by furniture, lay a damp bath towel over the depression and press lightly with an iron. When the towel area is dry, the indentation will be gone.

BONUS TIP ► *If you must replace furniture on a freshly cleaned carpet before it has dried completely, place coasters under the legs to prevent stains and indentations.*

Gleaming Windows and Blinds

All you really need is water

Cool, clear water is the choice of most professional window washers. If windows are very dirty, add 2 to 3 tablespoons of ammonia or vinegar per gallon of water. Use only, one; if combined, they'll neutralize each other.

BONUS TIP ▶ *Never use sudsy ammonia on windows and mirrors. It leaves streaks. Use clear ammonia instead.*

But for really clean windows

One of the best window-cleaning solutions can be found right in your medicine cabinet. Pure rubbing alcohol removes dirt easily and leaves windows crystal clear.

Equip yourself

If you do a lot of window washing, invest in a professional-quality squeegee with a brass or stainless-steel holder. When the rubber blade wears out, turn it over and use the opposite edge.

Cleaning small window panes

To make washing small windows easier, custom-fit a squeegee to the windowpane. Remove the rubber blade from its holder and trim it to a length slightly wider than the width of the windowpane. Then use a hacksaw to cut the holder to the exact width of the pane.

BONUS TIP ▶ *To clean the corners of small window frames, use a cotton swab dipped in cleaning solution.*

Which side of the glass is that spot on?

Here's an easy way to tell whether the spots you've missed are on the inside of the window or the outside. Use horizontal strokes to clean one side of the window and vertical strokes for the other.

Save those paper towels

For drying windows, a wad of crumpled newspaper works just as well as expensive paper towels. Wear rubber gloves to keep your hands free of ink.

Keeping frost off windows

Want to prevent frost from forming on windows? Add 1/2 cup of rubbing alcohol or antifreeze to each quart of wash water. Or moisten a cloth with glycerin, and rub it across the insides of the windows.

Cleaning fiberglass curtains

Wash fiberglass curtains by hand in the bathtub. This way you don't have the unpleasant task of removing the tiny glass fibers from the washing machine, since you simply rinse them from the tub.

Rehanging curtains with ease

- If curtains must be rehung on specific windows, mark them with colored thread inside the hem: one stitch for the first panel, two for the second panel, and so on.
- If just-washed curtains don't hang well, slip a curtain rod through the bottom hem of each panel and leave it there for a few days.
- When you wash curtains, wash the curtain rods as well. Then apply wax to the rods, and the curtains will slip on and move more easily.

Dusting Venetian blinds

If you don't have a special duster for your Venetian blinds, wear an old pair of thick absorbent cloth gloves and wipe the slats by hand.

BONUS TIP ▶ *Touch up soiled areas on white Venetian blind tapes with liquid shoe polish.*

Those Hard-to-Clean Objects

Vacuuming bric-brac

Take the risk out of vacuuming bric-brac. Place the foot of an old nylon stocking or panty hose over the end of your vacuum's dusting tool. This way, only the dust will be sucked in.

Cleaning knick knacks

Want an easy way to clean a lot of little glass and china knick knacks? Place them in the kitchen sink and spray them thoroughly with window cleaner. Move them to a towel to air-dry. You can also clean glazed figurines and ceramic lamps by spraying them with window cleaner. Dry with paper or lintless cloth towels.

Dusting keyboards and louvers

To dust computer keyboards, louvered doors, carved furniture, or anything with lots of nooks and crannies, use a clean, soft, ever so slightly dampened paintbrush.

Getting wax off candlesticks

Remove hardened wax from candlesticks the easy way. Place them in the freezer for an hour or so; then peel off the frozen wax, wash the candlesticks, and dry them. If you don't have time to freeze, run the candlesticks under very hot water; then cover your finger with a soft cloth and push the wax off.

Removing candle wax from a tablecloth

When candle wax drips onto the tablecloth, rub the wax with an ice cube to harden it, then scrape it off with a spatula. Put paper towels under and over any remaining wax, and press with a warm iron, changing towels as the wax is absorbed. Sponge off the residue with dry-cleaning solvent. Then rub gently with heavy duty liquid detergent. Launder the tablecloth as soon as possible.

Removing fingerprints on shiny surfaces

To remove fingerprints from pianos and other wood surfaces with a high shine, clean first with a dampened chamois. Then polish dry with a second, dry chamois.

Cleaning a crystal chandelier

When you don't want to take a crystal chandelier apart, here's an easy, no-mess way to clean it: First, put a few towels on the floor under the chandelier and spread several layers of newspaper over the towels. Next, to prevent any moisture from getting into the sockets, cover each bulb with a small plastic bag and secure it with a twist tie. Now, spray enough window cleaner on each pendant so that the dirt runs off onto the newspaper. The pendants can then dip-dry, or you can polish them with a soft cloth for more shine.

Fireplace cleaning tips

- Before removing ashes, sprinkle damp tea leaves over them to keep down the dust.
- Make your slate hearth gleam. Every 6 weeks or so, wash and dry it, then coat it with lemon oil.
- If iron fireplace tools feel sticky, rub them with a cloth moistened with kerosene. Dry them thoroughly before replacing. Wash brass tools in warm sudsy water.

Brightening piano keys

Whiten yellowed piano keys by rubbing them with a soft cloth and a tiny amount of toothpaste. Wipe the paste off with a damp cloth, being careful not to get it into the cracks between the keys. Then buff with a dry cloth.

BONUS TIP ► *When a piano is not in use, close its top, but expose the keyboard to light. Ivory turns yellow if continuously kept from the light.*

Blemish-Free Furniture

Furniture polish tricks

- You won't have to polish as often if you dust your wood furniture regularly with a slightly dampened lint-free cloth containing a little furniture polish.
- Apply polish sparingly. The real secret to a good shine is more rubbing, not more polish.
- Avoid switching back and forth from a polish containing oil to one containing wax. Applying both kinds to the same surface can cause blotches or smudges.
- To remove wax buildup, wipe the surface with a soft cloth dampened with synthetic turpentine or mineral spirits. Or clean the area with liquid polish.

Water stains on wood

To remove a water stain from wood, lay a thick blotter over the spot and press it with a warm iron until the stain is gone. If that doesn't work, rub lemon oil into the area and let it set overnight. Wipe off the excess oil the following morning.

Alcohol stains

Left untreated, alcohol can dissolve wood finishes. Clean up spills from drinks, medicines, and cosmetics immediately. Then rub the spot with a cloth moistened with lemon oil. Treat a dried stain as you would light burns (see hint, facing page).

Ways to hide scratches

- Hide scratches on mahogany or dark cherry by rubbing them with a cotton swab dipped in iodine. For unshel-lacked maple and light cherry, dilute the iodine by 50 percent with denatured alcohol.
- To darken a scratch, rub it gently with the meat of a walnut. Rub the kernel of the nut directly into the scratch to avoid darkening the surrounding wood.

- For scratches in oiled finishes, rub in the direction of the grain with fine (0) steel wool and lightweight mineral oil or boiled linseed oil. Let the oil soak in; then wipe the area dry with a clean cloth.

Burns on wood

Here's how to remove a light burn from the surface of finished wood. Form a thin paste by mixing rottenstone or finely powdered pumice (available from woodworking suppliers) with linseed oil. Using a soft cloth, rub the paste with the grain. Repeat until the burn disappears.

Spilt milk

Because milk products can damage wood finishes, wipe up spills promptly. Rub stains with a damp cloth dipped in ammonia or with a finger dipped in silver polish or fine wet ashes. Then wipe with a dry cloth.

Removing glass rings

Forgot to protect your mahogany table with coasters? Rub glass rings with mayonnaise and white toothpaste. Wipe the area dry, then polish the entire surface.

Cleaning leather furniture

Time to clean your leather chair or sofa? First remove wax buildup with a mixture of 1/4 cup vinegar and 1/2 cup water. Then wash the piece with water and saddle soap, available at hardware stores and shoe shops. Rub briskly with a soft cloth to restore the shine.

Wicker furniture

Without adequate moisture, wicker cracks or splits. If a piece becomes brittle, put it in a tub and drench it with water. Keep wicker well away from a fireplace, stove, or radiator. Bring it indoors during freezing weather.

A Sparkling Bathroom

When to clean your bathroom

The best time for cleaning a bathroom is right after you take a shower, when steam has loosened all the dirt. Just wipe off the damp surfaces with a paper towel.

Speed floor cleaning

There's no need to fill the mop bucket just to clean the bathroom floor. Simply spray the floor with a spray disinfectant and wipe with a clean cloth or paper towels.

Spot-free tile walls

Wipe away soap spots or film on ceramic tile with a solution of water and water conditioner or use 1 part vinegar and 4 parts water. Rinse thoroughly with clean water. Then dry with a soft cloth and buff to prevent streaking.

Cleaning grout lines

Clean grungy tile grout with full-strength vinegar. For stained or mildewed grout, mix 3/4 cup of liquid chlorine bleach in 1 gallon of water and, wearing rubber gloves, apply the solution with a toothbrush; rinse well.

BONUS TIP ▶ *Try running a typewriter eraser over grout to make it come clean.*

Cleaning a fiberglass tub

Fiberglass tub tough to clean? Use a water conditioner, such as Calgon, or a commercial bathroom cleaner containing EDTA (ethylene diamine tetraacetate).

Removing nonskid decals

If you're tired of nonskid decals in your porcelain tub or shower, scrape them off with a straightedge razor blade (in a holder) dipped in soapy water. Remove adhesive residue with acetone or nail-polish remover.

Dull glass shower doors

If glass shower doors are dull and filmy, wipe them with a soft cloth saturated with distilled white vinegar or water softener solution; shine with a dry cloth.

Clogged showerhead

Mineral deposits frequently clog showerheads. To remedy this, unscrew the head, take the pieces apart, and soak them in a bowl of vinegar; brush out any stubborn sediment. Reassemble the showerhead and reattach.

Spots on your chrome?

Use a cloth moistened with vinegar to rub away hard-water spots and soap scum from chrome faucet handles and drains. Dry and polish with a soft cloth.

Washing plastic shower curtains

Machine-wash (gentle cycle) colorfast plastic shower curtains in warm water. Add water conditioner to remove soap curd. Hang to dry. If the curtains are mildewed, add 3/4 cup of chlorine bleach to wash cycle.

Removing tub and sink stains

Tub and sink stains come clean with a paste of cream of tartar and hydrogen peroxide. Spread it over the stain and scrub lightly with a brush. Let it dry; then rinse.

Ring around the toilet?

Undiluted chlorine bleach, allowed to stand just a few minutes, will frequently do just as good a job as commercial toilet-bowl cleaners.

BONUS TIP ▶ *To remove old mineral buildup in the toilet, sprinkle 1/2 cup of water softener around the bowl (above the waterline), immediately after flushing.*

An Immaculate Kitchen

Clean your cleaning tools!

Keep sponges, plastic scrubbers, and dish mops clean and fresh smelling: Every now and then, run them through a dishwasher load in the top rack.

Getting up old hardened food spills

Soak-and-dissolve is still the easiest way to loosen dried-on foods on the floor, table, and counters. But if you're the impatient type, a plastic windshield ice scraper is good for prying them off.

Cleaning a wood countertop

To keep a butcher block countertop clean and fresh, scrape off all waste after each use and rub it with salt or a baking soda paste every now and then.

BONUS TIP ► *To remove deep scratches on wood surfaces, sand with fine sandpaper and then reoil.*

Keeping a cutting board fresh smelling

After cutting onions or garlic on a wood surface, rub it with a slice of freshly cut lemon. Rinse and wipe dry.

A simple kitchen safety measure

Every few days—or immediately after cutting meat or poultry—wipe down your food preparation surfaces with hot soapy water to discourage bacteria. Rinse thoroughly and wipe dry.

Eliminating countertop stains

- Get rid of those pesky purple price marks that transfer from containers onto countertops. Rubbing alcohol quickly erases them.
- Rub countertop stains, such as mustard, tea, or fruit juice, with baking soda and a damp cloth or sponge. If

the stain persists, wipe it with a cloth moistened with a little chlorine bleach.

Removing sink stains

- To remove stains from a porcelain sink, fill it with lukewarm water, add a few ounces of chlorine bleach, and let stand for an hour or so.
- For stubborn stains, line the sink with paper towels saturated with chlorine bleach and let stand 8 to 10 hours. But don't use chlorine bleach on an old, porous, or cracked porcelain surface. The bleach can penetrate to the iron base and cause rusting.

Cleaning a steel sink

- Avoid abrasive cleansers when cleaning a stainless steel sink. Simply wash it with hot sudsy water. Dry it to remove finger marks and water spots.
- To give a stainless steel sink extra sparkle, clean and polish it occasionally with glass cleaner.
- Has your stainless steel sink become scratched or slightly pitted? Rub it gently with very fine steel wool, then buff to a sheen with a soft cloth.

Controlling drain odor

Keep a drain odor-free by running very hot tap water through it after each use. About once a week, throw in a handful of baking soda, followed by hot water. Or pour in 1 cup of vinegar, let it stand for 30 minutes, then run very hot water through the drain.

Avoiding drain clogs

It's easier to avoid a clogged drain than to clear one. Pour cooking grease into an empty can or a milk carton—never into the sink. The same applies to coffee grounds and other bits of garbage.

Spotless Kitchen Appliances

Removing rust on kitchen chrome

Here's a remarkably easy way to remove rust from kitchen chrome: Wrap aluminum foil around your finger, shiny side out, and rub the rust until it disappears. Then wipe the surface with a damp cloth.

BONUS TIP ▶ *You can give the chrome trim on your appliances a quick shine by using a soft cloth moistened with rubbing alcohol.*

Cleaning under appliances

- To clean under and behind an appliance, take your car's snow brush and whisk the dirt out in a flash. Make sure that you unplug the appliance before poking around behind it.
- To clean under an electric range that has a storage drawer at the bottom, remove the drawer to get at the floor easily. For a gas range with a broiler below the oven, remove the broiler drawer.

Cleaning oven racks

Clean oven racks by placing them on an old bath towel in the bathtub and soaking them in a solution of ammonia and hot water.

Easier broiler cleaning

To make cleaning your stove's broiler less of a chore, put a few cups of water in the bottom of the pan before you broil next time.

Cleaning your outdoor grill

Before your next cookout, clean the grill with a wire brush dipped in warm sudsy water or a baking soda solution. Rinse, dry, and coat the grill with cooking oil to keep food from sticking to it.

Keeping your microwave fresh smelling

Deodorize and clean your microwave every now and then. When the oven is turned off and cold, wash its inside surfaces with a solution of 4 tablespoons baking soda per 1 quart warm water.

Magic Marker on fridge door?

If your artistic youngster uses your refrigerator door as a canvas for his permanent marker, try a little lighter fluid to remove the artwork. Then wash the door with soap and water and rinse completely.

Cleaning your coffeemaker

If you use a drip coffee machine daily, clean it thoroughly at least once a month to keep your brew tasting fresh. Pour a solution of equal parts water and distilled vinegar into the water reservoir and run it through the brew cycle. Rinse your machine by running clean water through the cycle.

Easy blender cleaning

Here's an easy way to clean your blender: Partly fill it with a solution of warm water and hand-dishwashing detergent. Then cover and run it for a few seconds. Empty the blender, rinse, and air-dry.

Getting rid of toaster crumbs

If there are any sticky crumbs left after you've shaken the toaster, gently blow compressed air (available in cans in photography supply stores) inside the appliance.

Sweet-smelling garbage disposer

Eliminate odor from your garbage disposer by grinding cutup orange, grapefruit, or lemon rinds while flushing the disposer with hot water.

Sparkling Dishes and Pans

Getting off caked-on food

Remove eggs and other dried-on foods from dishes by soaking them in cold water. Or leave them overnight in a solution of dishwasher detergent and water; then lift off the food with a rubber scraper.

Restoring plastic ware

Ugly stains on your plastic dishes or utensils? Combine 3/4 cup chlorine bleach and 3/4 cup baking soda and let the mixture remain on the stained utensil for 5 minutes. Wash and rinse thoroughly.

Lighten that dark aluminum pot

To brighten darkened aluminum, cook an acidic substance, such as tomatoes, rhubarb, apples, or vinegar, in the pan. Try removing discoloration by boiling 2 tablespoons cream of tartar in 1 quart water in the pan.

Coffee and tea stains

To remove coffee and tea stains from ceramic pots, soak them in 2 tablespoons chlorine bleach per cup water. Or soak the stained cookware overnight in 2 tablespoons automatic dishwasher detergent in 1 pot warm water.

Stains on a nonstick pan

Remove stains from a pan with a nonstick surface by boiling a solution of 1 cup of water and 2 tablespoons of baking soda in it. Wipe the surface lightly with cooking oil or shortening before using again.

Freshening a vacuum bottle

Before filling a vacuum bottle that has absorbed beverage odors or that has been stored for a while, freshen it with 1 tablespoon of baking soda and warm water. Let stand 20 minutes, scrub out, rinse, and air-dry.

Fresh-as-Daisies Laundry

Washing time matters

Detergents can only hold soil in suspension for a limited time before finer particles that are much harder to remove settle on clothes. To avoid this, use wash periods of 10 to 12 minutes for cotton, 7 to 9 minutes for synthetics, and 3 to 4 minutes for delicate fabrics or wool.

Ring around the collar

To clean a stained collar, rub some heavy-duty liquid detergent into it with a toothbrush or a small, clean paintbrush. Then wash as usual.

BONUS TIP ► *When you pretreat spots with liquid detergent, it's easier to control the amount of detergent if you pour it from an old squeeze bottle.*

Homemade prewash

To make your own prewash, mix 1 teaspoon liquid detergent and 2 tablespoons household ammonia with 1 pint warm water; pour into a clean spray bottle. Apply to stains and let stand for 15 minutes. Then wash as usual.

Protect your washer

When you use prewash sprays, avoid getting them on the washer or dryer. Some of the ingredients can damage the plastic and painted finishes of your appliances.

Washing delicate items

- Want a soft, gentle soap for handwashing delicate items? Mix 1/4 cup soap flakes and 1/4 cup borax in a saucepan with 1 cup water. Simmer, while stirring, to uniform consistency, let cool, and strain into container.
- Protect small or delicate items that you can machine-wash by putting them in a pillowcase. Tie the pillowcase with a cord.

- For white silk and other delicate fabrics that require a very gentle bleach, mix 1 part of hydrogen peroxide to 8 parts of water. Immerse the garment in the solution for 5 to 30 minutes, as necessary. Rinse in clear water.
- Try washing delicate items by shaking them in a jar filled with warm, mild, soapy water.

Garment-washing tricks

- To help prevent tangling in the machine, button shirt and blouse sleeves to front buttons.
- Washing an item with a drawstring? Tie both ends together so that the drawstring won't slip out.
- Before washing a knitted, permanent-press, napped, quilted, or highly textured fabric, turn the garment inside out. This helps prevent wear, fading, or pilling.

Be careful how you add detergent

Don't dump detergent on top of clothes in the washer. This can cause dyes to fade. Instead, add the detergent as the washer fills; then add the clothing. With cold water, dissolve the detergent in some hot water first, and add it to the wash water before adding the clothing.

BONUS TIP ► *Always dilute fabric softener before adding it to the wash; otherwise it can cause greasy stains. To remove such stains, pretreat them with a paste of water and detergent or with a prewash stain remover.*

Gentler bleach

Liquid oxygen bleach is gentler than chlorine bleach, but it's slower acting. Always use it in warm or hot water.

BONUS TIP ► *If you have no liquid oxygen bleach, substitute hydrogen peroxide (antiseptic, not hair bleach), available in most drugstores.*

Washing an electric blanket

Before laundering a washable electric blanket, protect the plug: Tuck it into a blanket corner and pin it in place.

Laundering feather pillows

Wash feather pillows two at a time for a balanced load. Put them in pillow cases. Fill the washer with warm water and push the pillows in until soaked. Use the gentle cycle, and halfway through, turn the machine off and turn the pillows over. When they're done, put them in the dryer on *Low* with a clean sneaker for even drying.

BONUS TIP ► *If your feather pillow is getting flat, after washing it, shake the filling to one end, open the seam on the other end, and insert new feathers or down a bit at a time. Stitch the opening closed.*

Washing jeans

To soften new jeans, soak them for 12 hours in a small tub filled with cold water and plenty of fabric softener. Then wash them, turned inside out to prevent streaking.

Dirty buttons

If cloth-covered buttons are still dirty after laundering, brush them with liquid detergent and a soft toothbrush.

Too many suds?

If your washer has an excess of suds, get rid of them by sprinkling them with table salt from a shaker. Next time use less detergent or use a low-suds product.

Giving your washer a wash

To remove detergent scum from your washer and hoses, fill it with warm water, add 1 gallon of white vinegar, and run the solution through an entire cycle.

Get rid of persistent B.O.

If perspiration odor remains after laundering, try this: Sponge the area with a mixture of 1 teaspoon white vinegar and 1 cup water, then rinse. If the odor persists, work a paste of enzyme or other presoak product into the area, keep it moist for 20 minutes, then rinse well.

BONUS TIP ► *Had a close encounter with a skunk? Don't bury your clothes; soak them for several hours in a 1/2 cup baking soda and 1 gallon water before washing.*

Recycle fabric-softener sheets!

Use fabric-softener sheets twice, then store them in a jar with liquid softener. When drying clothes, pull out a sheet, squeeze out the solution, and toss it in the dryer.

The right way to hand-wash

To hand-wash articles, pretreat spots and stains. Dissolve detergent in water before adding laundry. Now, here's the way to not damaging the clothes: Let the items soak for 15 minutes. Then swish them through the solution rather than twisting and wringing them. Rinse at least twice with cool water.

BONUS TIP ► *Soak items in a small, plastic bucket that can be removed easily if someone needs to use the sink.*

Washing a wool sweater

Lay the sweater on a sheet of clean paper and trace its outline. After washing and rolling the sweater in a towel to absorb most of the moisture, lay it on the paper and gently stretch it to fit the outline. Then lay it flat to dry.

BONUS TIP ► *Make sweaters soft by adding a capful of cream hair rinse to the rinse water.*

Quick Tricks with Stains

Neat reminder

To remind yourself that a garment is stained and needs pretreating, tie a loose knot in its sleeve or leg before tossing it into the hamper. Remember, though, that the longer a stain remains, the more difficult it is to remove.

Substitute spot remover

When no spot remover is available, try using automatic dishwashing detergent. Apply a paste of it with an old toothbrush, then rinse thoroughly.

Disguising a stain

All dressed and ready to go when you find a spot on your white garment? Rub in some baby powder to mask it.

Dab it off immediately

If you spill something on your clothes while eating out, dip a clean, white cloth napkin or handkerchief into a glass of club soda and sponge off the spot.

Red-wine stains

To remove a wet red-wine stain, quickly sprinkle salt on it. Then put the item in cold water and try to rub out the stain before washing the fabric.

Ball-point on silk

Use hair spray to remove ballpoint-ink stains. But on silk or acetate, test spray a hidden area for bleeding dye. Afterwards, flush with water to remove the hair spray; then wash or dry-clean the garment.

On-the-road stain treatment

If you need to pretreat greasy or oily stains while traveling, try using a clear gel or liquid shampoo that doesn't contain oxides.

Removing Common Stains

These instructions are for removing stains on washable fabrics. Take nonwashable fabrics to a dry cleaner.

TYPE OF STAIN

DYES: Beets, bluing, carrots, cherries, color bleeding, felt-tip pens, grass, green vegetables, mustard, soft drinks containing food dye, tempera paint

OILS: Automotive oil, bacon fat, body oil, butter, cooking oil, face cream, grease, hair lotion, hand lotion, lard, margarine, mayonnaise, ointment colorless salad dressing, suntan lotion

PROTEINS: Baby formula, baby food, blood, cheese sauce, cream, egg, feces, gelatin, ice cream, milk, mud, mucus, pudding, school paste, urine, vomit

TANNINS: Alcoholic beverages, beer, berries, coffee, cola drinks, fruit juices, preserves, jellies, soft drinks without dye, tea, tomato juice, washable ink, wine

MILDEW: WARNING: Mildew causes permanent damage. Avoid storing clothes in damp, dark, warm places.

HOW TO REMOVE

Rub liquid detergent gently into stain. Rinse thoroughly. Soak in solution of all-fabric powdered bleach and water. If stain remains, try liquid chlorine bleach solution, if safe for fabric. Wash normally.

Rub heavy-duty liquid detergent gently into stain. Rinse thoroughly. Wash in hot water.

DON'T use hot water (it sets stain). Soak and rub in cold water. Wash in warm water. If stain is old, treat with detergent or enzyme presoak.

DON'T use soap bars or flakes (they set stain). Wash normally, using detergent. If you can't wash immediately, blot up as much stain as possible. Sponge with water. Wipe with dry cloth.

Shake or brush garment outdoors. Pretreat darkest stains with heavy-duty liquid detergent. Wash in hot water with heavy-duty detergent and bleach.

TYPE OF STAIN

COMBINATION STAINS (oil and dye; wax and dye):

Group A: Ballpoint pen ink, candle wax, crayon, eye makeup, floor wax, furniture polish, lipstick, pine resin, shoe polish, tar

Group B: Barbecue sauce, ketchup, chocolate, cocoa, face makeup, gravy, hair spray, salad dressing containing food dye, tomato sauce

CHEWING GUM

COFFEE OR TEA (with cream or milk):

PAINT, ALKYD (oil base): WARNING: If paint has dried, removal may be impossible.

PAINT, LATEX (water base): WARNING: If paint has dried, removal may be impossible.

HOW TO REMOVE

To remove oily or waxy part of stain, spray or sponge with dry-cleaning solvent, then rub gently with heavy-duty liquid detergent. Treat dye part with solution of 1 tablespoon chlorine bleach in 1/4 cup water, if safe for fabric. Wash normally.

To remove oily or waxy part of stain, rub gently with heavy-duty liquid detergent. Treat dye part with bleach solution (see above), if safe. Wash normally.

Apply ice to harden gum. Scrape off excess. Rub heavy-duty liquid detergent into stain. Rinse with hot water. Wash normally.

Soak in cold water. Wash normally, using detergent, not soap.

Treat while wet. Rub paint thinner into stain until paint is softened. Wash, using heavy-duty detergent.

Treat while wet. Soak in cold water. Wash in cool water with heavy-duty detergent. If paint has been allowed to dry 6 or more hours, follow instructions for Combination stains, Group A. Wash in hot water, rinse; repeat treatment.

TYPE OF STAIN	HOW TO REMOVE
DEODORANT	Apply heavy-duty liquid detergent. Wash in warm water. (Buildup of aluminum or zinc salts may be hard to remove.)
PRESPIRATION	Apply heavy-duty liquid detergent or soak in warm water with presoak product 15 to 30 minutes. Wash.
RUST	Use a commercial rust remover. WARNING: Rust removers are highly toxic and can damage the finish on appliances. Wear rubber gloves, and rinse garment before washing. Do not use on metallic or glass fabrics.
SCORCH: WARNING: Scorched fabrics may be weakened, and stain-removal treatment may cause further damage	If fabric is thick and fuzzy, brush to remove charring. Gently rub heavy-duty liquid detergent (if fabric is delicate, use mild detergent) into stain. If stain remains, use all-fabric bleach. Wash normally.
LEAD PENCIL	Use art-gum eraser to lift off excess, but avoid hard rubbing. Spray with prewash aerosol product, rub with heavy-duty liquid detergent, and rinse in warm water. Wash normally.

NOTE: Because of dyes, invisible finishes, or previous stain treatments, these methods may not work perfectly or completely.

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