

Our 50 Best Tips to Make Your Home Super Clean

We've got a trick for every corner of your home.



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Make an all-purpose cleaner.

Here's the cleaner recipe that will make nearly every surface gleam (especially kitchen counters, appliances, and inside the refrigerator). Combine 4 tablespoons baking soda and 1 quart warm water, and use it with a sponge to wipe messes away. **What you'll need:** baking soda, reusable spray bottle, sponge

Solve smelly sneakers.

Freshen up after your Zumba class by sprinkling some baking soda inside your shoes (and your gym bag while you're at it). Just tap it out before you wear them again.

Banish marks from coloring time.

Toothpaste will erase marker stains from wood — a handy trick to have in your back pocket if you've got creative kids.

De-stink the garbage disposal.

Run a few lemon rinds through the disposal and follow with cold water to dispel any sour odors.

Freshen stuffed animals.

In between baths (through the washing machine, of course), groom your kids' plush pals by giving them a quick once-over with a lint roller. **What you'll need:** lint roller.

Wipe out wall doodles.

When your child's artistic efforts end up all over your new paint job, scrub lightly with a damp sponge sprinkled in baking soda. **What you'll need:** baking soda, sponge

De-funk hairbrushes and combs.

Combat build-up from hair products with a sudsy solution of a few drops of dish soap mixed with warm water. **What you'll need:** dish soap

Fight pet stink.

Deodorize the soft, cushy places around your house — including the dog bed — by sprinkling surfaces with baking soda. Let it sit for 15 minutes, and then vacuum it up.

Put a tidy bathroom on autopilot.

Shed expired and unused items as well as bulky packaging. Instead, store products in easy-in-and-out jars, bags, and baskets.

Clear a slow drain.

When you notice your drain is starting to clog, a 1/2 cup of baking soda down it, followed by a 1/2 cup of vinegar. Cover with a wet cloth to contain the science fair-like effects. Wait five minutes and then flush with hot water.

Clean the car without a vacuum.

A lint roller is a welcome, less hefty solution, and can fit in nooks and crannies where your vacuum attachments can't reach. **What you'll need:** lint roller

Make sneakers bright again.

Get your tennis shoes to their just-out-of-the-box state by scrubbing with toothpaste. **What you'll need:** toothpaste

Untangle a knotted necklace.

Never waste time desperately tugging at tangled jewelry again. Loosen the knot with a little baby powder and use a pin to pull it apart. **What you'll need:** baby powder

Soften fuzzy towels.

If you've got hard water, mineral buildup could be the cause of your scratchy towels. To lift deposits, wash the towels in the hottest water possible, and add 1 cup of ammonia and nothing else. **What you'll need:** ammonia

Be smart about denim.

Not everything you wear gets dirty after you've worn it once. Jeans can be worn several times before they need a cleaning.

Get stains out of a cutting board.

Run the cut side of a lemon over the board to remove food stains and smells. For extra cleaning power, sprinkle it with salt or baking soda first. **What you'll need:** lemon, salt, baking soda

Remove towel mildew.

Is that wet towel you left in your gym bag speckled? First, take it outside, brush off the spores, and sun-dry the item for about three hours. Then,

pre-soak with a bleach and water solution (check the care tag to be sure it's safe), and machine wash. **What you'll need:** bleach

Shine silver in a pinch.

Notice your favorite ring or bracelet looking a bit dull? Wet it, rub with a little toothpaste, rinse, and dry with a clean cloth. **What you'll need:** toothpaste

De-grime patio furniture.

Add a squirt of dish detergent to a bowl of warm water, and use it to wipe down your outdoor tables and chairs. Then, rinse clean with the garden hose.

What you'll need: dish soap

Add shine with vinegar.

Use white vinegar to brighten your windows. Mix 2 tablespoons of white vinegar with a gallon of water, and dispense into a used spray bottle.

Squirt on and wipe away with a clean microfiber cloth (not paper towels, which can cause streaking). **What you'll need:** vinegar, reusable spray bottle

Erase greasy stains on clothes.

Spot salad dressing on your shirt? Rub a little dish detergent into the stain and rinse with water. The soap is gentle enough for spot-treating most fabrics — even washable wool and silk.

Get rid of sweat stains.

If you want to keep your whites truly white rub full-strength liquid enzyme detergent on the underarm area and let sit 15 minutes. Then separate whites from colors and wash with a full dose of bleach-alternative detergent (for whitening) in the hottest water possible.

Make an earthy-smelling cleaner.

Infuse a homemade vinegar solution with sage. **What you'll need:** fresh sage, reusable spray bottle, vinegar

Or try citrus.

Add a sweet scent by putting orange peels in a vinegar solution.

De-grease cabinets.

Just like your cooking tools, cupboards can get greasy when you're making dinner. Add a little dish soap to a spray bottle with warm water to mist away the grime. Then, rinse with a well-wrung cloth and dry.

Shine copper with ketchup.

Yes, ketchup (as in the french-fry sidekick). A little can make copper pots gleam again. **What you'll need:** ketchup

Nix furniture nicks.

Got a scuff or a scratch on your wood furniture? Rub it with a walnut (shell removed) to mask the damage.

Clean porcelain with vodka.

It's easy to get porcelain fixtures shining. Just moisten a soft, clean cloth with vodka, then apply a little elbow grease.

Mark your calendar for bedding cleaning.

You only need to clean pillows and comforters two or three times a year. An easy reminder: Wash them when the seasons change.

Skip bar soap at the sink.

Keep your bathroom cleaner longer by using a liquid soap with a pump or a even hands-free soap dispenser instead. Eliminating the grimy soap dish will help your sink and countertop stay goop-free.

Freshen your microwave.

Make the interior easier to wipe down by heating a cup of water and a chopped-up lemon on high until the microwave's window is steamy. Let the bowl sit for 15 minutes before you open the door, and clean away any grime with ease.

Scoop up pet hair with a rubber glove.

After you're through washing dishes, don't remove your damp gloves. Take a detour through the living room and quickly pick up errant fur. **What you'll need:** rubber gloves

Wipe down your purse.

It's kind of remarkable how some things we touch daily, we rarely clean — your purse is another one of those. About half all women's bags have fecal bacteria on them, so give it a swipe with a disinfectant wipe. **What you'll need:** disinfectant wipes

Wait before you tackle mud

Dry dirt is easier to remove than sticky mud, so don't bother cleaning until the footprints get crusty. Then just open the back door and sweep it all out. Blot lingering spots with a water and a little dish soap. **What you'll need:** dish soap

Make faucets gleam.

Rub a bit of toothpaste over your bathroom fixtures with a wet sponge to get gunk off chrome. **What you'll need:** toothpaste

Fight musty smells.

Just like in the fridge, an open box of baking soda placed near your sheets and towels can prevent a dank linen closet. **What you'll need:** baking soda

Hang towels the right way.

To keep towels from getting musty in between showers, hang them where they can air-dry thoroughly. A hook is fine, but a towel bar is better.

Fill your dishwasher with everything.

Plastic toys, toothbrush holders, and pet dishes are just a few of the items you can toss in this handy machine.

Lift the worst carpet stains.

It's dish liquid to the rescue. Dissolve one tablespoon of dish liquid into two cups of warm water, and blot the stain with a clean white cloth dipped into the solution. Repeat until the stain absorbs into the cloth and disappears from the carpet. Then sponge with cold water, and blot dry with a clean cloth. **What you'll need:** dish soap

Silence squeaky floors.

Noise pollution is a real thing, people. Pour baby powder onto your wooden floor and sweep it into the cracks to quiet creaking floorboards. Wipe away the excess, and enjoy the sounds of silence. **What you'll need:** baby powder

Un-gunk wooden counters.

The coarse texture of table salt can erase stains from butcher-block countertop — and helps release stuck-on food from your cast-iron skillet too. **What you'll need:** salt

Fake tidiness quickly.

Pile magazines or books into neat stacks on the end tables and gather stray remotes in one place. Then, plump up throw pillows and flip chair cushions.

Remove coffee stains from mugs.

When your morning cup leaves a stubborn unsightly ring, use a little toothpaste to clean it off. **What you'll need:** toothpaste

Make a "right away" laundry bin.

Don't get stuck with a dirty soccer uniform or ballet costume the day your kid needs it. Add an extra "priority" basket to your routine and never be empty-handed again.

Iron clothes when they're damp.

The moisture helps release wrinkles, so press your peskiest pieces right out of the dryer (or use the spray feature on your iron).

Make your shower sparkle.

To clean grimy grout, mix 3/4 cup household chlorine bleach with 1 gallon water and use a stiff brush to apply to one small area at a time. Let it sit for several minutes, then scrub and rinse.

Shine up plants with mayo

Take a tip from professional florists: Clean dusty potted plants with some mild soap and water, then use a paper towel to rub a drop of mayo into the tops of leaves, to shine them up.

Remove pills from sweaters.

Textured scrub sponges make quick work of tidying up a worn sweater. Gently run it across the garment to banish fuzz. **What you'll need:** scrub sponge

Make a mirror gleam.

Since coffee filters are lint-free, you can swap them out for paper towels to give mirrors a no-streak shine. **What you'll need:** coffee filters

Zap oven spills

After gently chipping off any loose pieces from your range, liberally spritz burnt-on food with ammonia from a spray bottle. Then sprinkle some baking soda and add just a few drops of white vinegar. Let it bubble for a minute or two, then whisk away the grime with a scrub sponge. **What you'll need:** ammonia, baking soda, vinegar, reusable spray bottle

How to Get Coffee Stains Out of Absolutely Everything

Don't let an innocent mistake ruin your clothing, furniture, or carpet.

What You'll Need:

- Tide To-Go Instant Stain Remover Pen (3 Count)
- Mr. Clean Magic Eraser Cleaning Pads (8 Count)
- Tide Coldwater Laundry Detergent (2 Count)
- Spray 'n Wash Pre-Treat Stain Stick (3 Ounces)
- Heinz White Vinegar (64 Ounces)
- Dawn Ultra Dishwashing Liquid (2 Count)
- Clorox Regular Liquid Bleach (30 Ounces)
- White Microfiber Cleaning Cloths (12 Count)

Mugs

If you've ever left your mug in the sink for a couple days, you know the struggle that is a stained ceramic cup. All you need is a Good Housekeeping Seal holder Mr. Clean Magic Eraser to wipe off marks. Or, if you don't have one on hand, sprinkle some baking soda on top of your dish soap to add an extra oomph of abrasion and clean as usual.

Clothing

Sponge the stain with cool water or soak the garment in cool water for 30 minutes. Use a GH Seal holder Tide To Go Stain Pen to remove as much of the stain as possible, then pretreat with a prewash stain remover, like Resolve Stain Stick and launder as usual.

Upholstery

Mix one tablespoon of liquid dish soap with two cups of cool water. Using a clean, white cloth, sponge the stain with the mixture. Repeat until the stain disappears, then sponge once more with cold water and blot dry. You can also try sponging the stain with dry-cleaning solvent. Blot until the solvent is absorbed and repeat until the stain disappears.

Carpet

Blot up as much of the coffee as you can. Then, mix one tablespoon of liquid dish soap, one tablespoon of white vinegar and two cups of warm water. Using a clean, white cloth, sponge the stain with the mixture. Apply a little bit at a time, blotting frequently with a dry cloth until the stain disappears. Finally, sponge with cold water and blot dry.

8 Other Things Your Washing Machine Can Clean

The fastest way to refresh these items is to throw them in the washer.

On the days you just can't hand wash or spot clean another thing, remember that you have a major time-saving machine in your house. Lots of things, like these eight items, can be tossed in the washer. Just be sure to check any care tags or manufacturer guidelines first.

1. Stuffed animals

If your child's favorite teddy bear looks like he's been mud wrestling, give him a bath in the washing machine on a gentle cycle. Secure any loose strings, remove any "clothing," and place the toy in a mesh bag or pillowcase for added protection. Don't forget to check the care tag (it he has one). Certain furs might not be washable, and the same goes for a toy stuffed with small foam balls, like Beanie Babies.

2. Sneakers

Wash canvas or nylon tennis shoes (like Keds — avoid putting leather or athletic shoes in the washing machine) in cold water to prevent any warping, and throw in an old towel to prevent them from knocking around too much in the machine. Remove the insoles and laces if you can, and wash those separately.

3. Pillows

Good news: If your pillows are down or fiberfill, you can clean them in the washing machine. Use a gentle cycle with warm water, but always read the care label first.

4. Backpacks or lunch bags

Although you might not think to check, some backpacks can be washed in a front-loading washing machine (and throw in your soccer star's stinky shin guards, too). Turn the bag inside out and remove metal parts, if you can, and know that any bejeweled elements or decals might not withstand the spinning. Place the bag in a pillowcase to protect it, and wash on a gentle cycle.

5. Rubber-backed rugs

These no-skid mats get a lot of foot traffic, and can quickly become dirty instead of decorative. If your rug is made of cotton or synthetic fibers, you can throw it in the washing machine along with bath towels. Wash in cold water on the gentle cycle, and don't clean them too often: The rubber backing can't withstand weekly trips to the laundry room.

6. Curtains

Save yourself the chore of hand washing as you refresh your windows. Unless your curtains are made of a delicate material, they can likely be washed on a slow-spin cycle in cool water.

7. Chair pads

Bring your patio furniture out of hibernation. Wash one chair pad at a time, use the gentle cycle, and make sure your machine has enough space — if you're forcing the pads to fit inside (they may not fit if your machine has an agitator), to wash them by hand instead.

8. Car mats

After months of carpooling, your mats need a thorough cleaning. Pretreat them with a stain remover, like Shout Advanced Gel, and wash them with your normal detergent.

How to Clean Pillows the Right Way

If it's been more than six months, it's time to give them a bath.

What You'll Need

Gain Original Detergent
Nellie's Dryer Balls
Microfiber Cleaning Cloth

Down and Fiberfill

Good news: You can toss these pillows in your washer. We recommend laundering two at a time, to keep the washer balanced, and using a front- or top-loading machine without an agitator — a.k.a. the large spindle found in the middle of some machines, designed to help rotate water and clothes. If an agitator-style top loader is your only option, place the pillows in the tub vertically, so it's less likely they'll get wrapped around and damaged by the agitator.

If your pillow has a care label, read it and follow the directions. If it doesn't, or you clipped off the tag, use warm water and opt for the gentle cycle, then add on an extra cold-water rinse and spin cycle. Tumble the pillows dry on low heat, fluffing and turning them often. "In the [Good Housekeeping Institute](#), we toss in a few rubber dryer balls, like **Nellie's** (\$14 for two, [amazon.com](#)), to help plump the filling and keep it from clumping as it dries,"

Feather

This is another machine-friendly filler — just make sure there are no slits or tears in the pillow cover. For balance, load two pillows at a time and use only a small amount of detergent. We recommend Good Housekeeping Seal holder **Gain Liquid Detergent** (\$10, [amazon.com](#)). Set the machine on the delicate cycle and give the pillows a second rinse.

For drying, place them in the machine with several clean tennis balls, which will aid in the fluffing process. It's also a good idea to take them out periodically and fluff by hand, using your fingers to break up any clumps. Pillows will take longer to dry than a normal load of clothes. If they have a musty smell, set them in the sun for a couple of hours.

Foam

Unfortunately, you can't put these pillows in the washing machine, but if there's a removable cover, you can wash that according to the care instructions on the tag. To remove dust from a foam pillow, vacuum both sides with the upholstery tool. If possible, dial down the suction level to make the job a bit easier to do.

Another option: Tumble the pillow in the dryer on the no-heat or air-only cycle for 20 minutes. Spot clean any soiled areas with a cloth dipped in a mild sudsy soap solution. Rinse with a damp cloth. Allow the pillow to air dry completely before putting it back on the bed. Some foam pillows include instructions for hand washing. If you choose to follow them, be very gentle. Wet foam is heavy and tears easily.

When to Replace Your Pillows

No matter how diligent you are about cleaning your pillows, you'll need to buy new ones eventually. But how do you know when it's time to toss? "If you fold the pillow in half, and it doesn't spring back into shape, plan for a shopping trip," says Forte. To help pillows stay cleaner for longer, use liners under your pillowcases and wash them monthly.

Compliments of Good Housekeeping