



E-BOOK

CLEANING FOR BEGINNERS

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR
YOUR FIRST TIME LIVING ON
YOUR OWN

Editing information, logos etc.





INDEX OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	p. 1
GENERAL TIPS	p. 2
THE BATHROOM	p. 4
FLOORS	p. 11
THE TRASH	p. 14
THE KITCHEN	p. 15
• The fridge	p. 17
• The freezer	p. 18
• Food storage	p. 20
• Common groceries	p. 21
• The laundry	p. 22
THE BEDROOM	p. 24
WINDOWS	p. 28
OTHER COMMON SPACES	p. 30
BALCONIES	p. 32
UNWANTED GUESTS	p. 37
• Bedbugs	p. 38
• Ants	p. 42
• Cockroaches	p. 44
CONCLUSION	p. 46

INTRODUCTION

So, you moved out! Congratulations! It's always nice to be able to say that a house is "my place". The thing is, however, that with great freedom comes great responsibility. When it comes to having your own place, that means taking care of it, keeping it clean and tidy (or at least decent, just enough not to feel shame when you have an unexpected visit). And, since it is very probable that you do not actually own the place, and you do not live there alone, it also means managing the house chores by splitting common tasks and costs. This book is about how to do all that.

First things first: please, know that living with other people and taking care of a house means being especially aware of the importance of **respecting each other** and **communicating needs** in an effective way. That means that people who live in the same house must come to an agreement on how to manage its running: different people have different habits, and if you live together it is essential that you decide together what's the best way to do it. Don't assume, ask questions and make observations. This is the only general rule: **find a system** that works for all of the people who live together **and stick to it**.

The rest is easy: you just have to get the **right information** on how to clean things and make domestic devices last as long as possible. This guide will make it even easier. You will find tips on what **products** to use and **how to** clean the house in an **eco-friendly** way: protecting the environment should be important for us all, but especially for young people.

Let's begin with some general tips.

GENERAL TIPS

Clean **top – down right-left** (S pattern), not in a circular shape: it's definitely more efficient, because you don't pass a dirty cloth on an area you just cleaned. In a wider sense, dust tends to fall, so **never start** cleaning a room by sweeping and mopping the **floor**. First, the cupboards/shelves, then counters/tables, then chairs/couches and finally the floor. When you mop the floor, start from the farthest corner of the room and work your way towards the entrance, also following an S pattern.



Whenever you are **setting up** to clean a room, just make sure you have **all the products** you are going to need: you are going to save a lot of time if you are not constantly going from one room to the other looking for a sponge, or a cloth, or a pair of gloves. This is especially important when you mop the floor: **don't leave things** you might need on a table or a counter that you are not going to be able to reach before the floor gets dry.



Especially in the bathroom, you can make sure that your cleaning will last longer by **drying** everything with a **microfiber cloth** after you wash it. It can be really useful.



Let the products **sink/set**: don't just pass them and wipe them away with water, let them do their job! This is especially important when you use corrosive products.



Move things around: dirt piles up under the furniture and electric equipment. When you sweep/mop the floor, try and free as much space as possible by **moving the furniture** (including couches) at least twice a month.



To get rid of limestone, soak paper towels in **vinegar**, and put them on the faucet. You can also use vinegar to unclog shower-heads (just put some in a plastic bag with an equal amount of water, put it on the showerhead and let it sink overnight).



Wash **shower/bathtubs curtains** regularly to prevent them from piling up **mold**. Don't forget to **wash towels** and/or bathmats at least once per week (if you are the only one using them: if you are sharing them of course do it more often).



Soak a piece of cotton coil in **bleach** and let it sit overnight on the **moldy edges** of bathtubs/showers to clean them.



Use fresh **lemon juice to get rid of** rust **stains** on sink areas (remember to let it do its work, you don't need to scrub a lot). Just dip half a lemon in salt and pass it on the stain.



Bleach the **grout** between the tiles (in the bathroom, kitchen or anywhere else) using a **clinging gel**, by filling the grout lines with it and waiting for 10-15 minutes, then scrubbing them with a toothbrush, letting it sit for another 5 minutes, and mopping with just water to wash the cleaner away.



If you have them, **dust the blinds regularly** (at least twice per month) with a microfiber cloth.



For a deep cleaning of **stove burners**, put them in a bag of **ammonia** overnight.





BATHROOM

HOW TO TAKE CARE OF THE
CLEANEST SPOT IN THE HOUSE





Keeping the bathroom/s clean must always be a priority, especially if more than 2/3 people are sharing the same toilet/sink/shower/bathtub. Also - depending on the "level of usage" – the need to clean it can vary a lot, so there is **no fixed cleaning frequency**. There are minimum standards, though (see below).

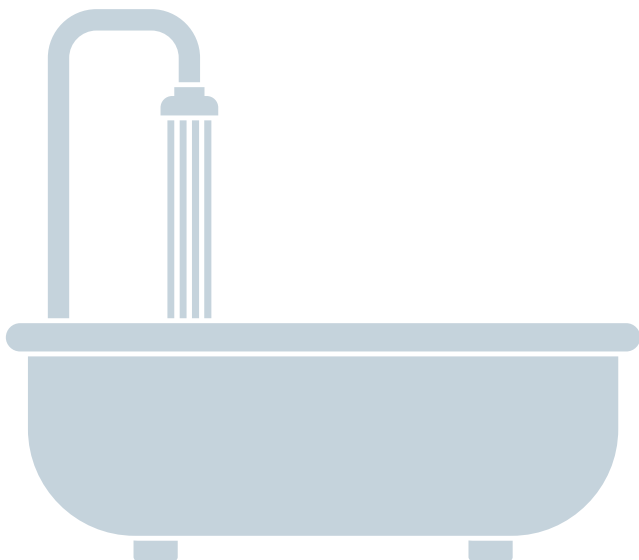


Essential products:

- 1 pair of good gloves (preferably rubber, not monouse, and not the same that are used to clean other rooms)
- 1 sponge for the WC
- 1 sponge or microfiber cloth for sink/s, shower/s, bathtub/s, bidet/s, shelves/cupboards, mirror/s and tiles
- 1 dry microfiber cloth
- 1 generic degreasing and disinfectant gel or spray product for sink/s, shower/s, bathtub/s, bidet/s, shelves/cupboards and tiles
- 1 specific cleaning product for glass (mirrors/showers/windows)(preferably)
- 1 specific toilet gel

Procedures:

- Clean the toilets thoroughly at least 1-2 times per week (that means **all parts** of the toilet, not just the most visible ones). Remember that the more frequently you scrub the toilets, the easier and quicker the scrubbing will be. Use a specific gel, a sponge exclusively for the toilet.
- In countries where wipes cannot be thrown into the toilets, there's always a bin next to them. This means that it's very important to **change the toilet bins** at any time necessary.
- For the same reason, remember to **clean the bins and the toilet brush boxes** and pour out any water weekly to prevent bad smells.
- Clean the sinks, taps, the shower/bathtubs, the tiles around them and the shelves at least **1-2 times per week**, using a generic degreasing and disinfectant gel or spray product and a sponge or a wet microfiber cloth. Mirrors should be cleaned with the same frequency, using a specific product for glass. If the shower has a glass door, you can use the same product on it.
- If there is common soap and a common towel for handwashing, make sure that there is soap for each sink and that the common towel is clean (of course, change it if it's not).
- The bathroom's **floor** tends to be the most humid floor in the house, and even in the cleanest houses, it's inevitable that some hair will be on it: since dirt accumulates very easily and quickly, sweep/mop it at any time necessary. For more details on products to be used, see the "Floor" section.



Tips for the bathroom:

There are tons of “green” bathroom cleaners on the market, but most of the time it’s cheaper and just as effective to **make your own**. Armed with a few simple non-toxic and biodegradable ingredients, you can keep your bathroom fresh and sparkling.

Products

- Baking soda – cleans, deodorizes, scours
- Borax – cleans, deodorizes, disinfects
- Castile soap or vegetable oil-based liquid soap – cleans
- Distilled white vinegar – cuts grease and soap scum, dissolves mineral deposits, inhibits mold, freshens; reportedly kills 99% of bacteria, 82% of mold, and 80% of viruses
- Essential oils – freshen, disinfect
- Kosher salt – scours, disinfects



Tools

- Measuring cups and spoons
- Jars
- Spray bottles



Instructions

• TUB AND TILE CLEANER:

In a jar or spray bottle, combine 1 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup baking soda with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup vegetable oil-based liquid soap. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water and 2 tablespoons vinegar. Shake before using. Apply with a cloth or sponge and rinse well.

• SCOURING POWDER:

Combine 1 cup baking soda, 1 cup borax, and 1 cup kosher salt in a jar. Sprinkle on area to be cleaned, wipe with a sponge, and rinse.

• TOILET BOWL CLEANER:

Mix $\frac{1}{4}$ cup borax or baking soda and 1 cup vinegar in the toilet. Let it sit for 15 minutes (or longer, if necessary), scrub, and flush.



- **DRAIN CLEANER:**

Pour 1/2 cup baking soda into drain followed by 1 cup vinegar. Let it sit and fizz for 15 minutes, then rinse with hot or boiling water. May need to repeat or leave baking soda and vinegar in overnight.

- **GLASS CLEANER:**

Combine 1/4 cup vinegar and 4 cups warm water in a spray bottle. Use to clean glass or mirrors with a dry cloth or piece of newspaper.

- **FLOOR SANITIZER:**

In a bucket, mix 1/2 cup borax with 2 gallons hot water. Apply with a mop or sponge. Rinsing is not necessary.



- **SOAP SCUM REMOVER:**

Sprinkle on baking soda, scrub with a cloth or sponge, and rinse. Vinegar or kosher salt also work.

- **CALCIUM OR LIME REMOVER:**

For calcium or lime deposits on a chrome faucet, soak a towel in vinegar and wrap it around the faucet. Let it sit for a couple of hours or overnight.

- **MOLD OR MILDEW REMOVER:**

Mix 1/2 cup borax and 1/2 cup vinegar to make a paste. Scrub with a brush or sponge and rinse with water. For tough mold, let it sit for an hour before rinsing with water.

Additional Tips:

- Add a few drops of **essential oil** for fragrance and/or cleaning power. Eucalyptus, lavender, lemon, tea tree, and thyme are among the essential oils considered to be antiseptic and antibacterial.
- Using a label or permanent marker, write **recipes** directly **on jars and bottles**.

FLOOR & TRASH



THE BASICS OF A DECENT HOME



FLOORS

Especially in big houses with a lot of windows and doors and a lot of people living in them, keeping the floors clean can be a nightmare. Also, in most rented houses whose tenants don't stay for long, there's no proper vacuum cleaner, which makes the task even more challenging.

Essential products:

- 1 Vacuum cleaner/broom
- Mopping cloth and bucket
- 1 specific product for floors, varying depending on the type of floor.





Procedures

General:

- If there are more than $\frac{3}{4}$ people sharing the house, **sweep** the floor **every day** in the kitchen, the living room or any other common spaces. In your own room, sweep it at least once or twice per week.
- **Mop** all of the floors in the common spaces at least **2-3 times per week**. Do it more often if necessary. In your own room, do it at least once per week.
- Remember to **clean the mop and the broom** after using them, and to change the vacuum cleaner's dust-collecting bag when it's full. if you have a vacuum cleaner, you can use the pipe to clean the broom: you just have to gently pass the tube over the bristles. It's a quick and efficient way to remove the hair that gets stuck. In general, put on a glove, take everything you can off the bristles and throw it in the garbage.



Specific to the type of floor:

Wooden floors: First dust with a microfiber cloth mop, then spray on a mild, water-based cleaner specific for wood floors and mop with a dry cloth. Remember that water is wood's worst enemy, so pay attention to the dosage and work one small area at a time: **do not let the water sit.**



Laminates: Vacuum or sweep dirt, then use a mop dampened with a mild cleaner-and-water solution. Wipe away lingering moisture **with a dry cloth mop.**



Linoleum: Mop regularly with a multisurface cleaner. **To maintain shine, wax every two to six months.** Apply two coats, waiting for the first to dry before adding the second, then buff with a soft cloth mop.



Ceramic tiles: Mop with warm water and tile cleaner, then **use a dry cloth to absorb water** that collects in grout lines.



TRASH



Another very common problem for young people sharing houses is the piling up of garbage. **Designating someone to take it out** is more important than it looks, because relying on everyone's common sense is just not effective: young people are busy, they go in and out of the house very often and don't always notice if a trash bag needs changing. Also, all of us should be sensitive about protecting the environment and **recycling** as much as possible. There are many ways to recycle: just make sure to know how it's done in your living area and what are your legal responsibilities as a tenant.

Essential products:

- Plastic bags (size varies according to needs), better if re-used and/or biodegradable. For practical reasons, it's a good habit to have them in different colors, according to the content.
- Generic disinfectant product (spray or liquid) and a cloth to clean the bins.



Procedure:

- When you throw bottles/boxes and other **voluminous envelopes**, fold or smash them, so they will take less space and spare you an extra trip. Pizza boxes, for example, can be unfolded and rolled.



By the way, the dirty/oily parts of pizza boxes should **NOT** be mixed with paper destined to recycling!

- Take the bins out when full (**avoid overloads** as much as possible, especially in spring/summer and especially when there is a lot of organic waste) and leave them in the proper containers. If more than $\frac{3}{4}$ people leave together, this can be a daily task.
- **Clean the bins** using soap or disinfectant product before putting the new bag on, especially when there is a lot of organic waste or if there are remaining liquids from bottles and/or other envelopes.
- To **minimize the use of plastic bags**, if possible, try to take the whole bucket with you outside and throw the garbage away, leaving the „old“ bag in for a new use. This is especially convenient for the plastic/paper waste bag, since it tends to be cleaner.

KITCHEN & CO.



TIPS FOR TAKING CARE OF ITS
EQUIPMENT AND THE LAUNDRY



Keeping young people's kitchens tidy is usually extremely difficult, especially in big houses, with a lot of roommates running on different timetables. Nonetheless, there are some basic things that need to be done regularly, no matter how short-term the results may be.



Essential products:



- 1 generic degreasing and disinfectant gel or spray product
- 1 sponge/microfiber cloth (you might need more if the kitchen is bigger and shared by more than $\frac{3}{4}$ people)
- 2 dry cotton or microfiber clothes (more if more than $\frac{3}{4}$ people share the kitchen)
- Rubber gloves



Procedures:

- Clean thoroughly the toasters, the stove, the oven, the sinks, the dish racks, the outside of the cupboards, the microwave, the washing machine (if there is one in the kitchen) and the chairs at least 1-2 times per week, using a generic degreasing and disinfectant gel or spray product and a wet sponge or microfiber cloth. For persistent dirt, see „General tips”.
- Clean the **counters** every day using the same products as above.
- Check if the towels need to be replaced, change them when necessary.
- Put all of the dry dishes, pots, pans and cutlery back into the cabinet whenever necessary, **without letting them stack**. Sometimes, this implies doing it several times per day.
- **Dry the dishes before storing them** if they are still wet, don't let the cabinets turn into a new habitat for bacteria!



THE FRIDGE



- Weekly, **check the expiration date** of the food in the fridge: when different people share the same fridge, there's always some open box, bottle or can that everyone has forgotten about, and sooner or later it will start to smell or leave stains.
- At least seasonally, **clean it**: it can gather a lot of unwanted dirt, especially if it's a big one. The procedure is fairly simple:

1. take everything out,
2. **turn it off**,
3. remove baskets, bins and shelves,
4. spray everything with an all-purpose cleaner,
5. scrub with a cloth or a sponge and **dry**.
6. To make sure that there's no stains, sticking nor smells, you can also put some **baking soda** on the removed parts, and then scrub it.
7. For little corners and edges, you can use a toothbrush. Then, you can put the food back in, but remember to **turn the cooling system on**, and pass a cloth on everything to make sure that there's no leaking jar, bottle, tupperware or bag.



This is one very important thing to do that doesn't get done as often as it should, especially in houses with young tenants. The frequency can vary: depending on the freezer itself and on its usage, frost can form at different speeds.

Products:

- Generic disinfectant product (spray or liquid), a sponge and a cloth
- 1 towel
- 1 casserole/other low recipient to collect the water
- 1 Rubber spatula to remove extra chunks
- Cooler/s (extra)
- Bowl of hot water (extra)



Procedure:

- **Take out everything** that's stored in the freezer, as well as the drawers;
- **Turn it off**, put a towel on the floor in front of it and some sort of a casserole to collect the water on the towel;
- To speed up the process, you can place a bowl of hot water on the bottom shelf of the freezer. Something definitely more risky is using an hairdryer, but you have to make sure that no part of it (especially the cord) comes in touch with water, and that's not easy. The safest way is just **letting the ice melt**.
- When it's all gone, you can **clean** the walls and the shelves using a sponge and a dry cloth. If the ice was really thick, there might be **chunks** you will need to **remove manually**. If so, do it with a rubber spatula, but make sure not to scrape any tubes and wiring on the back wall.
- Finally, remember to **turn it back on**.

Prevent the formation of **frost**:

- Keep the **door** of the freezer open as little as possible;
- Check the door **seal** and make sure it's in a good condition: if the door isn't closing properly and there are some air gaps, you are going to waste a lot of time defrosting. A good test is to put a piece of paper (it can be a banknote) between the door and the seal: if it grips all the way around, it's fine, if it falls, you need to replace the seal.



- Always push the **drawers back fully**: sometimes, the door doesn't close properly just because a drawer is not pushed all the way back.

Dont's:

- Use **sharp objects** to get rid of the ice: it can do more damage than anything else;
- Leave frozen **food outside** the freezer during the process: **it can take 3 to 4 hours**, so you can either put it in coolers or simply designate a day by which there shouldn't be anything left in the freezer to defrost it.

ABOUT CABINETS AND FOOD STORAGE...CEREAL FLIES!



So, in some houses (depending on the location) you might notice some strange flies who make their nests close to kitchen cupboards and cabinets and leave their eggs all over or even inside food boxes and bags. Having to deal with these flies (the scientific name is *Opomyza florum*) is NOT fun, but here are some tips:

- Always **close food boxes and bags really well**: all it takes to these flies to get in is a tiny hole. Pay special attention to your cereals: they love rice, pasta, oats, quinoa, couscous, leguminous and related products.
- **Check for their nests.** They usually are very close to cabinets and cupboards or even inside jars and boxes, if they are not closed properly.
- You can also try and hang **flypaper** in your food storage, although it's not always effective.



COMMON GROCERIES



Sometimes, especially when more than $\frac{3}{4}$ people live together, some groceries are bought and used by and for everyone for practical reasons (it makes no sense to have 4 jars of salt on the kitchen counter or 4 pieces of the same cleaning product). This requires some organisation and maintenance on the „hygiene” front.

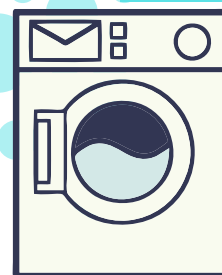
Essential products:

- 1 generic degreasing and disinfectant gel or spray product
- 1 sponge/microfiber cloth (it can be the same used for the rest of the kitchen)

Procedure:

- **Keep track of the supplies** that need to be bought (especially things such as toilet paper, paper towels, cleaning supplies etc.). A good system is keeping a „space” where everyone can write down what’s needed (it can be a piece of paper on the fridge, a board or a whatsapp/facebook group, whatever works for the people who are sharing the house).
- Figure out a **system to collect** the necessary **money** and make it work: some people collect a given amount of money on a weekly/monthly basis, other prefer to buy the groceries and split the costs once they have the receipts. Again, whatever works for the people sharing the house.
- At least twice a month, **check the fridge shelves and the cupboards** where the common products are stored and clean them with a generic degreasing and disinfectant product. While you are at it, also **check the expiration dates**, to prevent molds and undesired smells.

DOING YOUR LAUNDRY



Honestly, there is **no specific set of procedures** to follow in order to do your laundry with any existent washing machine. However, we do have some tips to offer on the topic:

- **Never** wash **synthetic** materials **and wool** at **more than 40° C**. To be sure you are not about to destroy it, **check the tag** of each piece of clothing you want to wash. Also, be careful with the **spin-dryer**: no more than 1000 spins for delicate clothing (lingerie, for example);
- Especially when something is new, **test if the dyeing wears off** by leaving it in a bowl of water for at least 30 minutes. If you don't want to take risks, just **wash** it **with similar colours**. There are also specific products to prevent the dyeing from staining the rest of the clothes: usually they are little sheets that you can put into the machine together with the clothes;
- As soon as you enter the house, ask your roommates or the landlord/lady how the washing machine works, in order to be able to choose specific washing programmes and products that won't damage it.
- Try to always **wash at full capacity**: if you don't have a lot of stuff to wash, coordinate with your roommates.















- Last but not least:

READ THE TAGS!



Laundry Guide

					
Machine wash	Machine wash, permanent press	Machine wash, delicate	Hand wash	Do not wash	Do not wring
					
Water temperature 30°C	Water temperature 40°C	Water temperature 50°C	Water temperature 60°C	Water temperature 70°C	Water temperature 95°C
					
Water temperature 30°C	Water temperature 40°C	Water temperature 50°C	Water temperature 60°C	Water temperature 70°C	Water temperature 95°C
					
Low temperature	Medium temperature	High temperature	Iron	Do not iron	No steam
					
Tumble dry	Low heat	Medium heat	High heat	Dry flat	Dry in the shade
					
No heat	Permanent press	Delicate	Hang to dry	Drip dry	Do not tumble dry
					
Short cycle	Reduced moisture	Low heat	No steam finishing	Do not dryclean	Do not wet clean
					
Any solvent	Any solvent except tetrachlorethylene	Petroleum solvent only	Wet cleaning	Non-chlorine bleach	Do not bleach

BEDROOM



HOW TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR
BED AND FURNITURE



- First, for a cleaner room, get rid of the junk you don't need. Clutter can impact how you're sleeping, and **de-cluttering** also allows you to move items that might have trapped dust or dirt.
- Dust mites are a leading cause of indoor allergies and asthma. Weekly, **dust** hard furniture, windowsills and floorboards, and use a vacuum hose on upholstered items. Remember to remove all items from the tops and shelves of any dressers, bookshelves, or nightstands before dusting, and to use a thin cloth moistened with cleaner appropriate to the furniture's material (wood, glass, plastic).
- Most store-bought **cleaners** and detergents are a mess of chemicals. Opt for cleaners that you can make at home or those that are made with natural, **organic ingredients**.



Special tips for the **furniture**:

- For a deeper clean or to maintain **fine wood** furniture, rub **lemon oil** or other polish onto the surface of the piece using small, even strokes. Wipe and buff with a dry, soft cloth for a final shine.
- It's best **not** to use **cleaners** or polishes **inside drawers**. Instead, wipe them out with a dry cloth or use the soft brush attachment on the vacuum cleaner.
- **Clothes moths** prefer humid environments, so it is essential to clean and **dry closets** well before storing clothes. In the same way, it is necessary to keep the **clothes clean** (moths prefer dirty clothes) **and ironed**, since the heat of the iron will eliminate any larvae that may remain in the garments. To complete this ritual, it is advisable to use **moths**. One of the products that is most closely related to moths is **naphthalene**, a very effective pesticide, and which, at the same time, has a very unpleasant odor.

Take care of your bed



Bedclothes

- This may seem like common knowledge, but keeping **clean sheets** on your bed gets rid of the moisture and skin cells that you shed while you sleep. Wash them at least every two weeks, in the hottest water recommended on the care labels.
- Check your **pillows'** care labels for washing and drying instructions. Many pillows can be put through a medium- or high-heat dryer cycle to freshen and fluff them.
- Avoid stains by using a washable **mattress protector** or wool underlay to help keep your bed clean.



Mattress



- Sleeping on the same spot on your mattress can leave body indentations after a while, which are bad for your back, as your mattress can't support your spine into straight alignment anymore. Most mattresses can be **rotated** regularly: this shifts the pressure to different spots. Do it frequently – every two weeks in the first three months and then every two months after that. Some mattresses can also be **flipped**, while some aren't designed to do this, so check with your manufacturer.
- Carry your mattress flat or on its side. Don't let it bend or twist out of shape.
- Give your bed a regular airing, free of covers and mattress protectors. Fresh air is good, but try and **avoid exposure to direct sunlight**.
- **Vacuum** your mattress at least once a month using low suction.
- Treat any **spills and stains** as soon as possible for the best results. Avoid using excessive water, as it can encourage mold growth. Don't use dishwashing or laundry detergent or scrub the fabric with a stiff brush, and make sure the mattress is completely dry before putting on the bedclothes.

Here are some options to do it:

- A combination of hydrogen peroxide, liquid dish soap, and baking soda. Mix them into a spray bottle and treat the stained area. Blot and/or rub with a clean rag;
- Use non-toxic, natural enzyme cleaners, that chemically break down stains and odors;
- Make a paste of lemon juice and salt. Apply the mixture to the stain, and let it stand for 30–60 minutes. Wipe off salt with a clean towel;
- To deodorize, sprinkle a light layer of baking soda over the entire surface and let it sit for at least 30 minutes. Then, vacuum it off.



WINDOWS & CO.



HOW TO MAKE SURE YOU CAN
HAVE A VIEW ALL YEAR ROUND



There's something young people definitively do not do: cleaning the windows. We all know that it's a tedious chore, especially during rainy seasons the result may last hours. Still, **once or twice a year** you really need to do it, if you don't want to end up not being able to see through the glass.

Products:

- 2 Microfiber clothes
- Specific product for glass (see "Bathroom") or white vinegar;
- Brush or vacuum cleaner
- 1 pair of rubber gloves.



Procedure:

1. Remove **dirt and dust** sweeping it with a brush or a vacuum cleaner;
2. Spray a glass specific product on the glass, or prepare a solution of one part of hot water and one of distilled **vinegar**, put it into a spray bottle and moisten the glass generously;
3. Pass a microfiber cloth on the glass;
4. Rinse and **dry** with a second microfiber cloth.



Remember:

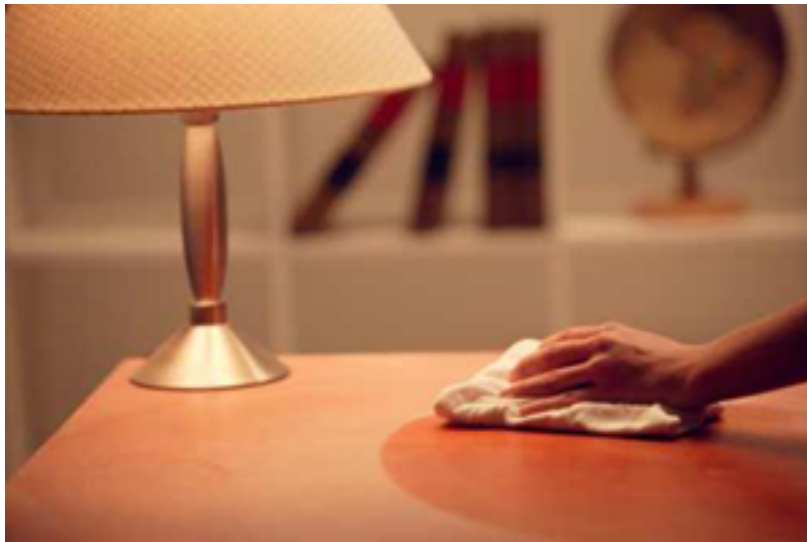
- If you don't want your work to be ruined, **do not do it while the sun shines** directly **on your window**. The ideal day to clean windows is cloudy and dry.
- **Microfiber clothes** are really better than sponges if you don't want streaks;
- Usually, it takes **2 or 3 rounds** to clean a window, especially the outside part, so don't despair if you don't get a spotless surface after the first.

OTHER COMMON SPACES



HOW TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR
LIVING ROOM & CO.





Some houses have one or a couple of common rooms apart from the kitchen and the bathroom (maybe a living room/entrance hall, a storage room, a guest room, a laundry room....). Here's how to keep them clean.

Essential products:

- 1 wet microfiber cloth
- 1 dry microfiber cloth
- 1 broom
- Stiff brush (extra)



Procedures:

- **Dust** the furniture (tables, cupboards etc.) and shelves 1-2 times per week. This means taking every single object/ornament off the surface, passing the wet cloth on it, drying it with the other microfiber cloth, cleaning all the objects/ornaments and putting them back into place. For some materials, it is necessary to use specific products (for example, certain types of wood).
- Make sure that the sofas are clean and **wash the blankets** whenever necessary.
- Clean the **doormat** once per week. Usually, it is sufficient to beat it from a window or a balcony. For a deeper cleaning, brush it with a stiff brush.
- If there are non-used rooms, sweep the floor, dust the furniture and open the windows to let the fresh air in weekly.
- Remind people to take their dry laundry off the racks, as we all tend to forget about it. Organise the drying racks when empty, optimise the space!
- Sweep and mop the floor (see "Floors") at least 1-2 times per week.

BALCONY & TERRACE



HOW TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR
OUTDOOR SPACES





Yes, some young people are so lucky that they get to have one or even a couple of balconies/terraces at disposal. Those are wonderful whenever the weather is good (which is often the case in Southern Europe), but they require some **maintenance** as well.

Essential products:

- 1 broom used exclusively for outdoor spaces
- 1 mopping cloth used exclusively for outdoor spaces
- 1 wet microfiber cloth/sponge
- 1 dry microfiber cloth
- 1 generic degreasing and disinfectant gel or spray product

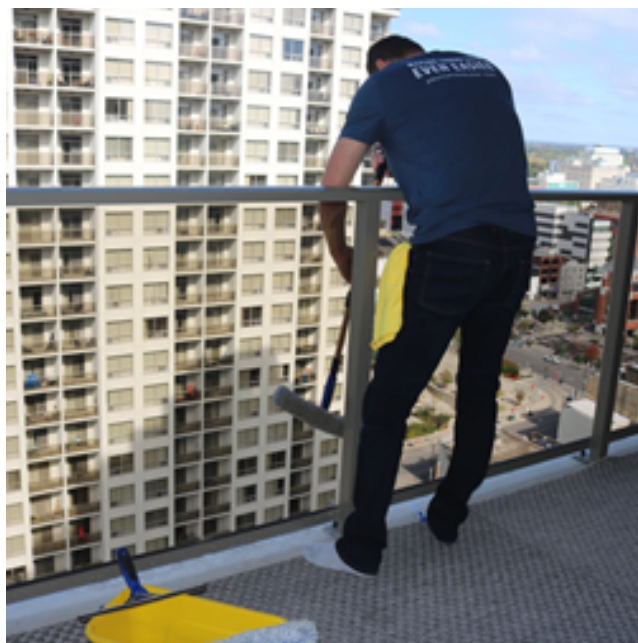


Procedures:

- **Sweep the floor** using the designated broom at least 1-2 times per week.
- **Mop** weekly, especially in spring and summer, using a designated moping cloth.
- Make sure that the **outside furniture** is clean (you can use a sponge/microfiber cloth and a generic degreasing and disinfectant gel or spray product) and bring as much of it as possible **inside if the weather is not good**.

Tips for to clean the balconies/terraces:

- **Empty your outdoor space:** remove all plants and furniture. If you live in a high rise building, and need to bring items indoors, clean them off first with a damp cloth while outside. Lay down a large piece of plastic, an old sheet, or a drop cloth so you don't soil interior floors and carpets.
- Clean out debris and dust. Next, sweep or vacuum the area to pick up cobwebs, dead insects etc. Always use the top down approach (see "General Tips". Check your local market for cleaning tools that offer **extension rods** for cleaning out of reach places. Be nice to neighbors and **use a dust pan**. Don't sweep debris over the side.



- The classic and **environmentally friendly** method is cleaning with a **broom, scrubber** and **brush**. However, this variant requires muscle strength and endurance.



- **Rust stains** are best removed with the help of **hot water** and a little **lemon juice**.



- For **light greening** you should try it with **citric acid** and **vinegar**, but it does not work in the long term and the **right dosage** is crucial.



- **Wooden decking** should only be cleaned with **warm water** and a **mild detergent** and then **oiled**.



- For **grooved wood panels**, it is better to use a **brush**. Meanwhile, there are also **special cleaning machines** that are loaned and protect their wood clean.

- The mixture of **water soda** or **detergent** is a tried and tested home remedy for a gentle and environmentally friendly care for a clean terrace, especially if there's light soiling, which are caused by weathering. For this, you need: a scrubbing brush, a broom, a bucket of water and soda or detergent.



These are the steps:

1. First fill the bucket with a little water and mix it with soda or detergent.
2. Before applying the mixture to the plates, **sweep** the terrace thoroughly..
3. Now **let the mixture work** for at least two or three hours.
4. Then **remove all** cleaning **residues** with plenty of water and a scrubber.



UNWANTED GUESTS



HOW TO DEAL WITH THE MOST
COMMON INSECTS & PARASITES



BEDBUGS



- Bedbugs may enter your home undetected through luggage, clothing, used beds and couches, and other items. Because they are thin and **flat**, they can fit into **tiny spaces**, about the width of a credit card. They do not have nests, but tend to live in groups in hiding places. Their initial hiding places are typically in **mattresses**, box springs, bed frames, headboards and baseboards.
- They are an oval shape and only grow to about **3 to 7 mm** in length. Prior to feeding, they are **brown** and flat; after, they're more reddish, swollen, and elongated. Adult bed bugs can be detected by sight, especially within mattress seams and box springs. Nymphs can be harder to identify, as they are smaller and paler.
- They bite and suck blood from humans and are most **active at night**. Their favorite body areas are the most exposed while sleeping: hands, arms, neck, feet and legs. The bite itself is painless and is not noticeable right after the bite. A few days later, however, you may see small, flat or raised **red and itchy bumps**. If scratched, the bite areas can become infected. If you are not sure whether a bite is a bedbug bite, check if you have more than one and if they are **lined up in a row** (they may appear as itchy welts after scratching). In some people, the bites can take several days to develop. The signs may become apparent up to 14 days after the bite has occurred. Bedbug bites may go unnoticed or be mistaken for flea or mosquito bites or other types of rash or skin conditions.



Signs of Infestation

If you wake up with itchy areas you didn't have when you went to sleep, you may have bedbugs, particularly if you got a used bed or other used furniture around the time the bites started. Other signs that you have bedbugs include:

- **Blood stains** on your sheets or pillowcases;
- **Dark** or rusty **spots** of bedbug excrement on sheets and mattresses, bed clothes, and walls;
- Bedbug fecal spots, **egg shells**, or **shed skins** in areas where bedbugs hide;
- An offensive, **musty odor** from the bugs' scent glands;
- If you suspect an infestation, **remove all bedding and check** it carefully for signs of the bugs or their excrement. Remove the dust cover over the bottom of the box springs and examine the seams in the wood framing. Peel back the fabric where it is stapled to the wood frame;
- Also, check the area around the bed and your closet, because bedbugs can attach to **clothing**.





Treatments

Once you know you have bedbugs, you need to keep them contained so you can get rid of them. That begins with cleaning up their hiding places. This is how:

- Run the **vacuum** over any possible hiding places. **Seal up** the vacuumed contents **into a plastic bag** and throw it away.
- **Seal up** all your **linens and** affected **clothes** in plastic bags until you can wash them. Then put them on the **highest possible temperature** setting in the **washer and dryer**. If an item can't be washed, put it in the dryer for 30 minutes at the highest heat setting.
- **Anything that can't be treated** in the washer and dryer, place in a **plastic bag**. Leave it there **for a few months**, if possible, to make sure that all the bugs die.
- Use a **steamer** on mattresses, couches, and other places where bedbugs hide.
- Pack up infested items in black **bags** and leave them **outside on a hot day** or in a closed car.
- Put bags containing bedbugs in the **freezer** at -17°C for at least 3/4 days.
- Encase mattress and box springs with a tightly woven, **zippered cover** to keep bedbugs from entering or escaping. Bedbugs may live up to a year without feeding, so to be sure keep the cover on your mattress for at least that time span.
- **Repair cracks** in plaster and glue down peeling wallpaper.
- **Get rid of clutter** around the bed.





WARNING



If you can't wipe out bedbugs on your own, it's time to **get the pros involved**. Pest control companies have the advantage of using chemicals and other treatments that aren't available to you, that both kill bugs and stay inside furniture and cracks in the long-term.

They can also use whole room **heat treatments**, using special equipment that heats up the room to between 57 and 62° C —high enough to kill bedbugs.

Before its visit, the company should give you **instructions** for **prepping** your home. Follow them carefully and you'll have the best chance of wiping out the bugs.

Professional treatments take **2 to 3 visits** to start working. After each treatment, you may have to stay out of the treated rooms for a few hours.



Bedbugs are hardy creatures. Just when you think you've wiped them out, you might spot them again. To be on the safe side, keep **monitoring** the affected areas weekly.

ANTS

Here's another unpleasant guest of your house. They travel in packs and usually show up in spring: once they find a spot they really like, the battle shall begin to get rid of them. What to do?



Prevention

- **Block off access points.** Inspect the outside of your home for cracks and crevices, paying special attention to areas where utility pipes enter. Seal any small holes or gaps with a silicone-based caulk.
- **Eliminate sources of water in and around the home.** Indoors, routinely check under sinks for areas of moisture and repair any leaky pipes. Consider using a dehumidifier in damp basements, crawl spaces or attics. Outside, ensure that downspouts and gutters are functioning properly so that water flows away from the home's foundation.
- **Keep a clean kitchen.** Remove crumbs and residue from spills from counters and floors. Store food in sealed containers, and keep ripe fruit in the refrigerator. Also, make sure to take out of garbage regularly.
- **Pets.** Keep their **bowls clean** and wipe up any spilled food or water around them. Use sealed plastic containers to store their dry food.

Treatments

- **Place bait traps.** To attract different types of ants, use both carb-based and protein-based traps. The best spots are near drains, in cabinets and under appliances (stove, refrigerator). Remember to replace them.
- **Combine the bait traps with ant sprays.** The best places to cover are baseboards, door frames, windows and patio sliders.
- **Outdoor,** use liquid baits and granules near the trails. It's better to use a non-repellent spray specific for outdoors than an ant killer around the foundation of your house, the perimeter of the yard and other structures (garages, sheds etc.). Focus on openings for pipes and wires.
- **Work with a pest professional.** Eliminating ants can be challenge without the proper treatment. If you see any in your home, contact a licensed pest professional to identify the species and recommend a course of treatment.



Some **natural anti-ant products** (better if you have pets around):

- Diatomaceous earth;
- Borax;
- Food-based: white vinegar spray, coffee grounds, cucumbers, citrus fruits peels, cinnamon, pepper and mint.



COCKROACHES

Second to bedbugs for their charming presence once they decide that your home is their home, here are some ways to fight them.



Prevention

Keep in mind that the golden rule is **proper sanitation**. Basically, if you are following this guide, you are already making roaches' life much harder:

- **Eliminate food sources:** clean kitchen appliances (especially fridges, dishwashers, stoves, toasters, microwaves and underneath sinks) and cabinets and counters daily, limit food consumption to one room of the house, vacuum the kitchen floor thoroughly each night before bed (and other spaces regularly, see "floors"), store food in sealed containers and keep pet bowls clean, take the trash out regularly.
- **Eliminate water sources:** fix leaks and make sure that faucets, sinks, showers and bathtubs are dry before going to bed. Everything that's wet or humid should be sealed in plastic bags overnight.
- **Seal off hiding places:** cracks and crevices, holes surrounding pipes or other light and wall fixtures. Windows and doors should fit tightly and squarely within their frames: place tape over holes and crevices in appliances and other household items (computers, telephones, bread machines, alarm clocks, etc) in the most affected areas.

- **Out!** Apply **long lasting insecticide** dusts to your **exterior wall** void, spray the exterior of your home with a residual insecticide every 60-90 days .



Treatments

- The best idea to disinfest your home is **calling a specialist**, so that they can identify the problem and the right course of treatment. Especially when the infestation is highly spread, it might call for fumigation.
- One remedy that has become popular recently is placing **gel baits** in strategic places (dosages are indicated on the product).
- There are also **adhesive baits**, less effective than gel baits, but also less risky if you have pets around the house.
- There are all shapes and forms of pesticides to spray on cockroaches, but here are some more **natural remedies**:

- Place **bay leaves** in hard-to-clean places;
- **Garlic**, **onion** or **cayenne** powder sprayed on their favorite spots;
- Use a solution of water and **lemon juice** to spray;
- Use a solution of **vinegar** and a few drops of **peppermint** essential oil to spray;
- **Neem oil** (you can sprinkle the powder or mix it with water in a spray solution);
- **Borax**;
- Put **catnip leaves** in a sachet strategically placed (remember to replace them);



- **DIY traps:**

1. **Baking soda** and **sugar** (1/1 ratio) on a plate, place another container of the same size full of water next to it ;
2. **Duct tape** with a dollop of peanut butter and some sugar on it (in the middle);
3. A clean jar with a food bait on the bottom and **petroleum gel** sprayed over the inside wall;
4. Put some **wet coffee grounds** in a plastic cup and place it into a bigger jar. Fill the jar (not the cup) with water up until a little below the surface of the cup.

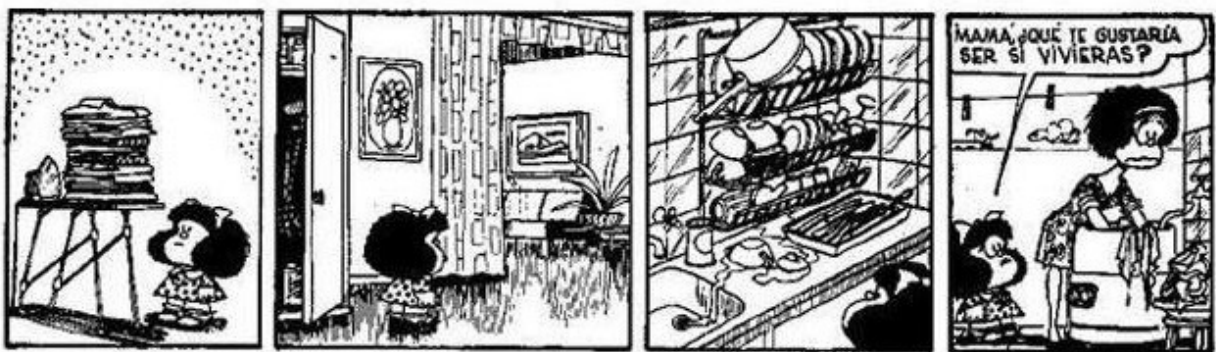


CONCLUSION

So...That's all! We covered all of the basics, if you follow our tips you are all set for a spotless home. At this point, of course, you might feel as if you can either have a perfectly clean, tidy and shiny house or you can have an actual life, but the secret for happiness always lies in balance: just make sure that the chores are fairly split among the roommates and you will see that getting the hang of it is easier than it seems.

If you'd like to get a more in-depth insight into some of the trickiest aspects of managing a house, know that there is a whole online community eager to share their knowledge and achievements: professional companies, housewives and other amateurs of the art of cleaning await in blogs, YouTube channels and all sorts of social media to guide you through the hardships of living on your own.

Good luck!





My products

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