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Clever Cleaning

Have a Happier, Healthier Home!

By Pru Nation

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About the Author

Pru Nation worked for a commercial cleaning company part-time when she was at college. She says that was hard work but the hours fitted with her school and study requirements better than the few other options she had.

Since then, she has worked for cleaning contractors, suppliers and as a demonstrator at Trade Shows.

Pru has yet to find anyone that really likes cleaning except her grandmother. That wonderful lady had a large family and a small home. She didn't spend as much time cleaning as many people that Pru knows do now, despite having no access to modern equipment and chemical concoctions.

Pru has included some tips which can be traced back to her grandmother's time but others rely on more modern advances which that lady could only have dreamed of.

Pru put this book together with the desire to help all her readers keep everything around them clean without tears or smears.

And, when you have read this book and started to apply those ideas which suit your needs, you'll find you have more time for doing the things you really enjoy with your family and friends in a cleaner, happier environment.

What to Use

Baking soda: Sodium bicarbonate is extremely useful for its action on stains and grease. You'll find it in the cooking area of your local super market but buy two packets - one for the kitchen and one for your mini cleaning kit.

Acetone: A solvent that is the traditional base for nail polish removers. Highly flammable so use with care and store safely.

Bleach: This has many uses around our homes but should only be used with due care. It works by removing colors or reducing their intensity. Combining it with other chemicals can produce dangerous fumes and/or reduce the effectiveness of the other cleaning agent.

Borax: A traditional fungicide and insecticide that can also can kill some weeds at very high concentrations. It can have side effects so wear gloves and avoid breathing any in.

Bran: Very popular because of its laxative power, but we may also use it to absorb liquids, and for cleaning some clothing.

Camphor: Your grandmother's moth repellent. Still used by many for that and also to repel cats. But, it is strong smelling, inflammable and not safe near pets.

Cleaning mitt: A flat tube of towelling or similar material. You can buy them at many stores but it's very easy to make your own.

Instead of using your pieces of discarded towels as they are, cut them into pieces about 15 inches square. Then, fold them in half and sew the open sides together to make towelling tubes. Put your hand inside and use them this way to give you better control and ensure that almost the entire surface of the towelling is used.

When it becomes soiled and damp, turn the tube over and use the other side. Then, turn them inside out and use those two surfaces as well.

Cloves: From the clove tree. The oil is a natural but fairly expensive mold inhibitor.

Cornflour: Another natural, mild abrasive and, like bran, very absorbent.

Dry sponge: A flat, rubber-like sponge about 6 inches square. It contains a proprietary mixture of chemicals which gives the sponge high absorption and mildly abrasive properties.

They are often used for cleaning wallpaper, acoustic tiles and most kinds of walls and ceilings. They should not be used for kitchen or bathroom walls or, of course, anywhere that they would come in contact with liquid. You must never let any liquid come in contact with them or they will become useless.

To use the dry sponge, fold it in half, and then press half of the sponge's surface against the area that you want to clean. Hold the other half of the sponge firmly and draw it across the wall, doing about 3 feet in each wipe.

You will probably be very surprised when you examine the sponge and realized how much gunk it removes with so little effort.

When you first used a dry sponge before washing a wall to clean it or in preparation for repainting it, you will realize just what a bargain they are.

They are quite inexpensive, but not reusable. Dispose of your dry sponge when you have used all the surfaces on it. You cannot clean them.

Magnesium sulfate: Another compound from your grandmother's cleaning box. Known also as Epsom Salts.

Eucalyptus oil: Oil that is extracted from some types of eucalyptus trees. Highly regarded as a solvent but has many other uses around the home.

The natural smell of Eucalyptus Oil is popular as an air-freshener

Some people use it to clean toilets. It imparts a nice smell and will remove some deposits, but it doesn't replace a hospital grade disinfectant.

It is also used to remove sticky labels. My results vary, because of the different types of labels and the surfaces which they're attached to. Don't use eucalyptus oil to remove labels or marks from items without testing first.

Most eucalyptus oil is produced outside Australia. It's worth checking the label to ensure that you get the 100% oil you are paying for.

Remember that eucalyptus oil, for all its benefits and uses, should be used carefully as it is flammable and poisonous.

Hydrogen peroxide: A powerful bleaching agent.

Lavender oil: Oil from some varieties of Lavender flowers which is used in cosmetics, air fresheners and is claimed to deter dogs and some kinds of insects.

Lemon oil: Oil extracted from lemon peel to be used for stain removal and in furniture polish. Also claimed to repel some kinds of insects.

Methylated spirits: A cheap, traditional paint remover.

Slurpex[®]: I must mention the super absorbent synthetic sponge which is, as far as I know, available in most countries under this name.

I got mine for removing spills from carpets (the original purpose for which it was developed). But it's good for removing condensation from windows and pet fur from some types of upholstery and clothing.

The block is very soft and easy to squeeze. I was told it absorbs about two-thirds its volume of liquid and can be used with most liquids, including red wine, soda pop and fruit juice.

But, don't let bleach anywhere near it. That's about the only liquid which damages it. Also, it will take up the color of whatever liquid you pick up.

If you don't like the discoloration, you may banish it to the car and get another one for inside the house.

Follow the directions with it, keep some clean water in it between uses (don't ever let it dry out!) and yours may last as long as mine. It's five years old and still has lots of life in it.

Sugar soap: A mildly abrasive and very caustic soap for cleaning.

Almond oil: Oil derived from almonds. May be used to clean ivory.

Petroleum jelly: A translucent gel composed of hydrocarbons, used for a variety of cleaning tasks.

Toothbrush: You can recycle your family's used ones for further duty cleaning the tracks of the shower door (use a little white vinegar on the bristles) and removing grime from many other places, or just buy the cheapest you can at the local discount store.

Vinegar: Three common varieties; **Brown, White** and **Cider**. The cider and white vinegars are widely used for different types of cleaning.

WD-40: A highly regarded, internationally available brand of penetrating oil. You need a can in your house as well as one in your car.

White Spirit: A solvent containing petroleum hydrocarbons. Sometimes called dry-cleaning fluid.

Stop that Smell



Quick Fix: The easiest quick fix, when you discover that friends from Australia or the PTA Chairwoman will be at your door in thirty minutes, is quickly spraying an aerosol freshener around.

But, these products are not discreet and your visitors will probably be over-powered. It's much better to release a more delicate perfume from a few flowers from the garden, or just burn a couple of cloves or fragrant oil.

Refrigerator: Put a little white vinegar on the cloth you use to wipe out your refrigerator. It will refresh the interior and also help reduce the reoccurrence of mildew.

A small dish containing charcoal (the kind sold for use in fish-tanks is okay) and will reduce any odors too.

Keep an open packet of sodium bicarb in the door of your refrigerator to absorb any odors. It should have no effect on anything else in there. Just replace the box every few weeks.

Put a little in a small dish on a ledge in the kitchen and the bathroom.

Don't just throw the old powder in the garbage; pour it down your sink so that any remaining strength can help to keep your pipes fresh. Then, pour about a half-cup of vinegar down the drain. Don't use the sink for about half an hour to give the chemicals time to work.

Sometimes, the reaction will cause some odor to be released for a few minutes, but that will disappear when you run some water through to remove any residue.

Inside your home: Put just a few drops of Wintergreen Oil on a cotton swab and drop it in an inconspicuous part of each room, such as within a plant pot. Just replace the swab with a fresh one every month or so.

I dab a few drops of pure vanilla or cologne on a piece of cotton for that.

Smart Cleaning!

Reduce Cleaning Time

You can reduce the time and effort you need for cleaning by:

Better organize you cleaning. Set up a cleaning kit in a tray or basket. Start a routine of doing a little each day.

Deal with problems as they arise. Put a spray bottle with an appropriate cleaner and a cloth or sponge in the bathroom, garage and near the front door so you or someone else can deal with any mark or spill the first time it is seen and before it can set in place.

Use the most appropriate cleaner. Turpentine is oil-based so it will work on oil, grease or tar. Contact cement spills can't resist the appropriate chemical which has the same type of base. Read the label carefully. If you still aren't sure, ask the supplier and always test on an inconspicuous area first.

Reduce clutter. This has two advantages. When you get rid of stuff you don't need or no longer value, you won't have to move it so you can clean around or under it. And, you won't have to clean the stuff you got rid of ever again.

Play it Safe!



You might be surprised that working around your home can be as hazardous as working in any other place in the community.

Many of the compounds which we use are poisonous or corrosive. Read the labels on the products you use, including the “natural” ones.

Be careful when lifting anything. A full basket of clothes should be thought about. Maybe you should make two trips sometimes. Also, lift anything of noticeable weight properly – bend your knees.

Jumping the Mountain

Are you one of those people that will try to get all of their cleaning done in the minimum of time by doing almost all of it on one special day of the week?

That's an understandable desire, but that approach can cause some problems and frustration.

Because we all have limited time and often have to start our cleaning duties before or after a full day's work, we are ill-prepared to complete a major cleaning offensive.

It's much better to set out a regular schedule and tackle that mountain in easy stages.

Do a little bit every day.

Don't make Spring cleaning an annual, dreaded event in your home.

Delegate some of the work to other members of your family. This is not always easy because everyone always has something they'd rather be doing than cleaning, even when it's their own clothes, dishes, dog or whatever.

Don't believe the promises until you see some results. You'll probably decide to do some of their allocated tasks to save the whole house dissolving into a smelly heap. You'll have to decide where to draw your "line in the sand" in your own situation.

If something is spilled, clean it up right away wherever possible. That way is almost guaranteed to produce the best result because you won't give the spill time to set in place. You also avoid developing any stress from worrying about another chore not yet done.

Rubbing the Wrong Way

When we get some mess on our carpet or food spatters on our new stove, a natural reaction is to grab some cleaner and rub it away.

But applying pressure in situations like that could be a waste of energy and cause more damage.

Rubbing stained carpet is likely to spread the mess wider and deeper, making a good result less likely.

Grinding food scraps off your stove or kitchen pots with a strong cleaner or abrasive pad could cause damage to the stove or utensil.

Read any advice provided by the supplier, then read the relevant section in this book. There are often easier and more effective ways, however attractive brute force may seem at the time.

Let Science Help You

Many of the suggestions in this book are based on tried and proven methods which have been around for years.

Often, these involve less cost but, sometimes, there is a trade-off. They may take more time and effort than is needed when using more modern chemical products to do the job.

That's a decision I will have to leave to you. I prefer, where possible, to limit the amount of chemicals used around our home, but I will take advantage of these time-saving methods where I am comfortable that using them will not cause other problems further down the road.

Any Old Cloth

We all like to save money and many people save up discarded clothes to be used as cleaning cloths.

But, you need to take some care in your selection of cloths for your cleaning. Many modern fabrics are designed to repel liquids and the other things you want your cloths to pick off the surfaces you are trying to clean.

Use discarded towels, or cheap ones you buy at sales, provided they have reasonable cotton content – it's highly absorbent. Their synthetic content gives them strength and you should discard them sooner rather than later.

Don't use Newspaper for Cleaning

I've heard people recommend using newspaper for wiping windows and for protecting floors and carpets from soiling by pets.

But, I’ve noticed that some newspaper starts oozing ink if it comes into contact with liquid – that’s not good for your windows or for animals.

Even the modern inks used for printing newspapers may contain substances which could be directly harmful to your pets. If traces get onto their fur, for instance, they will lick it and swallow it.

Pets - Problems and Precautions

A pet will enrich almost everyone's life if they choose something that is appropriate to their lifestyle and they have the physical and financial resources to properly care for it through its life.

You also need to set up a routine for keeping the pet and its environment clean. Otherwise, it could become a source of irritation and even illness for you or your family members.

One of the first things you need to do is to house train your new family member. It needs an area which it can use for its toilet.

But, you must expect that even the smartest and most obedient pet can have a mishap at some time either because it waited too long or had eaten something which disagreed with it. Those accidents occur with human children and even some adults.

Don't punish or abuse the animal if this occurs. That will make it more unsure of its position in the family group and increase the chance of further accidents.

You need to be ready and able to deal with them at short notice.

If it's on a non-porous surface, damage is likely to be minimal but you need to be careful when your carpet was the target or you might cause more damage than the original accident.

Remove all the solids with paper towels before you do anything else. If you have a thick pad of absorbent material, lay it on the area and then stand on it to draw as much of the remaining liquid as possible into the pad.

Liquid will seep quickly into the base of your carpet, so it is important to act as soon as you are aware of the problem.

Blot up as much of the liquid as you can but don't rub on your carpet; areas of this pressure will disperse the liquid deeper and wider.

There are so many varieties of carpet that I cannot give you any suggestions that will work in every case. Always follow the manufacturers' instructions

about what it is safe to use on your carpet and test any substance or mixture, whether homemade or commercial, on an inconspicuous small area before you need to act quickly in a real situation.

Although carpet is not usually affected by water, use only enough for the task because excess water can spread whatever it is that you are trying to remove from your carpet.

Friends have recommended to me a mixture which is one quarter club soda and three parts water, applied sparingly with a toothbrush. Then, they blot up the residue with clean paper towel or absorbent, color-fast cloths.

Another friend reported success with a teaspoon of detergent in a cup of warm water. Dab a little on the stain, then remove as much as possible of the liquids with a paper towel.

If there is still some staining, you might then use a little white vinegar in some water. Blot that up with more paper towel.

Because this is a common problem, there are many commercial products promoted as remedies.

If you find one that you want to use, read the label carefully before use.

If you use a product containing ammonia, the smell is similar to urine and a dog, especially may think that it should use that area again. So, make sure that you remove all residue and any lingering smell.

Hair of the Dog (or Cat)

If your pet drops fur because of the change in the seasons or because they are of a particular breed or age, you need to get it from the carpet or off the furniture as speedily as possible.

If the furniture can safely tolerate a little water, you might lightly wet a sponge and draw it over the area.

Or, you might keep the fabric-softener sheet from your last load of washing in your machine and wipe that over the furniture.

Getting fur out of your carpet can be more difficult. Vacuum cleaners are not the ideal device for this. Use a carpet sweeper which is suitable for your particular type of carpet or get a carpet-brush attachment if one is available to fit over the front of your vacuum cleaner.

Getting pet fur off fabrics requires care.

Provided the fabric is not really delicate, you might use the common sticky roller which is usually sold in discount stores everywhere. But, you should buy a few of them because the exposed sticky tape will quickly be covered or just lose its stickiness, so you have to keep rolling out a new layer of tape.

Wide plastic parcel tape will work to some extent and probably work out cheaper than the sticky rollers but they are easier to carry in your luggage if you travel with your pet.

A damp cloth or sponge will also lift hair off your baseboards but it has a different effect when the hair is on curtains, fabric covered furniture or carpet. Then, the hair will wad together in little balls. Not as efficient but at least the balls are easier to pick off the fabric than the individual flat hairs were.

Precautions around Pets

Everybody is aware that many chemical preparations contain substances that may cause serious problems for pets. You need to keep them where your pets can't get at them

Buy a small toolbox or a handyman's plastic box to carry your materials in when you are cleaning so that your pets can't lick or sniff the containers and any drips. Keep it at where neither pets nor children can get into it when you are not actually using it.

You also should remove fish tanks and bird cages from the room when you spray any cleaning liquids or air-fresheners.

Some will contain substances that will affect the pets directly.

But, many sprays will coat the water in fish tanks so that no oxygen can be absorbed into the water. Your fish will either become sick or injure themselves when they try to jump out of the aquarium.

If the fish tank is too large to be moved, cover it with a sheet of glass or other non-permeable material until the spraying is done and any mist or residue has completely cleared.

If your cage is too large to shift, remove the food and water containers and cover the cage until everything is cleared away.

If you have a smaller cage for keeping a bird in when it gets sick, as many breeders advise, you could temporarily transfer your pet into that with some fresh seed and water and put it in another room until all traces of the spraying have gone.

One manufacturer of a carpet deodorising spray advised their customers to never use any aerosol in a room where there is a cage bird because the minute droplets could be harmful, even before considering what chemicals were in the spray.

Wonderful Windows



Many people will turn to this section of my book first when they read the table of contents. That's because windows are probably the cause of as much frustration as anything else which we have to clean.

Always avoid trying to clean your windows when the sun is shining directly at them – that would almost guarantee enough streaks to require you to do the job again!

I don't have a magic formula and, in fact, you may be disappointed to learn that I clean my windows with an ammonia solution or a diluted, common dishwashing liquid.

It's the results that matter and not how much you pay for the product you use.

One thing that you should not economize on is a high quality metal (brass or steel) handle squeegee, about twelve inches wide.

If possible, find a commercial supplier. You could ask someone you see cleaning the windows of a local store where they buy their supplies, or just check the Yellow Pages or the Internet.

It really is that important to get the best possible tool for this job.

If you have many small windows around your home which this squeegee would be too big for, think about getting a smaller squeegee of similar quality when you buy the large one.

Some people will attach a pole to the handle of their squeegee to try to clean high windows. This may not be very effective because most people will not be strong or experienced enough to keep enough control of the squeegee.

If you decide to use a ladder, make sure it's of professional quality and you have a reliable person watching the base which must be well secured. Or, you might want to get the professional cleaner – their fee could be a lot less painful than a fall.

Wipe a cleaning cloth over the frames where they touch the glass before you start cleaning the actual windows to prevent any chance of the edge of your squeegee picking up grime, or worse, and spreading it over your windows.

With a soft brush or new sponge, lightly moisten the window from top to bottom.

Now, use a new chamois or cloth to wipe the rubber blade of your squeegee. That is just to help the blade to track smoothly across the window.

Put the blade of your squeegee in contact with the edge of the glass at the top of the window. Hold it at a 20° angle to the window frame, not set straight up-and-down.

Now, draw the squeegee across the top section of the window. When you get to the other side, wipe the blade again with your chamois.

Put the blade of your squeegee on the glass at the top left corner of the window and parallel with the frame.

Draw the squeegee down the window in a steady movement to the bottom.

Then, do your second stroke down the window but make sure that you overlap the area which was cleaned by your first stroke by about an inch or so. Continue wiping the blade and then drawing it down the window until the whole window has been done.

Always lubricate and clean the blade of the squeegee with a gentle wipe off your damp chamois after each stroke.

You can wipe your squeegee across the window instead of drawing it from the top to the bottom. What I suggest, is that you use vertical strokes on one side of the window and horizontal strokes on the other. Then, if you find that you have missed any spots, you will be able to see which side of the window they are on.

But, always start on each side of each window by drawing your squeegee across the top of the window to make that narrow clean band which ensures that you don't have any drips rolling down into the rest of the window as you clean it.

When you have completed your windows, use your squeegee moistening cloth to wipe away any drips from your window sills.

Your first attempt may not, of course, give you perfect results but that will come with practice. Also, using this new system on your window for the first time will feel awkward and you will probably have a residue of accumulated grime to contend with at first.

Resist the temptation to wipe away any odd marks that remain on your windows with a cloth. You will probably mark your newly cleaned window more severely if you try that.

Just leave it and you'll see that most of those marks will disappear as the day progresses.

Caring for and enjoying Carpets

Many people decide to get commercial carpet because of its strength and relative low cost. But, if you are buying new carpet, then I suggest you go for quality carpet with some pile.

And, I also suggest that you could find having a professional install done to be worthwhile, if you can afford it, for the time and hassle it will save you. These measures will add a little to your initial cost, but the benefits are possibly worth it.

They will add to the usable life of your carpet and allow you to escape the stress and hassles involved in laying your carpet yourself. You will probably find, as we have, that you will enjoy your carpet more!

Commercial carpet may be less expensive, but it can also be less comfortable if you have children and like to join them when they are playing on the carpeted floor.

Consider that this is an occasional, long-term investment. The additional cost for quality is likely to be a very small part of your outlay.

Even when your carpet is protected by chemical such as 3M's excellent Scotchgard[®], you should still clean your carpet regularly. Some people think that they don't have anything to be concerned about until they start to notice marks or feel a build-up of grit in the pile.

But, unfortunately, when we look at our carpet every day, we are less likely than visitors are to see the gradual deterioration of its original showroom condition.

Here is a simple tip which will help you to see the real state of your carpet as it gets used. When the carpet is installed, put aside a small sample in a plastic bag. From time to time, take out the sample and compare it to your carpet in its current state.

Regular vacuuming and beating or brushing are just as essential as dealing with any spills or other problems as soon as they occur. Some vacuum cleaner suppliers offer optional beater attachments which fit over the front of

your cleaner to loosen dirt so that the vacuum cleaner itself can do a more thorough job.

Use good quality mats to protect high traffic areas.

Where possible, use carpet protectors under the corners of heavy furniture.

Always lift and carry furniture and other objects rather than dragging them across your precious carpet. Not only will that cause marks but the weight and pressure will drive any grit or other rubbish deeper into the carpet.

A modern vacuum cleaner has plenty of power to lift just about anything off or out of your carpet. But you should always be visually inspect your carpet and remove any loose items before vacuuming. Pebbles, needles and other hard or sharp objects may damage your vacuum cleaner.

Always empty or replace the bag in your cleaner without waiting until it is completely full. That just puts extra pressure on the motor.

Cleaning Spills off Carpets

The only detergents to use are those which are specified by the manufacturer as safe with quality soft fabrics and which you have pre-tested.

The prime directive for reducing the damage with almost any type of stain on your carpet is to deal with it immediately.

Gently but thoroughly blot away as much of the liquid as you can.

Only use white or colorfast towelling or other absorbent material. Stick to white if you have it because you can't always be sure that colored materials might not release a little color.

Remove any solid matter. If you need to scrape anything off, only use something which won't damage the carpet. You might be able to live with a remnant of a stain more easily than obvious damage to the area from too-enthusiastic scraping.

Test any chemical you want to use on an inconspicuous area. Check for color fastness or any other negative effect.

Alternate between blotting and cleaning, then blot up any liquid which has been brought to the surface by the previous step.

Be careful when applying pressure. Do not rub the area because that will tend to spread any liquid over a wider area in a lower concentration which will probably be harder to lift out.

Gently work from the edges of the stain toward the center so that you minimize the possibility of spreading the stain to unaffected areas.

When you feel that you have removed all of it that you can, gently blot the area again.

Then, examine the area to be sure that no liquid remains.

If necessary, put clean white towelling on the area and weight it down. Leave it there for a while, then re-examine the area.

Then, repeat that step with some fresh, dry towels if necessary.

If you believe that the area is really dry, brush the fibres upright.

Shampooing Your Carpet

You may decide that you want your carpet shampooed sometime. You might think that the cost is worthwhile and it will help to put off the day when you need to replace the carpet which currently have.

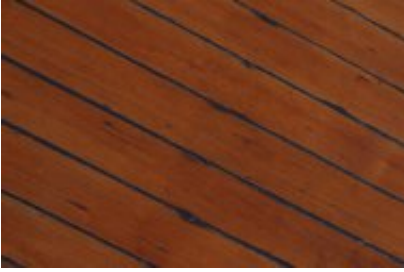
I suggest that you save yourself time, money and frustration - get a professional to do it. You may think the cost is too far above what it would cost you to hire some equipment and buy some chemicals and do-it-yourself.

But, your carpet is a high value asset and any mistake that you make could hasten the need to replace it. It is a job for professionals or, at the very least, someone with experience using professional equipment.

But, I don't suggest that you have your carpet done by someone who has a large ad in the Yellow Pages or a special offer on the television.

Recommendations by word-of-mouth from your friends and work colleagues are probably a far better guide to finding an operator to clean your precious carpet.

Floors



I've covered carpets and almost everything above it in the average home.

But the other important item is the floor.

If you use good broad mats at each entrance, that will help to keep your floors cleaner and more presentable.

Sealing your wooden or tile floors will make them less slippery and not more dangerous as many people might think.

Also, the smooth, protective coating will reduce the amount of time that it takes you to clean them.

Use a mop and bucket to keep the surface in good shape. The best kind of bucket, in my experience, is the type with two rollers across the top for squeezing the liquid and dirt from the mop.

These will handle almost any kind of mop but I always use one that is fairly thin with all the strands about the same length.

Sweep your floors regularly – this will not only keep them clean but it will reduce the wear on your mop and you!

If you need to move a piece of furniture or anything which is too heavy to be lifted and you can't fit a wheeled trolley under it, slide the corners or the feet, if it has them, on to thick towels and pull the towels rather than trying to push or pull the object itself.

This is likely to reduce any damage to your floors and perhaps make the actual shifting of the object a little bit easier all around.

For years, janitors and other professionals have bought and used large quantities of "sweeping compound" to make collecting dust easier.

But, this product is not as widely used as before.

I have read that it should never be used on asphalt tile floors, waxed wooden floors or linoleum because it may produce spots.

Use a dust mop instead.

Cement Floors

If you get some spills on the floor of your garage or other cement surfaces, you can use plain cat litter to absorb a lot of the liquid before it can settle in. Some people recommend that you press the cat litter into the liquid to ensure that it absorbs the maximum amount.



But, you still may have to try a second application after you have swept up the first lot of cat litter.

Mats Matter

One simple way to reduce the amount of cleaning required around your home is to stop a lot of the dirt and debris before it gets in your doors.

You probably already have a doormat at each entrance, but the type and size of the mats which you use are very important.

Size: You need to have a mat which everyone who comes in through that entrance will have to take at least two steps on. This helps to ensure that as much dirt is shaken from their shoes before they get inside. Some mats, especially those decorated with mottos or other eye-catching designs may be small enough to be stepped over by adults and even older children, so the rubbish gets into your home.

Construction: Fiber mats are a tradition in some areas but they don't collect dirt well and are not easy to clean either.

Mats composed of recycled pieces of rubber tire joined with metal don't do a very good job either, in my opinion.

I suggest you put outside each door a solid rubber mat or one with strong rubber backing.

I prefer solid mats instead of those with holes in them because some areas of visitors' shoes will not come in contact with the mat if it has holes.

The gaps may cause an accident if the visitor is wearing high heels or loose slip-on shoes or has any kind of infirmity.

Always check the manufacturer's instructions, but most of these mats can be washed with a hose.

Then, you can spray them with a little cleaning agent. Give them a quick rinse with the hose before you hang them on the clothesline to dry.

Inside your doors, you should use a synthetic mat with a non-slip vinyl back.

Please avoid using carpet samples, squares or anything which is more decorative than useful.

Be sure that all your mats won't slip in wet weather or when an excited child rushes in at speed. Avoid cloth-backed mats for that reason.

If you have expensive, or hard to clean, floor covering in high-traffic areas such as hallways, buying a runner which you can lay over it might be a wise investment.

Doors Do too!

Although they are subject to more use than almost any other part of the average home, doors are seldom treated well.

We slam them and we seldom clean them even when we attend to the windows and other parts near them.

I mentioned elsewhere that you should clean the handles every week because they can be a prime source for spreading germs.

But, they also need to be checked regularly for wear.

They are, after all, the first thing all visitors see and the first line of defense against weather and other problems.

Have a Bathroom Your Guests will Envy!



The bathroom probably gets more traffic than any other room in your home.

I guess some people dread cleaning theirs but, after reading this section, you will be ready and

able to make the littlest room one you can be proud of!

The reason that your bathroom is likely to become one of the toughest cleaning jobs you get maybe because you have been trying too hard and using bleaches and other harsh cleaners.

The first step is to abandon the common practice of a weekly blitz on every part of your bathroom in favor of a quick daily session which keeps everything ready for the inevitable unexpected guest and helps to prevent small problems building up.

Bleach can cause two problems in your bathroom.

1] It can remove the color from residue that has built up so that you don't notice it.

2] It may react with some cleaners and cause the release of unpleasant vapors or worse.

So, please keep the bleach away from your bathroom.

If you have a particularly bad problem with mildew and you feel that diluted bleach is your only answer, make sure that there is no residue from other cleaning products on the area you are going to clean.

Then, wipe the solution over the area, and let it dry. Then, rinse the area thoroughly with clean water.

Make sure the whole area is clean and dry before using any other cleaner.

For fiberglass, there are only limited options. Use a cleaner which is specified for the job. Never use abrasive pads or non-specific products.

Clean all fiberglass regularly and also at any time when you see a new mark or stain.

To clean your porcelain, as always, read and follow the supplier's instructions if you have them. Or, you can try a paste of Borax with a little water. Check first on a small, inconspicuous area.

Getting grime off grout is considered hard work by many of my friends but it's easy if you attack it early and as often as you see the grout start to discolor. The best weapon is a circular typewriter eraser but make sure that the grout is as dry as the eraser. Clean up the powder residue when you have used the eraser on all your grout.

If the grime has built up, mix some baking soda with half that quantity of borax and then add water slowly until you have a paste. Brush onto the grout and then rinse everything away. Get yourself a couple of typewriter erasers before the grime has time to build up again.

For my chrome taps, I use a little white vinegar on a soft cloth. Then, I use a clean cloth to dry the fittings.

Be careful as fittings may not always be made of or plated with the material you think it is. Always follow the suppliers' instructions.

"Gold" fittings may be more delicate. Try a mild detergent on your cloth.

Don't use abrasive cleaners or scourers on any these fittings.

Rubbing dried soap scum to remove it can be frustrating. Soak the residue with water for about ten minutes, then remove what comes away easily with a plastic spatula. Then, soak the remainder for a while longer before trying again. It may take some time to soften but this means you don't waste a lot of energy and lessen any risk of damage to your fingers or the surfaces.

After that, use your damp cloth daily to remove the scum before it has any chance to build into a solid mass.

Use three parts water to one of vinegar to clean glass shower screens. Never use soap – that's what causes most of the mess.

I've read that WD-40, a spray-on lubricant, will also remove stubborn soap scum. The person who supplied the testimonial said they applied the spray and then left it for a few minutes. Then, most of the residue could be easily

removed. If you try this, test an inconspicuous area first and be sure to rinse away any WD-40 too and then thoroughly dry the area afterwards.

I've got a couple of cans of the stuff but I haven't tried this because I don't let any soap residue build up.

Plastic shower curtains should be wiped down with a cloth that has a little mild detergent on it. Replace them rather than washing them more thoroughly because they mostly don't stand up very well to machine washing or just being squeezed.

Get a cleaner with a hospital-grade disinfectant for your bathroom. You can use it for most of the fittings but, of course, it is most important to use the hospital grade solution around the toilet itself.

Wear gloves and use a double-edged scouring sponge to remove any persistent deposits (a quick squirt with your disinfectant solution might make that easier.)

Start from the mirror and cabinet and work your way downward.

Clean the toilet last so there is minimum chance of transferring any germs onto the other areas. Wipe all the outer surfaces including the cistern and the base, then spray, brush and flush.

This treatment, if used regularly, will make your toilet cleaner than all the fancy (and smelly) blocks or blue liquids in those little expensive containers which people secrete in their cisterns.

The job is almost finished.

When everything is sparkling or, at least clean and sweeter smelling, spray the door handles and wipe them over with a fresh cloth.

It's a good idea to do this to all your door handles about once a week because everybody that comes to your home touches them and they're a prime agent of transferring germs.

Kitchen Clues

After the bathroom, the kitchen is probably the most heavily trafficked room in most homes. There are also plenty of potential threats to our health.

But, it's not hard to keep your kitchen clean.



Your kitchen equipment is in almost constant use. The best way to keep it looking its best is to do a little every day and clean off any spills or other accumulations as soon as you can.

Wash the exterior of your appliances with club soda.

Chopping Boards: Get a wooden chopping board just for chicken, and one for raw fish and for meat. Don't use those boards for anything else such as vegetables or cooked meat.

Use a slice of lemon to bleach and deodorize your wooden chopping boards.

When a board develops any cuts or chips, it is better to replace it rather than try to keep it clean.

Plastic boards can be washed with a little standard dishwashing detergent if you keep your water just under boiling temperature. Use a nail brush which you keep just for this purpose.

Make sure that you dry everything completely before storing it away.

Ovens: Many people still attack the inside of their oven with the same harsh and smelly products that their parents used. I prefer to use bicarb and vinegar.

If the supplier of your stove recommends a particular way to clean their appliance, that is the course for you to follow. If you don't have any information from them, check their web site.

Remove all the racks from within your oven and set them aside for now.

Make sure that every switch on your stove is turned OFF.

Dust the interior with a little bicarb, then apply a little to a sponge which you wipe over the inside top of the oven.

Now, put some vinegar on a fresh sponge and wipe that over the inside top of the oven. You'll hear a little crackling and popping as the two chemicals interact.

Immediately scrub the area gently with a nylon brush.

Now, apply some bicarb to the sponge you used to apply bicarb to the top of the stove, unless that sponge is too grimy to be used. If so, put some bicarb on a new sponge and rub it over one side of the inside of the stove.

Apply some fresh vinegar to your vinegar sponge put it on top of your bicarb sponge and then rub both of them firmly over the area where you just applied the bicarb. You are, in effect, squeezing the vinegar through both sponges onto the stove surface.

Clean your nylon brush and dry it, then scrub the whole side of the stove to remove any residue. Do the same with the other side of the inside of the stove.

Before you clean the bottom of the stove, brush out the accumulated loose material which has dropped from the top and sides. Then, you can clean the bottom as you did the other surfaces.

If there are stubborn residues on the sides which did not come off with the first application, you can treat them again individually or apply a little mild cleaning liquid, leave it for a few minutes and then try to remove it with your nylon brush.

Wash the fittings with mild detergent in warm water. Dry them thoroughly. Make sure the entire inside of the stove is dry and there are no small spots of residue still hiding there.

Now you can return the fittings, have a restorative cup of tea and start to prepare your next meal in your newly cleaned oven.

Clean the outer surface of your oven with detergent and warm water. Never use abrasives or harsh chemicals. Though the stove is strong, the coatings

on various parts may be easily damaged and hard to get a proper finish on again.

When you are cleaning your stove, pay particular attention to any grooves or scratches which might hide grime.

Furniture

Keeping your furniture clean should be one of the major considerations when you are buying it. Good quality furniture is, of course, more expensive than the cheaper types but with quality you usually get better comfort and greater longevity.

The good stuff is also usually easier to clean and gives us a better return for the time and effort you spend on cleaning it.

Furniture that has patterns and grooves will require more time and care to keep clean and presentable.

Check the type of fabric or other materials used in the furniture you are considering:

- ? Can they be cleaned by you without calling in professional paid help?
- ? Do they repel stains or do you need to use a protective treatment like Scotchgard?

Ask the store or check the information supplied with your new furniture about the recommended method of cleaning each part of the furniture.

There are many products which are promoted for cleaning upholstery on furniture.

But this is one area where I recommend some caution. Many of the quick fix applicators and magic solutions can easily be misused even when they seem to produce almost miraculous results when you use them.

If you apply some of these solutions to your upholstery, the grime or stain might disappear but you may have only pushed the solution deep inside the fabric.

If your vacuum cleaner is a modern one with an attachment for extracting grime from this particular type of upholstery, that may be worth a try.

There are upholstery cleaners which you can use for furniture fabrics like cotton, wool and a few others. Test the cleaner on a small area first, because

results will vary even between two items covered with the same type of fabric.

Leather couches should be treated regularly with saddle soap or a proprietary product designed for protecting them.

Wrap the nozzle of your vacuum cleaner in a piece of soft cloth before using it on your leather furniture to prevent scratches or other damage.

Don't use water when trying to clean your leather furniture because the leather may become hard.

Leather is easily scratched and I don't know any perfect method for fixing it. But, you could try gently rubbing on a small quantity of quality shoe cream of the appropriate shade.

Because there are a wide variety of leathers, you should ask your supplier for specific instructions about maintaining and cleaning your purchase.

If the leather has some sort of backing material, this will probably require different treatment and you must ensure that whatever you apply to the backing does not contact or affect the leather.

Fake leather will not respond the same to the products used for real leather. There are special products designed for treating fake leather which should be used.

Your Cleaning Plan

Like almost everything in life, cleaning is more effective and takes less time and effort if you work to a plan.

Windows

I go through this in detail in the chapter on window cleaning. But, the basic idea is to:

- 1) Clean the frame near the window with a damp cloth.
- 2) Use your commercial squeegee to clean a narrow band across the top or down one side of the window.
- 3) Wipe your squeegee with a clean cloth or chamois after each stroke.
- 4) Wipe your squeegee across or down the window in even smooth and slightly overlapping the strokes. Remember to clean off the squeegee after each stroke

Vacuuming Carpets

- 1) Start your vacuuming at the point opposite the door (where you want to finish) and work across the room.
- 2) Before you switch on your cleaner, remove everything you can which might obstruct or get sucked into your machine.
- 3) Attach the beater option, if you have one, to the front of your cleaner.
- 4) If you don't, do a visual inspection of the carpet and carry a small dustpan and broom with you.
- 5) Make sure that you've cleared any items which might damage the machine or that you would prefer not to end up inside it.
- 6) Now, you can brush picture rails, the tops of the doors and the baseboards to remove any loose grime or push it onto the floor where your vacuum can pick it up.
- 7) With the narrow nozzle, vacuum the awkward areas such as corners and under the furniture which you could not move before attaching the regular head to clean the main area.

- 8) Most people vacuum like their mothers did, moving parallel with the wall where they started. But, I suggest that you vary your routine by vacuuming in diagonal stripes from time to time to vary the impact on the fibers in your carpet.

Cleaning Stairs

Take extra care of your own safety when you are cleaning your stairs. You will be handling your vacuum cleaner and possibly attachments as well. That's hard enough on a level surface.

Keep a small dustpan and broom with you to collect any solid items before using the vacuum. That makes cleaning your stairs much simpler and protect the cleaner's mechanism.

Start at the top and move yourself and disturbed dust downward. Otherwise, you will find floating dust which you dislodge as you work your way upward will soil the lower steps and reduce the effectiveness of all your work.

Make sure that you clean the corners of each step because that's where the most grime will collect. If not cleaned out, it might attract small bugs.

Cleaning Walls

I never cleaned these myself nor ever had any desire to.

But, my partner is very good with heights and he has not only done our walls, he’s helped a few friends who share my dislike of heights.

This is the system he read about a few years ago and it has been a great help in reducing the amount of time and effort required.

I hope that you will find it equally useful.

Peter said that the most important requirement is stable ladders or scaffolding. It’s usually better to hire good equipment rather than depend on that 13 foot wooden ladder you inherited from your dad.

You need:

- ✓ Two large buckets
- ✓ Some dry sponges ([see here](#))
- ✓ Concentrated cleaning solution
- ✓ A cellulose sponge as big as you can comfortably hold
- ✓ A cleaning mitt made from a fifteen inch square of clean towelling. ([see here](#))
- ✓ A drop sheet to protect your floor from spills and grime you remove from the walls.

Half-fill one bucket with warm water.

Put the same amount of your diluted cleaning solution in the other.

Put your materials in a plastic box close by so that you don’t waste time when you want to get another mitt or dry sponge.

Unwrap and then fold a dry sponge in half, then press half of one surface against the surface you want to clean.

Grasp the other half of the sponge in your hand and draw it across the wall.

If you don’t see any marks on the sponge after a few swipes, it’s probably clean enough to wash without further application of the dry sponge.

Otherwise, keep wiping the sponge over the area to be cleaned in swipes that are as long as your arms let you make without stretching.

Turn the sponge around to put a new surface against the wall whenever the side you are using is almost fully soiled.

You will also refold the sponge when you have used all the sections of that first side, so you get eight surfaces on each dry sponge.

When you have used your dry sponges on all the walls you intend to wash, you might take a short break but, surprisingly, Peter says you won't expend a lot of energy in that phase, so you might want to continue straight on and wash the first part of your room.

Dip about half an inch of your cellulose sponge in the dilute cleaning solution and then put it on the edge of the area where you will start cleaning.

You might want to start at the bottom and work upward, but Peter always starts at the top. He says this prevents him seeing drips of water and cleaning solution running down the wall and marking areas where he has already cleaned.

Climb to your starting point with your sponge in one hand and your cleaning mitt on the other.

Don't waste any time as you wipe the wet edge of your sponge across the first section. If you do, you have more chance of drips falling on your floor and your face. You won't get water or cleaning solution running down your arm if you followed my suggestion and just dipped a small section of the sponge into the bucket. The dry section of the sponge will absorb any runoff.

Don't try to do too big an area in one session. When you have dampened a reasonably sized square with the cleaning solution, return to your starting point and gently draw the sponge over the same area again without applying any pressure to it.

If your cleaning solution has done its job, the dirt from the wall will start to run off into the sponge.

After each wipe, rub any spots of grime away with your cleaning mitt.

When you have finished gently wiping over the whole section, just come back to the floor.

Squeeze out all the liquid and dirt from your sponge into the half-full bucket of warm water. Don't wring the sponge.

Then, start the cycle again by dipping about half an inch of the sponge into the cleaning solution.

Or, as the familiar saying goes, “Rinse and repeat!”

This method saves time and effort. Your solution might be the latest chemical miracle liquid or a simple ammonia solution.

If one or two spots remain on an area you wash, don't worry.

When you have finished the whole wall, go back for another look. The solution which remained in the surface may have worked it loose while you were working through the other areas.

If not, try a dab of your cleaning solution on a fresh cloth and give it a rub.

If that doesn't work, you could try white toothpaste or even a more abrasive substance but you then risk leaving a dull patch where the dirt had been which will show up like a beacon now that you have done such a great job on the rest of it.

Walls with a glossy finish will respond to this treatment but you need to ensure that your cloths are dry and change them more often. Otherwise, there is more chance that you will mark the walls as you wipe them.

I don't think you need to worry about your ceilings unless they are showing definite marks or other damage like smoke patterns.

Then, even Peter thinks it's a good idea to call in the professionals. Reaching up and even behind his head to clean our ceilings is something he is happy to pay someone else to do.

Quick Fixes

Barbeques

You can clean a barbeque hot plate with a little bicarb and some vinegar. When the fizzing starts to slow, rub everything away with a paper towel.

Irons

There are still a lot of people using irons that don't have a non-stick coating on the soleplate.

When they get dirty, people tend to attack them with a scourer or strong cleaner which reduces the effective life of the iron.

Let the iron cool down and then try rubbing a clean cloth with some white toothpaste on it over the sole plate. Don't press too hard. When the plate is clean, rinse all traces of the toothpaste away and dry thoroughly before its next use.

Empty steam irons between ironing sessions or you may get a build-up which will start to clog the holes in the soleplate.

Use the wooden end of a match or, better still, a pipe cleaner to ream out any holes which start to block up.

Marks on Walls

Some marks will wipe away with a rub of an art gum eraser. Keep one in your cleaning kit just for these occasions.

Another household item that will get some marks off is a small spot of white toothpaste. Put it on a clean cloth and press it gently against the mark with your finger.

Put Your Umbrella Here

You might have good mats outside and inside each door as I suggest elsewhere, but their effect will be reduced if you don't remember to also give people somewhere to hang their coat and park their wet umbrella.

Any handyman can make a simple wooden tray with a stand at the back of it but I got ours from the local second-hand store for just a few dollars.

More Time for You.

Thanks for reading my book.

I don't expect that cleaning will be very enjoyable except for the satisfaction we can get from doing something well.

I hope these tips and short-cuts will help you to keep your home or castle clean and inviting, with less time and effort, so you get more time to share with your family and friends.

Pru Nation

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