

Cleaning Tips

1. Clean Your Cleaning Equipment

Your cleaning equipment includes everything from your feather duster to your vacuum and dishwasher. If you don't clean, maintain and disinfect these items, they're more likely to spread dirt, grime and bacteria instead of cleaning them up. Here are some tips for cleaning tool maintenance:

- Empty the dust container or bag in your vacuum
- Clean and disinfect mops and scrubbing brushes, then air dry
- Clean rags and towels in hot water
- Replace dusting tools if they're in bad shape
- Run a machine-cleaning cycle in your dishwasher and clothes washer

2. Use the Right Products

Using the right products on the right surfaces is key to keeping your home in shape long-term. And there are many downsides to using the wrong stuff:

- It doesn't clean the surface because it's too weak
- It causes damage because it's too strong
- It warps or dulls the material because they interact poorly

Familiarize yourself with the materials and finishes in your home, including countertops, flooring and cabinetry. Match the right product to each material and resist the temptation to use what you already have if it's not a good fit. And for a deep clean, consider [hiring a cleaning professional](#) who will know the right products to get your home in top shape.

3. Follow Product Instructions

Cleaning products have evolved and multiplied. When you grab a new, fast-acting foam cleanser or dissolving tablets, read the directions first. The products won't be as effective if you don't use them as intended. People commonly miss or skip these instructions:

- Let sit for X amount of time
- Works on all materials except X
- Do not mix with other products
- Dilute in X amount of water
- Shake first / Don't shake
- Test on a small area first
- Rinse with cold water
- Let air dry

4. Blot – Don't Scrub!

It's important to tackle stains in carpet, furniture and upholstery right away, but it's even more important to tackle them correctly! Immediately scrubbing the stain will only push it further into the fibers. You want to blot

at the stain with a cloth to get the liquid up, then treat it with a stain remover. Scrubbing will make your job more difficult, and you may do damage that calls for a professional.

5. Clean in the Right Order

The rule of thumb is to clean from the top down, but it's easy to get stuck in a rhythm that goes out of order. This just creates more work for you, because dirt and dust falls where you've already cleaned. And if you don't notice it's happening, the grime will pile up. So, dust your light fixtures before you mop your floors. And clean the tops of your cabinets before you wipe your countertops.

6. Be Careful With Vinegar

Vinegar is the ultimate multi-use cleaner, and many people think they can use it on anything. But before you reach for this magic solution, do a quick search on how vinegar interacts with the material at hand – and test it in a small area to be sure. Here are a few things you shouldn't clean with vinegar:

- Pet accidents in your carpet
- Most stone countertops
- Hardwood
- Digital screens
- Some waxed surfaces
- Some types of grout

7. Cut Yourself Some Slack

Some materials don't need to be cleaned as often as we think. And some need more or less attention depending on where they are, like a tile backsplash versus a tile shower. If you clean things too often, you waste time and risk wearing the material out. Here are a few chores you can cut back on, with a suggested frequency for each:

- Mopping: Every one to two weeks
- Washing pillows, slipcovers and comforters: Seasonally
- Deep-cleaning carpets and upholstery: Once or twice a year
- Cleaning pantries and cabinets: Seasonally
- Polishing wood: Seasonally
- Deep cleaning windows: Once or twice a year

8. Remember: Less is More

It may seem impossible to use too much product, and many people operate by the principle that more is more. But too much product can damage a material over time, or at the very least waste money. You might notice you've used too much when you see residue on your counters or windows after cleaning, or when your wood furniture is far too slick with polish. People tend to use these products in surplus: bleach, wood polish, detergent, window cleaner, carpet cleaner.