

Here's a terrific deep-cleaning cleanser that works on any bathroom surface. It cuts through soap scum and mildew as well as any commercial bathroom product and costs just pennies.

Ingredients:

1 2/3 cups baking soda

1/2 cup liquid soap

1/2 cup water

2 tablespoons white vinegar

1 clean 16-ounce squirt bottle with closing cap

1. Mix baking soda and liquid soap in a bowl. Dilute with water and add the vinegar. Stir the mixture with a fork until any lumps have been dissolved. Pour the liquid into the bottle. Shake well before using.

2. Squirt on area to be cleaned. Scrub with a nylon-backed sponge. Rinse off with water. Keep cap on between uses.

You can lift out many stains from your carpet with vinegar:

Rub light carpet stains with a mixture of 2 tablespoons salt dissolved in 1/2 cup white vinegar. Let the solution dry, then vacuum. For larger or darker stains, add 2 tablespoons borax to the mixture and use in the same way.

It may sound like a cliché but adding 1/2 cup baking soda to your usual amount of liquid laundry detergent really will give you “whiter whites” and brighter colors. The baking soda also softens the water, so you can actually use less detergent. Adding 1/2 cup baking soda in top-loading machines (1/4 cup for front-loaders) also increases the potency of bleach, so you need only half the usual amount of bleach.