



SPRING CLEANING 101

Quick tricks to help conquer spring cleaning

We live in an accelerated time and it seems everything can be accomplished in no time at all; everything, that is, except cleaning! Try these easy steps to tackle any room — no matter how much (or how little) time you have.

KITCHEN

Kitchen enemy No. 1: grease. Before you start, move small appliances off the counters to ensure that bacteria (kitchen enemy No. 2) won't flourish underneath the toaster oven or the coffeemaker.

Clean countertops and sink

Spray disinfectant in the sink and let it soak; otherwise, the product won't have time to kill the bacteria and viruses you're trying to remove. Meanwhile, spritz the counters with disinfectant. Scrub the sink with a sponge, rinse well, and dry. Return to the counters and wipe dry with a fresh cotton or microfiber cloth.

Clean refrigerator handle

It takes only seconds to wipe this bacteria-friendly spot with disinfectant.

Wet mop the floor

A few spritzes of an all-purpose cleaner and a damp microfiber mop will do the trick.

Wipe down appliances

Avoid damage by using wipes made to clean the surfaces of gadgets.

Wash cabinet fronts

Wipe from top to bottom with a soft sponge and a solution of warm water and dish soap. If the cabinets are wood, use a wood cleanser, or olive oil.

Deep-clean appliances

To freshen the refrigerator's interior, clean it with a solution of three tablespoons baking soda and four cups warm water.

Clean your tea kettle by boiling a mixture of water and white vinegar and then wiping away the grime.

Fill the reservoir of your coffeemaker with a mixture of white vinegar and water, and run it through the brewing cycle. Follow this with several cycles of water to rinse thoroughly.

To clean your dishwasher, run a cup of vinegar through an entire cycle (with the machine empty) to reduce soap buildup on the inner mechanisms and glassware.

Clean drains

Pour 1/2 to 1 cup of baking soda down the drain, then slowly pour 1/2 to 1 cup of white vinegar after it. Let sit for five minutes (covered, if possible). Follow with a gallon of boiling water.

THE FAMILY ROOM

Clear the clutter

Tour the room with a laundry basket or cardboard box, and pick up any out-of-place items. You can either redistribute these later, or store them

to create a less-cluttered environment.

Clean from top to bottom

When you dust, let gravity work for you. Start up high, and work your way down, saving vacuuming for last. This is the most efficient way to clean.

Speed dust at eye level

Grab two electrostatic or microfiber cloths. Rotate out the grimy cloth, or opt for quick, two-handed dust-busting.

Dry-clean special items once a year

For special items, like decorative pillows or throw blankets, send them to the dry-cleaners during spring cleaning. In between, spot clean as needed.

Vacuum

It's time consuming, but important. Dirt can cut carpet fibers and damage wood floors. Concentrate on the areas around doorways, which harbor tracked-in dirt.

Tackle upholstery and window treatments

Use the vacuum's brush attachment or a lint roller to get dust off sofas and chairs (also good for lamp shades). Clean under and behind cushions, then flip them to distribute wear evenly. Wipe each slat of your blinds with a damp microfiber cloth. You can also dust blinds with a fabric softener sheet.

Spot clean the walls

Take off dirt, stains, and scuffs with a damp eraser pad. One solution: Use a damp sponge with a sprinkle of baking soda to erase crayon, pencil, ink and furniture scuffs from painted surfaces.

Combat hidden dirt and dust

Get behind, underneath, and on top of all furniture with a long-handled duster.