

Spring-Cleaning Checklist



There are few rites of spring more satisfying than the annual deep clean. For many people, however, the pleasure comes only after the work is finished. Cleaning your home from top to bottom may never become effortless, but you can make the project more manageable—and even enjoyable. This checklist offers an overview of everything you need to know—including information on cleansers, stain removal, fabric care, and storage—to zip through the process.

After you read through the tips and techniques, tailor the list to your home and yard. Whether you prefer to proceed from the attic to the basement or start outdoors and wind your way inside, create a realistic schedule and focus on one task at a time, keeping in mind that a single weekend won't suffice. You'll need several days for more involved projects, such as shampooing carpets and organizing closets. And be sure to enlist the help of family members.

The tips below outline basic techniques that will help you clean almost every surface (or object) in any room, leaving your home refreshed from top to bottom.

Wipe Walls and Ceilings

Use a vacuum to remove dust. Tackle stubborn surface grime, especially prevalent in kitchens, with a solvent-free degreaser (test it first in an inconspicuous area to ensure it won't mar the surface).

Reseal Grout Lines

The cement-based material between wall, floor, and countertop tiles is extremely porous and stains easily. Protect it with a penetrating grout sealer; it's best to apply it with a small foam brush.

Vacuum and Shampoo Rugs

Synthetic carpets and rugs with waterproof backings can be deep-cleaned with a rotary shampoo machine and a hot-water extraction machine. Rugs without backings, including Orientals, require professional cleaning.

Dust Books and Shelves

Take everything off the shelves, and brush them (along with the books) with a feather duster. Use the dust brush or crevice tool on a vacuum to reach into tight spots. Wipe the spines of leather-bound books with a clean, soft cloth.

Clean Upholstered Furnishings

Take cushions outside and gently beat them by hand to remove dust. If there are stains, check the pieces for care labels. Use a vacuum's upholstery and crevice tools to clean under seat cushions.

Polish Metal Door and Window Hardware

Liquid polishes and polish-impregnated cloths work well for medium-tarnished surfaces; pastes and creams are best for heavier work. If the tarnish doesn't come off, try a stronger product.

Dust Your Home Thoroughly

This includes hard-to-reach places, such as the tops of ceiling fans and window casings. Always work from the top of a room down, vacuuming the dust that settles on the floor. Avoid using dusting sprays.

Wax Wooden Furniture

Wipe surfaces with a soft cloth dampened with water and mild dishwashing liquid. Apply paste wax, such as Butcher's wax, a few feet at a time with a cotton rag folded into a square pad. Let the wax dry; buff with a clean cloth.

Ensure Fire Safety

Change batteries in smoke detectors (this should be done twice a year), and make sure units are free of dust. Teach everyone in your household how to use a fire extinguisher, and review escape plans.

Wash Window Screens

Using warm water and a mild dishwashing liquid, scrub each screen with a brush; rinse thoroughly.

Clean Window Treatments

Many draperies and curtains are machine washable; check labels. Dry clean fabric shades. Wipe wooden blinds with a damp cloth; warm water mixed with a mild dishwashing liquid is safe for metal and vinyl blinds.

Wax Non-Wood Floors

Vinyl and linoleum floors that have lost their shine should be waxed with a polish designed for these surfaces. Most stone and tile floors can be treated with either a paste or a liquid wax designed for the material.