



# the CLEAN machine

It's a *dirty job*, but somebody's got to do it.  
108 fast, faster and fastest *plans of attack*

BY ALYSSA ETINGER

Here's a confession...I *hate* cleaning.

I know, I know, you're probably thinking "Yeah, lady—who doesn't?!" I've been writing about cleaning for years, though, and I've learned there are lots of ways to get things clean and tidy without getting into a frenzy.

Most of my cleaning is speed cleaning, or the kind that gets done because I have absolutely, positively no choice. (Invite friends for dinner and see if that doesn't get you off the couch.) As for deep cleaning, that's something I do about once a year, but don't tell. In the meantime, I can offer you a big, room-by-room game plan, plus some tips I've managed to pick up along the way.

## Easy Ways To Do the Chores You Hate

**THE DREADED REFRIGERATOR.** To defrost a freezer that's not self-defrosting, turn it off, place a bowl of boiling water inside and wait 15 minutes. When you come back, the ice will have loosened and will be easier to remove. (Do not, however, pry at it with sharp objects.) Take out shelves and bins and put them in the bathtub with hot, soapy water. Let them soak themselves clean, then rinse and let dry in the tub.

**GRUNGY MINI-BLINDS.** Let's hear it (again!) for the bathtub. Fill it with warm, soapy water, take down the blinds and let them soak. Or bring them into the backyard and zap them with the hose.

**PATIO AND SHOWER DOOR TRACKS.** If they go uncleaned for too long, dirt will build up and harden, causing doors to stick. To clean them, spray generously with all-purpose cleaner and let sit for a few minutes. Then take a screwdriver with a terry-cloth rag wrapped around the pointed end and carefully make several passes along the track to get out the gunk.

## Keeping the Cleaning Supplies Clean

■ Soak sponges in bleach and water to keep them fresh and clean, or try tossing them in with a dishwasher load. You can even wash and dry them with a load of rags in your washing machine.

■ Mop heads can be washed and dried in the washing machine as well. Add some bleach to get them really clean and germ-free.

■ Dusty broom? Use a stiff comb to remove lint from the bristles. After using a broom, always rinse vigorously and hang it face down.

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**PET-PROOFING** ■ Place pretty pillowcases or towels where four-legged friends tend to nap and shed. My cat loves the arms of sofas, and a couple of inexpensive lace pillowcases protect them while looking not-so-bad-after-all.

■ For pets who sleep on the bed, try using a decorative top sheet as a bedspread. It's pretty and washable.

■ Animals are not tidy eaters. Stay one step ahead by placing a clean dishtowel underneath your pet's feeding area. Shake it out regularly and toss it in the wash once a week.

■ Put a few drops of glycerine on vacuum brushes to get pet hair off floors.



## The Absolute Best Way to Clean...

### FABRIC LAMPSHADES.

Vacuum with the dusting attachment.

### A VASE WITH A THIN NECK.

If you don't have an extended wand with bristles or a sponge, fill the vase with warm, soapy water and a handful of rice. Cover the opening with your hand and shake, shake, shake. The rice works as an abrasive, lifting away dirt.

**LEATHER FURNITURE.** This is usually best left to the pros, but for small stains, saddle soap should do the trick. Follow the directions, and test first on the underside or back.

**QUILTS.** If the quilt is washable, place it in a large-capacity machine

with detergent and a clean pair of canvas sneakers. Likewise, if the quilt can be machine-dried, dry in a large-capacity dryer with the sneakers. As they toss and turn, they'll keep the quilt fluffy (works for pillows, too).

**PURSES.** Dump the entire contents of your purse into a large, clear plastic bag, then vacuum the inside of the purse with the crevice attachment. Next, reach into the plastic bag for things you need to put back in the purse (or elsewhere). When you're done, the purse is clean, and the plastic bag is filled with only dust and all those loose, wrinkled wrappers and bits of paper.

**DRAPES.** If they're soiled, they should be dry-cleaned. If they're just dusty, run them through a dryer on a no-heat setting. (Check drape manufacturer's instructions first.)

**LIGHT FIXTURES.** Hurricanes, chimneys and other glass light covers should be washed in a plastic bucket to prevent breakage and chipping. Use 2 tablespoons rubbing alcohol to 2 quarts water. Rinse.

**WINDOWS.** For a quick, painless solution, simply spray on some window cleaner, use a squeegee, and you're done—streak-free. Try it on mirrors and shower doors, too.

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## When You Can't Clean It, Cover It!

■ Use **wallpaper** to cover or line the insides of drawers and cabinets. It's so much easier to work with (and far more affordable) than self-adhesive vinyl. Use ordinary white glue to hold it.

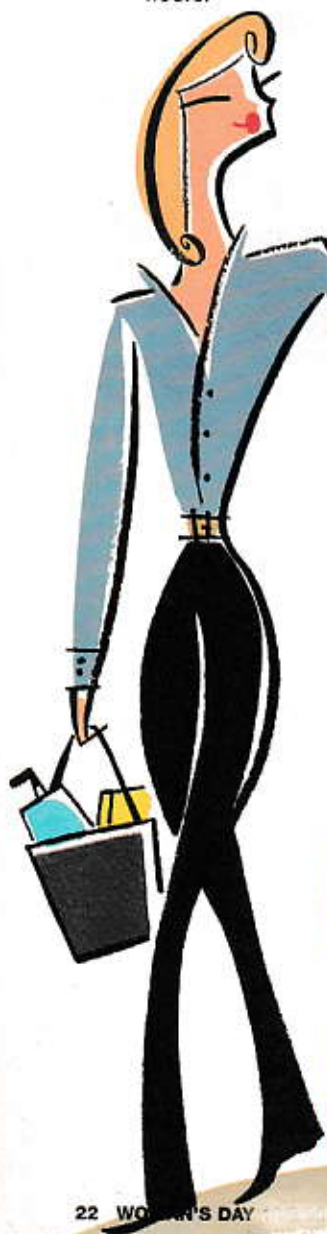
■ Don't underestimate what a framed **picture** or a **wall hanging** can do. Use them to hide stains on wallpaper or imperfections in the plaster.

■ If windowsills are forever getting dingy, keep a quart of **paint** handy and give them a fresh coat several times a year.

■ Rings on coffee and end tables? Toss a piece of washable decorative **fabric** on the table.

■ Some carpet stains are never going to go away. Cover them with a decorative **throw rug**, right on top of the carpet.

■ Tired of seeing the cleaning supplies stashed under your pedestal sink? Hide them with a pretty **sink skirt**.





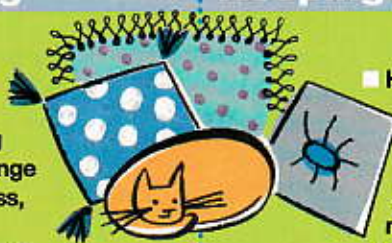
## THE BIG GAME PLAN

Speed cleaning | Deep cleaning | Keeping it clean

### the bedroom

- Gather books and knick-knacks that wander and put them in baskets.
- Make the bed quickly by pulling all linens up on one side before moving to the other, then tucking them in at the same time.
- Give the room a fast sweep or vacuum, especially in high-traffic areas.

- Start in one corner of the room and work in a circle, tidying and picking up things as you go. Change sheets, rotate the mattress, fluff pillows.
- Put the brush attachment on the vacuum and tackle molding, windowsills, miniblinds, tables, pictures, etc. Vacuum the floor, and don't skip areas you can't see.



- Have a hamper within easy reach so clothes can be tossed in at night. A decorative basket near the bed can hold books, glasses and remote controls.
- Make your bed prettier with decorative pillows, etc., to motivate yourself to make it every morning.

### the living room

- Toss mail and magazines into a basket, and fluff sofa pillows.
- Use a dustcloth to go over the coffee table, television, etc. Quickly sweep or vacuum.
- Spot-clean windows with glass cleaner and a cloth.



- Pull out the vacuum and its attachments and go for broke: the sofa, the floor, the corners of the ceiling, the bookshelf. Just remember to start at the top (lamps, ceiling fans, etc.) and work down so you don't have to clean anything twice. If the walls look dusty, vacuum them, too.

- When you watch television, spend a few of the commercials tidying up.
- Use a dusting spray formulated for electronic equipment on the television, stereo and VCR.
- As in the bedroom, keep a decorative basket handy for holding reading materials and remote controls, but don't let things get out of hand.

Speed cleaning | Deep cleaning | Keeping it clean

### the kitchen

- Fill the sink with hot, soapy water and let dirty dishes soak while you tackle the rest of the room.
- Wipe down the stove, countertops and fridge with glass cleaner.
- Vacuum, put away everything that has a place, then let the soapy water drain from the sink and transfer the dishes to the dishwasher, or wash them by hand.



- Dust thoroughly, working from top to bottom. Then use a cloth dampened with dishwashing liquid and water to dissolve grease marks on cabinet tops, stove fronts, etc. Rinse. Buff dry so you don't leave streaks.
- Clear off countertops and scrub them down with a counter cleaner; replace all that you moved away.
- Remove control knobs and drip pans from the stove, soak them in hot, soapy water, then scrub and rinse well. Clean stovetop with an all-purpose degreaser and inside the oven with oven cleaner as per manufacturer's directions.

- Don't let dirty dishes stack up, whether you have a dishwasher or not. Wipe up spills on the floor, countertops and stove as soon as they happen.
- Sweep daily to keep floors free of crumbs and dust.
- Keep bags of chips and cookies in clear canisters to prevent any spills.



- Tidy up the kitchen for 5 minutes before you go to bed each night. It does wonders.

### the bathroom

- For a fast all-over wipe-down: Turn on the shower to its hottest setting, close the bathroom door and let the room get steamy. Come back a few minutes later with a rag and start wiping. The steam loosens dust and grime, making removal easy.

- With hot water and a heavy duty scrub-brush, attack the floor, tub, shower, sink and vanity, using an appropriate cleanser for each surface. Dry everything with a clean rag to prevent water spots.
- Use a toothbrush to clean faucet fixtures and tile grout. For tough spots of mildew, dip the toothbrush in a dab of bleach. Rinse.

- Just before a washcloth goes into the hamper, use it to wipe surfaces such as the sink basin and faucets.
- In fair weather, leave a door or window open to keep mold and mildew at bay.
- Squeegee or towel-dry glass doors and walls after each shower. You'll minimize soap scum buildup. **WD**