



How To Clean A House

Extract from

"Food and Household
Management" (Illustrated)

Introduction by Gaia Thompson

How To Clean Your House!

Extract from "Foods and Household Management"(illustrated)

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Introduction



As a contributor to [Housecleaning-Tips.com](https://housecleaning-tips.com), I've grown interested in how homes were managed decades ago. This is mainly because I was never taught how to manage a home because my mother took care of the house and my only duties were to go to school, do my homework and play.

When I first left the protective care of my mother and moved in to my first apartment, I realized immediately that I was not well equipped to manage my new home. I had some unanswered questions.

- How to clean...?
- When to clean?
- What to I need to clean...?

I got the answers to these questions from my mother who for some reason was surprised that I did not know the answers myself.

In addition to using my mother's advice, I've found some treasures in old books. Through some research I've found a few household management books and a textbook (use to teach university courses about Household Management) from as early as 1914.

This report is an abridged version of Chapter 22 (Housewifery) of an old textbook for the Foods and Household Management written by Helen Kinne and Anna M. Cooley. It was first published in 1914. I'm sure you will recognize what information you can use today and what you cannot use and have a new found appreciation for the washing machine.

Also be sure to test yourself by answering the questions at the end.

Chapter 1: Order In Place



KeeP articles of a kind together conveniently arranged in places set apart for them, these places to be easily accessible. Make an inventory of household goods in a card file, household linen, personal apparel, including lists of clothing put away for summer or winter, dishes, and valuables. Each housekeeper must make a scheme that suits her own needs, but a few suggestions may be helpful.

Keep bed linen and towels, piled preferably on shelves, near bedrooms and bathrooms, marked and numbered. Put the clean underneath when they come from the laundry.

Clothing should be kept in an orderly way by each member of the family. Winter clothing and furs should be cleansed for putting away, protected from moths by wrapping in paper, hanging in tar bags, putting in cedar chests, or in trunks with some strong odored substances, moth balls or cedar oil. Camphor is too expensive. Summer clothing should be washed and put away un-starched and un-ironed.

Dishes and silver should be carefully arranged in very definite places, and counted often enough to keep account of breakage and loss.

Brooms, brushes, dusters, and cleansing materials should have a place of their own, well ventilated when possible, and all articles put away clean.

Chapter 2: Order In Work and Division of Labor



This depends so largely upon the number of workers, and upon the equipment of the house that no definite plan can be made for all. The question must be differently answered for the woman who has a helper one day a week, or with one or two, or with a large staff of workers. However, there should be some definite plan for the days of the week and the hours of the day, and some division of work among the members of the family or between the family and [paid helpers](#).

The young people of the family should each have some regular piece of work, at least in their own rooms; and the paid helpers should have a definite plan given them, including some hours to themselves, as regular as possible. There are emergencies that upset even the most perfect system, and these must be met as they come, but a fair amount of work at regular times should be the system.

"Domestic service" is too large a social and economic problem to discuss at length here. Miss Jane Addams calls it "belated industry," meaning that in domestic work we are far behind the productive industries of commerce in organization. We are trying experiments in putting work out, and having helpers come in, and in time we may bring order out of chaos when employers and employees are all properly trained and have the right relation to each other.

Chapter 3: Equipment



Brooms should be made of pliable straw (broom corn), be evenly made, with a light and comfortable handle.

Brushes may include the whisk broom, soft brush of bristles both short and long handled for floors, a long handled brush of wool or soft material for walls, ceilings, and cornices, a soft brush for furniture, a thin brush for radiators, a silver brush, and stiff scrubbing brush. The variety of brushes at a furnishing shop is very large, and interesting to study. It is economy to buy good quality when you can, and if cleaned and not abused they last a long time. Wash the brushes in soapsuds and water, drain and dry before putting away. A bamboo beater is convenient. The dustpan should have a narrow cover at the handle side, and a strong handle.

Carpet sweepers prevent dust from flying and are easy to use, but inclined to wear off the pile of the carpet.

Vacuum cleaners are a necessity in crowded city quarters, where we cannot beat and shake dusty carpets and rugs out of windows, on the roof, or in the street, on account of our neighbors. That we cannot all have them does not make them less necessary. While they may involve no less muscular exertion they remove dust and old dirt in a remarkable way from fabrics, and are very useful for taking dirt from cracks in the floor and woodwork and from upholstered furniture.

The principle of operation differs with different makes, and some are less effective than others, but there are several patterns that do good work and are not expensive. Experiment with one at the first opportunity. A room cleaned in this way is markedly different in odor from a room that has been swept with a broom, even when this is well done.

A good [vacuum cleaner](#) must have an air conveying system, a separator or other means of disposal of the material picked up, and a vacuum producer. They may be divided, according to the method employed, into those worked by bellows, by fan, by rotary pump and piston pump. This is a problem to take to the class in physics.

Cleaning cloths. Have a good supply of cheesecloth dusters, and heavier cloth for work on the floors. A sponge and chamois are useful. The mop, which is a cloth or fiber fabric on a handle, is something that we ought to banish when we can, for it is hard to keep clean, and is a trap for bacteria. A substitute for the common mop is a long handle with a cross bar covered with corrugated rubber, which is held down on the cloth, and rubbed back and forth but not fastened to the cloth. Avoid the use of linty old cloths, because the thread and lint clog the traps and drains.

Cleaning cloths should be boiled in strong soap suds, rinsed, and thoroughly dried before putting away. This is a difficult rule to enforce, for it is a temptation to tuck such things away where they will not show. Watch this matter as you do the garbage pail. When a cloth is too dirty to wash clean, burn it or send it away with paper refuse.

Cleaning materials. Air, sunshine, and water are the great purifiers, plus muscular energy or the power of machinery, but we frequently use chemical aids. These should all be kept in stock.

Soaps and alkalis. White and yellow soap, some washing powder, sal soda, caustic soda, household ammonia. Buy these in quantities if you have room to store them, and if they will not be used too lavishly because the supply is large. The soap is not much cheaper by the box, but it hardens with age, and then it wastes less rapidly when used.

Oils and polishes. Crude oil, kerosene, a mixture of linseed oil, vinegar, and turpentine, one part each, cottonseed oil, alcohol.

Acids. A solution of oxalic acid marked poison. Vinegar is on hand among kitchen supplies.

Gritty substances. Rotten stone, whiting, some gritty soap of a kind that does not scratch, a gritty powder, or fine sand for coarse work.

Disinfectant and deodorizers. A weak solution of carbolic acid marked poison, chloride of lime, or some reliable preparation (though these are rather expensive), rock salt, and coarse common salt.

Chapter 4: Methods of Cleaning



We must first consider what the substance is that has to be removed. The fabrics and upholstery used in furnishing catch dust which contains lint, grit, organic material from our bodies, and bacteria. Fabrics also become spotted. The walls and ceilings, floors and cracks, catch dust. All wood and glass surfaces become soiled from the touch of even clean fingers, and the moisture of the air mixed with dust dulls them. Metal surfaces oxidize, and this oxidized layer must be rubbed off.

To clean fabrics. If you live in a suburb or in the country, brush, shake, and beat articles to be cleaned out of doors, noticing the way of the wind that the dust may not be carried back into the house.

To cleanse a rug, spread it on the grass, rub with a medium stiff brush with white soap solution on the wrong side, turn it over, and rinse with water from the hose; or better still, tack it by two corners to a wooden wall, and then wash with hose.

The city dweller must resort to the vacuum cleaner, or rely upon a cleaning establishment. The other alternative is to shake out the dust in the room, remove each article as it is cleaned, let the dust settle, and take it out as well as it can be. One apartment dweller heard this remark rise from the window below her: "Shut the window quick. Those dirty people upstairs are brushing a rug out the window!"

Painted surfaces and woodwork should be wiped off with a soft cloth wrung out of tepid water. A small amount of neutral white soap solution in the water can be used for paint if it is greasy, but alkalies are ruinous.

A highly polished surface (piano) is cleaned by washing with a sponge and tepid water, and rubbing until dry with a wet chamois wrung out of cold water. This method was learned from a piano polisher, and it works excellently. A dry chamois streaks the surface.

The wood of furniture is kept clean by rubbing with a soft dry cloth, but once in a while needs cleaning with crude oil or the mixture of oil, turpentine, and vinegar.

Bureau drawers need watching for finger marks.

Glass is best cleaned by rubbing on a mixture of whiting and water. Leave it to dry and rub off with a dry cloth. A fine gritty soap comes for this purpose. Ammonia and water and a soft cloth work well, the success depending upon the final polishing. Very soft tissue paper is satisfactory for polishing.

Marble, porcelain, and enamel need little more than white soap suds, rinsed off and the surface dried. If spotted, use the finest kind of metal soap.

Metals. Fine silver and plated ware should be kept polished by the daily careful washing, rinsing in hot water. Silver will spot and tarnish. Use whiting and alcohol, let it dry on, and rub off with a clean cloth or chamois.

The silver powders sold at the silversmiths' are very good, but the patent powders and liquids should not be used, as they remove too much of the silver.

Brass and copper are polished with rotten stone and oil. If the metal is spotted, use oxalic acid solution with the rotten stone. After rubbing well, the metal should be washed off in hot soap suds and finished with a dry cloth.

Nickel plate keeps bright if kept clean by daily dry rubbing.

Chapter 5: Care of Rooms



The bedroom. The daily care includes airing the room and its closets, airing and making the bed, dusting, removing lint and threads from the floor, and removing slops and bringing fresh water if bathing apparatus is in the room.

To make the bed. The amount of airing of the bedclothes depends somewhat upon the weather; bed linen absorbs too much damp if placed by the window on a rainy or foggy day. Pull back the bedclothes and hang them over a chair set front to the foot of the bed, seeing that the bedclothes do not drag on the floor.

On a bright, fresh day remove all the clothes and hang them singly near the window. If there is a screen in the room, this is convenient for this purpose. The blankets should be hung out on the line once in a while, and washed twice a year. One important point in the cleanliness of the bed is a pad or thick cloth placed on the mattress under the sheet. The mattress should be sunned and aired often, and beaten or cleaned with the vacuum cleaner.

To make the bed, place the cover on the mattress, lay the under sheet straight, tuck in firmly at top and bottom, and fold the sides under straight, making angles at the corners. Put each piece on separately, turning the upper sheet down over the others. The cover is sometimes placed over all, and a strip to match over the pillows.

Care of the washstand. This is all important, and cannot be neglected a day, without causing an unpleasant odor. The jars containing slops should be rinsed in cold water, washed out in warm soap suds, dried, and aired. If the ware is china, hot water may crackle the glaze, and then it is impossible to remove odors. Wash and dry all the small articles and wipe out and refill the water pitcher.

Care of the bedroom at night. Fold back, or remove the covers, and lay the bedclothes partly back. See that drinking water is in the room, and lighting conveniences.



The living room, dining room, and halls. The daily care consists in setting furniture and such small articles as the pictures and ornaments straight, removing lint and dust from the floor, dusting wherever needed.

The weekly cleaning of all rooms. Whether a thorough cleaning is needed weekly, depends upon the situation of the house, and the number of people who use the rooms. The rooms in a country house set in wide green spaces do not need cleaning so often as those of a city house.

General order for all rooms. Dust all small articles, place them together and cover them. Dust and clean off furniture and take the lighter pieces from the room. Cover what remains. Clean the textile fabrics in the best way available. Brush the walls, with a special brush, or soft cloth on a broom. Dust and cover pictures. Brush the rugs, or use vacuum cleaner. If the floor is hardwood, brush it with a soft brush, taking long, steady strokes from corner and sides to center. Take up dust in pan, and carry away to burn, or put in dust can at once. Wipe the floor with moist cloth, or with oiled cloth.

If there is a carpet and a broom is to be used, scatter pieces of wet paper over it, moisten the broom, and sweep as directed for brushing, using steady strokes and not allowing the dust to fly. The broom should be washed and dried. If dust flies, allow it time to settle. Dust the surfaces left exposed. Wipe off the woodwork if necessary, remove covers, and replace all articles.

To have the room perfectly clean, windows should be washed, but if this is not convenient at the time, or the weather is bad, rub them and dust the sashes. Wash mirrors and the glass of pictures. This means much labor, and some people cannot accomplish it every week; and different rooms should have different cleaning days. But such thorough cleaning occasionally is necessary for keeping all articles in good condition and also for the health of the family.

The old-fashioned yearly house cleaning seems hardly necessary if cleaning is well done through the year, but in both fall and spring some extra freshening may be necessary in the way of thorough cleansing of textiles and furniture. All closets should have everything removed from them and the whole closet cleansed. Drawers should come out, be emptied, washed and aired, and fresh white or brown paper put in all.

The bathroom and toilet. This needs very particular care, no matter what the type may be. All drains and traps should be flushed daily, and a solution of caustic soda put down weekly. If there is an odor about the water closet, try salt first, and then some chloride preparation. The basin, the tub, and the seat and basin of the toilet should be thoroughly washed daily.

When the bathroom is used by more than one person, all should be taught to leave all the toilet equipment perfectly clean. If the toilet is not of the water-closet type, even greater care should be taken. Everything must be kept scrubbed clean, and chloride of lime should be put down daily, if there is not a removable pail with earth.

Chapter 6: Household Insects



Keepest out flies and mosquitoes by screens, but see first that your premises are clean, and do what you can in the whole neighborhood.

Flies breed in dirty stables and mosquitoes in standing water. The stables must be cleaned and kept so, and water drained off or kerosene put upon it. Mosquitoes will breed in water in an empty milk bottle or old tomato can. If flies enter the house, kill them in some way. Wire or net fly killers cost only ten cents, and do good work. If the flies are very numerous, catch them in wire traps, or burn pyrethrum powder in the room. At night when they are on the ceiling, catch them in a glass of hot water and soap, not quite full, by holding the glass under the fly and gently knocking the glass against the ceiling. If the ceiling is high, tack an empty can on the end of an old broom stick and set the glass in that.

Clothing moths are kept out by precautions already mentioned.

If bed bugs appear, go over the bed with great care and examine the bedstead. Wash it off with kerosene, putting this well into the cracks. A single insect may be brought in on the clothing. If they continue to appear, all wall paper should be removed, woodwork varnished or painted.

It may be necessary to resort to fumigation, but this should be done by an expert. Croton or water bugs are difficult to destroy, if they are once in a house. No garbage should be left about, to attract them at night. There are powders that drive them away, and another remedy is sulphur paste, which comes for the purpose, and which may be spread on slices of potato. The U.S. Department of Agriculture issues free bulletins on the suppression of household insects.

Chapter 7: Repairs



Too often in planning the budget, and the daily work, the housekeeper forgets to allow for the constant wear and tear on the house itself, and its furnishings; but to preserve the beauty and usefulness of both the house and furniture, as much thought and time are necessary as for the repair of clothing. In addition to the care and cleaning, there must be a constant attention to small repairs.

Inspecting and reporting. Have a series of cards in the card file, or pages in the notebook, where needed repairs may be jotted down. Have a regular time for looking over different parts of the house; and give a brief daily look as you pass from room to room. Each member of the family should be asked to report whatever goes wrong in his province, a leaky faucet, a squeaky door, or broken castor, a tear in a curtain, a shade roller that does not work.

For large repairs, like a leak in the water or waste system or shingle on a roof, a trained worker is needed; but for small repairs a special worker from outside is too expensive, and there needs to be a handy person in the house, who can put in a screw, and use a monkey wrench, touch up the paint or varnish, or mend the wall paper. It is pleasant work, and in these days when schools teach so much handicraft, there should be some one in the family glad to do it.

A repair outfit. Have a shelf somewhere for the repair "kit." Look at the woodwork of your house, and see what is needed; whether paint, or varnish, an oil mixture or stain, or all of them. Have on hand a small can of each, and bottles of alcohol, turpentine, and glue. Two or three paint brushes of good quality and of different sizes are needed. Keep a bundle of wall paper including pieces of all the patterns on the walls. A box of tools is needed, including a hammer, gimlet, screw driver, monkey wrench, a sharp knife, with boxes of nails and screws of mixed kinds and sizes such as may be found at any hardware store.

Exercises

1. What are the reasons for keeping an inventory of household goods?
2. How should winter garments be cared for in summer?
3. Obtain a price list and estimate the cost of an equipment of brooms and cleansing materials.
4. What are the advantages of a vacuum cleaner over a broom?
5. What are the best methods of removing dust? Of cleaning paint and woodwork and glass?
6. How are metals cleaned?
7. What are the most important points in caring for a bedroom?
8. What is the order of work in a thorough cleaning of a room, and why?
9. How should plumbing be cleaned?
10. Is the old-fashioned order of work the best now?—Monday, washing; Tuesday, ironing; Wednesday, mending; Thursday and Friday, cleaning; and Saturday, baking?
11. How may all the family help to some extent in household work?
12. Can you plan the best order of work for a day for the home worker who has no help but some one to wash and iron?
13. What are the dangers from different household insects?
14. What simple repairing can be done by members of the family?

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