



How to Keep It Clean!

**The Spring Cleaning Action Guide for
Cleaning and Organizing Your Home
All Year Round.**

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Introduction



Finally, the days are getting longer, and that tell-tale scent of spring is in the air. The birds have returned, and you notice their songs more and more as you step out for the morning paper or head to work. You long to get out for a walk in the sunshine, but ugh! It's Spring-Cleaning time, and you just know that if you put it off, things will get out of control, and you'll never do it.

This spring, sweep away those old ideas about Spring-Cleaning, and cleaning altogether. Yes, much of housework can be laborious. But the first thing you need to straighten is your vocabulary.

Stop calling it housework, and start calling it home-keeping! Home-keeping should not be seen as drudgery. Look at it as an art form. Martha Stewart founded an entire industry based on the art of home-keeping. Turn your labors into labors of love, and you might actually begin to enjoy cleaning! When everything is in order in a person's home, life is so much less stressful and much more enjoyable. Spring-Cleaning is really important, and integral to how the rest of the year will go. An organized home will actually cause a shift in the space-time continuum! Well, not really, but you will find that you have more free time, in other words, if you do the work well on the front end, you will have exponentially more time on the back end.

Here is how it will go: Do a good job cleaning in the spring, and you will have more time in the summer to play, because all you will have to do is maintain what you have already done. Maintain what you have done, and when school starts, you will have the kids organized and ready to hop on the bus. Keep the maintenance-ball rolling, and you will be able to sail through the holidays with less stress, and get to enjoy yourself for once instead of doing a major overhaul before company arrives. Think about what it's like when you have to go out of town. Is it total chaos and frustration with everyone asking you, "Where is my backpack? Where is my swimsuit? Did you see my mp3 player?"

Spring-Cleaning will lay the groundwork for you to get ready and simply go - without tempers flaring - even if your vacation is in the middle of winter, months after your Spring-Cleaning took place!

Inside this book, you will find a revolutionary method for handling your home-keeping. Everything you need to do a fantastic job cleaning and organizing your home this spring is right here, including ways to maintain control over clutter, and simple advice on how to avoid backsliding into your old habits. You will be given tips on how to get everyone in your home on board with you so that it isn't just your responsibility alone to do the home-keeping.

Spring is the time for renewal of the earth, and the time for renewal of your spirit as a home-keeper. It is the time to get the windows sparkling so you can enjoy looking out at the greening landscape after the long winter. Pretty soon, you will be feeling better - about your home, and about yourself because you did an excellent job on your Spring-Cleaning, and you can move forward with the skills to keep it going.

Read the guide through a couple of times before starting, to get a feel for the journey on which you are about to embark. It is probably very different from how you are used to approaching cleaning, but it works! That makes all the difference in the world - the difference between your breaking your back over your home-keeping activities, or your laying in the hammock reading the latest summer novel.

How this book is organized

There are three main sections in this book. Section I covers complete Spring-Cleaning, and takes the approach that you intend to clean your entire your house thoroughly, room by room, plus the exterior of the house.

It assumes you need to get the whole house "up to speed" so that, along with simple daily policing of clutter, maintenance-level cleaning will be enough to keep your house clean and presentable.

Section II eases you into maintaining what you have just accomplished by performing a real Spring-Cleaning. You will find daily, weekly, rotational, and seasonal cleaning lists for keeping it all under control.

Having it all under control, you will find that Spring-Cleaning is no longer a massive undertaking! You will discover when you read the seasonal maintenance list that the things that you will actually be doing come spring do not involve the entire house!

Section III offers tips, tricks, techniques, and even recipes for homemade cleaning products. You might be surprised that you can save money and time by using things like baking soda and vinegar to clean, rather than running to the store and buying twenty dollars worth of cleaning products. You might even have a little fun mixing them and tweaking them to your preferences, and sharing the recipes with your friends.

You are encouraged to read and re-read all of the sections often, so that what is contained in this book simply becomes integrated into the way you do things. Do not be daunted or discouraged by how much cleaning there is to be done in your home. It only looks overwhelming to you because you don't know where to start! You will soon be learning a different way of doing things, planning ahead and breaking it down into manageable segments, so that it will not seem as insurmountable.

Last, this book contains many cleaning checklists. These are provided in a text format as a [bonus at the end of the book](#) so that you can edit and print to suit you needs. There are also some other bonuses, which I think you will like.

SECTION I

A Thorough Spring-Cleaning

Chapter 1: Forming New Habits

Changing habits is a tough job. It takes, on average, 21 days to form a new habit or break an old one. But, as old habits begin to disappear, you will notice a difference in how much more smoothly everything goes in your home.

Here are some other habits you will be developing as you take action and follow this guide:

The habit of setting clear, specific objectives in writing. Your binder is the place where your objectives reside. When you have a clear outcome in mind, it is easier to focus your energies. Keep all of your notes and lists, as they will help you going forward. You will learn how to create your binder in Chapter 2.

The habit of planning to achieve specific objectives, which includes specific time frames. Define how long you intend to spend on Spring-Cleaning, because "Work expands to fill the time available for its completion." Don't make it an open-ended job, or it will turn into an unfinished job. When you get beyond Spring-Cleaning, and into rotation-based maintenance, each zone has a start day and a finish day on your calendar. Pick a date to finish Spring-Cleaning by, and try to meet that goal. Get as far as you can by your deadline. Even if you do not finish the entire house, start on your rotation. (You will learn about this in Section II.)

The habit of doing first things first. And the very first thing is to write it down! The most effective people do 80% planning and 20% doing. It is called time management!

The habit of doing creative and important work when energy is highest, doing lower-skill, routine work when energy is lowest. People tend to do the opposite. Do your planning when you are refreshed. Scrub the sink before you go to bed.

The habit of taking time with your key people - your family. Teach, train, listen, delegate, encourage, praise, discipline, celebrate. It is all important. With a clean house, you will have more time with your family!

The habit of saying no to the unimportant. There are only so many hours in a day, and you are only one person. Writing things down will help to get your priorities in line with what you want for your home and family. If it's the Saturday of your kitchen cleaning rotation, and you still have to wash the floor, you will simply say to your friend, "Sorry, can't go to the mall with you this morning, I have things I have to get done." This helps break the procrastination cycle, and prevents the guilt of not meeting goals due to poor choices.

With that in mind, now the time has come to get started with your Spring Cleaning.

Chapter 2: Oh Where Oh Where Do I Start?

Well, don't pick the place just yet. You need to assess the situation thoroughly first, and do a little "homework" before you start the home-keeping tasks for Spring-Cleaning.

Arm yourself with the following items: A binder; Loose-leaf or three-hole punched copier paper; Index tabs; Camera; Pencil; and Tape or glue stick.

Your first task is to go into every room of your house and take pictures of everything. Photograph your closets, your cabinets, your garage, your basement, everywhere.

In the binder, give each room a separate tab. On a blank sheet of paper, divide each page in half horizontally, and then divide the upper half from top to bottom and from left to right so that you have four sections like the following diagram, with room for notes at the bottom (alternatively, make a photocopies of the next page, or print several off, and 3-hole punch them).

ROOM:

<div>Works</div>	<div>Doesn't Work</div> <div>Steps to take</div>
<div>Spring-Cleaning (Rotational Cleaning) to be done</div> <div>Person responsible</div>	<div>Daily Maintenance Tasks</div> <div>Person responsible</div> <div>Weekly Maintenance Tasks</div> <div>Person responsible</div>

Notes:

Items to purchase for storage/organization

Items to replace (worn out or broken, etc.)

Thinking ahead to next season (clothing to buy, etc.)

These pages will serve as a reference for you in the cleaning days ahead. It will be your "Home-keeping Bible," if you will. Keeping it all bound together will help you to become more organized, and save time in the long run, because everything you need will be in one place. As you are taking notes and photographing, envision what you want the room or space to look like. Write down what you think you might need to buy to accomplish your cleaning and organizing tasks, be it extra-strength shower cleaner to get the hard water stains off the shower door, or a laundry hamper for your teenage son to toss his soccer stuff into after school.

If your craft room is a wreck, make a note that you have to price out storage cabinets to house your supplies in an organized fashion. Even if you cannot afford to outfit your house with every last thing you need to be organized, make a note of it anyway, and work those items into your family budget down the road.

When you have documented your whole house, gather your photos together and affix them to the index tab of the section of your binder to which they belong so that they are handy. They will give you a morale boost as you go from room to room, accomplishing the task of getting your home ship-shape.

It is also important to have your camera handy for when you are finished. This way you can put the "after" photo in your binder alongside the "before". It will serve as a reminder to you and to the rest of the household of how peaceful and uncluttered it can look, if everyone gets on board with home maintenance.

Chapter 3: Getting Organized Already! - What's Next?



Now is the time to decide what you need in the way of cleaning supplies, tools and equipment, as well as organizational supplies.

Review your notes from your trip around the house, and gather the cleaning supplies you have on hand together. Don't rely on your memory. Get it all onto the kitchen table and take inventory.

If you are low on kitchen cleanser you will need to buy some. But if you simply assume you have enough because you know there is a can of it under the sink, come cleaning time you will have the distraction and inconvenience of having to go to the store.

Even worse, it might derail the cleaning train by causing you to put off giving the kitchen sink a good scrubbing. So make a list. Bring your binder with you and keep the list in the front, if you think it will help you.

If you find you have to go to the store for cleaning supplies, take along a list of tools, equipment, and organizational supplies, too. If your broom is on its last bristles, get a new one. If you need extra clothes hangers and a storage bin for baby clothes you will be keeping, pick those up as well. Again, the more organized you are at the outset, the more free time you will have on the back end!

The list on the next page is for you to copy so that you can take inventory at home. Check off what you have, and leave the blanks empty alongside the items you need to buy. Write any additional items you need in the empty spaces or in the margins. Use the back side, if necessary!

Try to go to the store by yourself, if possible, so the task of gearing up for cleaning has your full attention. That way, you will be less likely to forget something or overlook an item on your list.

Cleaning products

- Kitchen cleanser/ abrasive cleaner/ baking soda
- Tile/linoleum/floor cleaner, plus wax or sealer if you're flooring requires it
- Ammonia
- Bleach
- Glass cleaner
- Isopropyl (rubbing) alcohol
- Dish soap and/or dishwasher detergent
- Dishwasher cleaning solution or powder
- Coffee maker de-scaler
- Oven cleaner
- Kitchen surface cleaner (hot, soapy water will do!)
- Special cleaners for stainless steel, stone, or other surface-specific items
- Degreaser, such as Formula 409
- White vinegar
- TSP or other strong cleaner for outdoor furniture and siding (read the warnings)
- Laundry detergent, fabric softener, etc.
- Carpet spray
- Toilet cleaner
- Disinfectant wipes
- Furniture polish
- Furniture touch-up marker
- Lubricant for squeaky hinges
- Car wax (for metal outdoor furniture)

Cleaning tools and equipment

- One or two plastic troughs to carry around supplies
- Rubber gloves and/ or a box of latex gloves
- Protective eye-wear for when you are using strong chemicals
- Bucket, large
- Floor mop
- Broom and dustpan, and/ or dust mop
- Push broom for garage
- Snow shovel for picking up debris outdoors
- Rake for yard debris
- Rags
- Paper towels
- Newspaper
- Vacuum bags

- Feather duster
- Telescoping duster
- Squeegee or magnetic window cleaner
- New, empty spray bottles (at least two)
- Portable kitchen timer
- Old toothbrushes
- Scrub brushes
- Garbage bags
- Reservation to rent carpet cleaning machine near the end of Spring-Cleaning
- Garden hose with strong sprayer
- Plastic drop cloths
- Three decent-sized cardboard boxes which you can lift easily when full. Mark them separately with the following: Pitch - Put Away - Donate
- Calendar with room to write on it

Do not worry right now as to why you need the items listed on the preceding page, as they will be explained as you go through the Spring-Cleaning process.