

Clean Smarter, Not Harder

by Donna Smallin



A clean house, one small task at a time

I've always found cleaning to be therapeutic for the body, mind, and soul. I believe many of us strive to cope with a chaotic world. We may not be able to stop war or terrorism, and we certainly can't keep hurricane and earthquakes from occurring, but we can clean up our little corner of the world.

You don't need a degree in housekeeping to maintain a clean, uncluttered home. You also don't need to spend all your spare time cleaning. What you do need are the right tools and supplies, an understanding of how to best use them, and a plan for what you hope to accomplish. Most people would probably enjoy living in a clean home—if only they didn't have to clean it! Guess what? It might not be as hard as you think.

Make a plan

What are your goals for cleaning? Would you like to be able to eat off the floors? Or would you be happy just to be able to fix dinner without having to clean up the kitchen first?

What are the benefits to cleaning? First and foremost, a clean home is a healthier home. Germs in your home can create and spread illness. While it is impossible to kill all germs, cleaning and disinfecting is the best offense against them.

Make the Plan Personal

Our cleaning approach depends on our attitudes, preferences, experience, time, energy, and goals. Make the time to clean. It's a lot easier to keep up than catch up! Spend a little time each day cleaning. Modify *My Sample Cleaning List* to suit your needs and lifestyle.

More Time Tips

In my book, *The One-Minute Cleaner*, I offer 500 tips for cleaning smarter, not harder (see Clean Tip boxes). Perhaps you need to motivate yourself by setting a timer for 10 minutes in the morning and 10 minutes at night just to clean. Focus on the bathroom or kitchen, where most germs lurk. Or spend 30 minutes each day on one room or one whole-house cleaning task. On Monday, clean the bedroom, Tuesday the kitchen and so forth. Or you could arrange a task-oriented schedule, like polishing the furniture in every room Monday with vacuuming on Tuesday. By the end of the week, your house will be clean!



Clean Tip #1

1 Cup of vinegar in 1 gallon of water cleans ceramic tile, slate or stone floors that won't leave a sticky residue that actually attracts dirt.

Clean Tip #2

A green wood cleaner and polish. Mix ½ tsp of olive oil and ½ c vinegar or lemon juice in a plastic spray bottle. Shake well. Spray onto microfiber cloth first and then clean and polish wood.

Clean Tip #3

Freshen up your garbage disposal by grinding citrus rinds with ice cubes and running water.

Clean Tip #4

Wet all-wood cutting boards and then microwave on high for 5 minutes to kill any bacteria.

Clean Tip #5

At least once a week, throw open a window to freshen the air in each room.

Clean Tip #6

Keep sanitizing wipes on hand for cleaning on the fly.

Clean Tip #7

Hire a housekeeper!

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If you are short on time and energy, pick the jobs that are most important to you and do them well. Make housecleaning more enjoyable by putting on your favorite music or listening to a book on tape. Consider hiring help or arrange a work trade with a friend to get the house clean.

Clean less, not more

The simplest way to cut cleaning time? Prevent dirt and dust from accumulating! Place doormats inside and out. Initiate a “no shoes” rule in your home. Shower with glycerin soaps to avoid scum buildup. Think about clearing clutter. Less clutter makes cleaning a whole lot easier. The more you have, the more you have to take care of! Ask for help if you need it. For example, when you get ready to clean out your closet, invite a friend to help you determine what does and does not look good on you. Donate. Recycle. Say “no thanks” to things you don’t want or need in the first place.



Uncluttering is half the battle. Organizing is the other half. Without organizing, uncluttering is a job you’ll have to do over and over again. Sort new mail and toss the junk immediately. Take a moment to put things where they belong. One key to getting organized is to find the best possible place to store all your things based on the level of accessibility required. For example, designate a “drop off” box for

My Sample Cleaning List

- Make all beds
- Empty wastebaskets
- Round up dirty laundry
- Wipe bathroom sinks
- Sweep the kitchen floor
- Vacuum carpets in high-traffic areas
- Clean the kitchen table & countertops
- Wash dishes
- Start a wash
- Load & start the dryer
- Fold laundry
- Sort mail into categories: pay, file, read, call, trash or recycle
- Pick up clutter

Continued

bookreview

A trio of books by author Donna Smallin will have you motivated to clear the clutter, organize the disorder and find smart ways to clean without losing the smile on your face.

Donna Smallin | by Margy Squires



Ms. Small admits to having a passion for cleaning so she’s showing the rest of us how to get our “housecleaning done faster so we can spend more of our free time doing what we’d rather be doing”. Hooray! I’m all for that! An expert in all three areas, Ms. Smallin’s books are exceptionally easy to read but even easier to do. You can almost hold the book in one hand and implement her tips in the other! Each book has simple steps to personalize a plan to get started, along with sage advice on how to keep you going strong. With 500 tips in each, the one minute tips are specially marked to kick start you into motion right away until your whole house is cleaner, neater and even healthier. You might as well plan on buying all three because once you buy one, you will want the other two!

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library books and videos that need to be returned. Simplify. Make a conscious decision to surround yourself only with things you love and use. It helps to realize that the most important things in life are not things.

These are only a few examples from my book. Whatever your cleaning goals, know that the only standards that matter are those you set for yourself. Whether you enjoy cleaning or do anything you can to avoid it, there's no point in making it any harder than it has to be. Armed with proven tips, techniques and strategies, you'll be able to accomplish every cleaning task in record time and with less effort than you ever imagined possible!



Donna Smallin is an expert on cleaning, organizing and simplifying life. This article is an adaptation of her book, The One-Minute Cleaner, Plain & Simple. A few of her other titles include Organizing Plain & Simple and Unclutter Your Mind, 500 Ways to Focus on What's Important. Ms. Smallin also offers free tips and inspiration in a monthly ezine. Sign up at www.unclutter.com. You can order a signed copy of her books online or ask for them at your local bookstore.



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