

## throughout the house

The tips below outline basic techniques that will help you clean almost every surface (or object) in any room. The tasks on the next page are broken down by location, including outdoor spaces. The final page of this foldout focuses on window washing and upkeep, which is essential if you're going to let the sun shine in on the bright days to come.

● **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 shelves and 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 for heavier work. If 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 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 NONWOOD 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.



## room by room

<b>KITCHEN</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>DUST REFRIGERATOR COILS</b> Turn off power at circuit breaker or fuse box. Coils are usually at the bottom of the refrigerator, under the grill. Clean coils with the crevice attachment of a vacuum or a specialty refrigerator-coil brush, available at hardware stores.</li> <li>● <b>DEFROST THE FREEZER</b> Turn off power at circuit breaker or fuse box. Empty freezer's contents; wipe interior with a solution of 2 tablespoons baking soda per 1 quart hot water.</li> </ul>
<b>LIVING ROOM</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>SWAP HEAVY CURTAINS, RUGS, AND THROWS FOR LIGHTWEIGHT ONES</b> Clean items first. To store, roll material around an acid-free tube; wrap in a clean sheet of cotton, muslin, or polyethylene; secure with twill tape, and label each bundle so you'll know which is which.</li> </ul>
<b>BEDROOMS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>ROTATE BED AND CHANGE BLANKETS</b> Turn over your mattress to distribute the wear evenly. Replace cool-weather bedding with warm-weather bedding.</li> <li>● <b>CLEAN PILLOWS</b> Whether made of natural fibers (such as down) or synthetic (often polyester), most pillows can be machine-washed. This rids them of mold, bacteria, and odors.</li> </ul>
<b>BATHROOMS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>DISCARD EXPIRED COSMETICS AND BEAUTY PRODUCTS</b> Secure these items in a plastic trash bag, and keep it out of reach of children and animals.</li> <li>● <b>UPDATE FIRST-AID KIT</b> In addition to bandages and ointments, the kit should include a list of emergency numbers, especially the one for your nearest poison-control center.</li> </ul>
<b>HOME OFFICE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>ORGANIZE FILES</b> Review insurance policies, contracts, and household inventories.</li> <li>● <b>CLEAN COMPUTERS</b> Scrub casings with a solution of 1 drop mild dishwashing liquid per 1 quart of water and a lint-free cloth; dust crevices in keyboards with cotton swabs; wipe screens with a soft cloth or a dry screen-cleaning sponge.</li> </ul>
<b>CLOSETS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>REPLACE COOL-WEATHER CLOTHING WITH WARM-WEATHER CLOTHING</b> Wash or dry-clean garments before storing them in a zippered sweater or blanket bag.</li> <li>● <b>DONATE APPAREL YOU NO LONGER USE</b> Many charities are happy to accept old clothing and may send a truck to pick it up. They may also provide receipts for tax purposes.</li> </ul>
<b>UTILITY SPACES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>CLEAN ATTIC AND BASEMENT, GIVING AWAY OR DISCARDING UNWANTED ITEMS</b> Divide whatever is left into two zones: one for things you'll need to retrieve in the next six months, such as clothes, and the other for objects that may be there for years, such as furniture.</li> <li>● <b>PROTECT OBJECTS IN BASEMENT</b> Use concrete blocks to keep storage boxes off the ground. Place washer and dryer on elevated pedestals (made by the appliances' manufacturers) to prevent electrical shock during flooding.</li> </ul>
<b>OUTDOOR SPACES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>CLEAN PORCH CEILINGS AND WALLS</b> Sweep up cobwebs and debris with a corn broom, and wash walls with a solution of all-purpose cleaner and water using a polyester sponge.</li> <li>● <b>SCRUB DECKS, PATIOS, DRIVEWAYS, AND WALKWAYS</b> Treat mildew spots with a solution of 1 part oxygen bleach to 3 parts water using a deck brush.</li> <li>● <b>WASH OUTDOOR FURNITURE</b> Most materials, including aluminum, plastic, wood, and wicker, can handle a solution of mild dishwashing liquid and water and a soft-bristle brush.</li> <li>● <b>INSPECT LIGHT FIXTURES</b> Wash covers, and check for damaged wires and connections.</li> </ul>

## eight steps to perfectly clean windows

- 1. Schedule the project** Choose a time when the sun is not shining directly on windows. Its hot rays can cause the cleaning solution to dry, which will result in streaks.
- 2. Clean the surface** With a soft-bristle brush, dust away cobwebs and loose dirt from windows and frames. Don't forget hinges, sills, and tracks. Wear rubber gloves to protect your hands, especially if the frames are old and splintery.
- 3. Make the cleaning solution** Mix 1 part white vinegar and 1 part hot water.
- 4. Prevent a mess** Before cleaning the inside of each window, place an absorbent terry-cloth towel along the windowsill to catch drips.
- 5. Wet the glass** Using a sponge, wet (but don't drench) the windowpane with the vinegar-and-water solution, and rub away the dirt. As much as possible, keep the solution from coming into contact with the window frames.
- 6. Prime a squeegee** Wet the rubber blade; a dry one will skip.
- 7. Wipe the glass** Starting at an upper corner of the pane, draw the squeegee down in a straight, confident stroke. Wipe the rubber edge of the squeegee with a sponge or a lint-free cloth. Return to the top and repeat, slightly overlapping the first stroke. Finish by pulling the squeegee across the bottom of the window. Dry the sill.
- 8. Clean the frames** Wipe surfaces using a cloth dampened with a nonammoniated all-purpose cleaner and water. Rinse them thoroughly with a clean, damp cloth to remove cleaning solution, and dry immediately by wiping with a clean, dry cloth.

### basic window-washing kit

Stash all of your supplies in a plastic or metal bucket. Mix and transport the vinegar-based solution in a second container.

- soft-bristle brush
- white vinegar (or mild dishwashing liquid)
- large polyester or natural sea sponges
- rubber gloves
- lint-free cloths (cloth diapers or huckaback cloth) that haven't been washed or dried with fabric softener (which can leave behind a residue that will streak glass)
- squeegees
- sturdy ladder (with a label indicating it is approved by Underwriters Laboratories)
- nonammoniated all-purpose cleaner

### cleaning storm windows

After storm windows have been replaced with screens, they should be cleaned before being stored for summer. Start by vacuuming the glass and tracks. Clean glass following the instructions above. (It's easiest to do so outside, but you can clean them in place; allow windows that can't be removed to dry completely before closing them, as moisture trapped between panes can damage the frames.)



The information in this article was excerpted from *Martha Stewart's Homekeeping Handbook: The Essential Guide to Caring for Everything in Your Home*. ©2006 by Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia, Inc. All rights reserved. Published by Clarkson Potter/Publishers, a division of Random House, Inc.

## patching a screen

*Tiny tears in nylon or fiberglass screens can be mended with a few drops of instant adhesive; small splits in metal screens can be fixed with epoxy. Larger rips, however, require slightly more attention. Here's how to make repairs:*

### NYLON OR FIBERGLASS SCREENS

Cut a patch just barely larger than the hole. Apply a thin layer of instant adhesive along edges of patch; press it in place. To hold screen together as glue dries, cut a piece of low-tack painters' tape larger than the patch, gently apply tape to patch, and leave until glue is dry.

**METAL SCREENS** Begin by trimming around the tear in the screen to create a small, clean-edged rectangular or square opening. Cut a piece of screen about ½ inch larger than the hole in length and width. Unravel a couple of strands of screen away from each of the piece's 4 sides until the central woven section is just large enough to cover the hole. Fold the resulting "fingers" away from you at 90 degrees to the patch's surface. Cover the hole with the patch, inserting the fingers into the mesh of the existing screen. Fold and carefully weave the fingers under and inward onto the patch or outward toward the screen frame, into the surrounding screen.

