

Strategies for Spring Cleaning Success

Did you ever think about how the [spring-cleaning](#) ritual developed? Before the advent of electricity and a host of other modern conveniences, homes were heated with coal, oil and/or wood, and lit by gas or candlelight. Soot and grime were the natural companions of winter. Once spring arrived, the doors were thrown open, and everything – rugs, furniture, cupboards, curtains and more – was aired out, cleaned out, swept out and scrubbed out.

Although today's centrally heated homes don't collect that intensity of dirt, with weather conditions keeping us indoors all too long, our instincts are to make everything look fresh and bright come that first whiff of spring with a new [cleaning schedule](#). The American Cleaning Institute offers these strategies.

Clear It Out. Start by getting rid of the things that are needlessly filling up your home. Recycle, sell or donate items.

Inventory Your Supplies. Before you start cleaning, make sure you have all the necessary supplies on hand. The basics should include an all-purpose spray cleaner (for small, washable areas), an all-purpose powder or liquid cleaner (for large washable surfaces like floors and walls), chlorine bleach (an effective disinfectant, particularly where mold and mildew are present), glass cleaner, and toilet bowl cleaner. Don't forget to check your supply of vacuum cleaner bags and trash bags.

Make a Plan. Decide on your cleaning style. Some people find it more effective to clean one room at a time. Others prefer to group tasks – such as cleaning windows in several rooms at once or leaving all the vacuuming until the end. If one room at a time is your style, decide on the order. Generally, it's best to do the rooms that need the most work or get the most traffic first. That way, if your cleaning plans get derailed, you can still be proud of what you've accomplished.

Recruit Help. It's not necessary to do everything yourself. Enlist family members. Start early. Assign tasks according to age and ability. Have lunch preplanned so your helpers don't lose momentum. Play lively music that keeps everyone's energy up. You could also find a like-minded friend and clean together at each other's home. If your budget allows, you don't have to do every bit of cleaning yourself. Someone else can come in and wash the windows ... or buff the floors ... or shampoo the carpets ... or clean the upholstery ... or even do the majority of the cleaning after you've removed the clutter.

