



Homemade Cleaning Recipes

Countertops: For a "soft scrub," mix baking soda and liquid castile soap (such as Dr. Bronner's) until you get a consistency you like. The amounts don't have to be perfect. Make only as much as you need, as it dries up quickly.

Cutting boards: Sanitize by spraying first with vinegar and then with 3 percent hydrogen peroxide. Keep the liquids in separate spray bottles and use them one at a time. It doesn't matter which one you use first, but both together are much more effective than either one alone.

Tub, Tile, and Toilet cleaner: Mix 1 2/3 cup baking soda, 1/2 cup liquid castile soap*, and 1/2 cup water. Then, as the last step, add 2 tablespoons vinegar (if you add the vinegar too early it will react with the baking soda). Immediately apply, scrub, and wipe. (*Dr. Bronner's Peppermint liquid castile soap actually makes this job a pleasant aromatic experience!)

Drains: Prevent clogged drains by using hair and food traps. To de-grease and sweeten sink and tub drains, pour 1/2 cup of baking soda down drain, followed by 1 cup vinegar; let bubble for 15 minutes; rinse with hot water. You might need to repeat the procedure more than once, or leave the baking soda and vinegar to "cook" overnight.

Furniture polish: Mix olive oil and vinegar in a one-to-one ratio and polish with a soft cloth.

Windows: Add 3 tablespoons vinegar to 1 quart water in a spray bottle. Some recommend using half vinegar and half water. For extra-dirty windows try 1/2 teaspoon liquid castile soap, 3 tablespoons vinegar, and 2 cups of water. Shake well. The best way to get streak-free windows is to wipe with newspaper instead of paper towels.

Brass, copper, bronze and aluminum: To remove tarnish, rub metal with sliced lemons. For tough jobs sprinkle baking soda on the lemon, then rub.

Sterling silver: Put a sheet of aluminum foil into a plastic or glass bowl. Sprinkle the foil with salt and baking soda, and then fill the bowl with warm water. Soak your silver in the bowl, and the tarnish will migrate to the aluminum foil. Rinse and dry the silver, then buff it with a soft cloth.



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Air freshener: A simple recipe of 1 teaspoon baking soda, 1 teaspoon vinegar (or lemon juice), and 2 cups hot water combined in a spray bottle can be sprayed in the air to remove odors.

Wood floors: Add 1 cup of vinegar per pail of hot water to clean wood floors.

Carpeting and rugs: To absorb and eliminate odors, sprinkle baking soda over the surface of the carpet and let it stand for 15 to 30 minutes before vacuuming.

Laundry brightener: Add 1/2 cup of strained lemon juice during the rinse cycle.

Fabric rinse: Add 1/4 cup of white vinegar during the washing machine's rinse cycle to remove detergent completely from clothes, eliminating that scratchy feel. (Note: This will not leave your clothes smelling like vinegar.)

Detergent booster: To reduce the amount of laundry detergent you need to use (especially if you have hard water) add baking soda. These minerals soften the water, which increases the detergent's power. If using liquid detergent, add 1/2 cup of baking soda at the beginning of the wash. With powdered detergent, add 1/2 cup of soda during the rinse cycle. Instead of chlorine bleach, use hydrogen peroxide.

Dry cleaning: Many delicate "dry clean only" items can be washed at home by hand. In general, it's best to use cool water and a mild liquid soap. Squeeze or wring gently and lay flat to dry.

Odors: To stop unpleasant cooking odors from permeating throughout the entire house, boil a cup or two of vinegar in a pot on the stove to absorb the odors.

Coffee Pot: Get rid of the sludge in your automatic drip coffee maker by running full-strength vinegar through a normal brew cycle. Rinse by running plain water through the cycle two or three times.

Tea Kettle: Remove the lime coating on your teakettle by filling it with water and adding a half-cup of vinegar. Let it stand overnight, then rinse with clean water and dry.

***If making your own cleaning products is not your style, the non-profit Environmental Working Group, or EWG, is a valuable resource for researching and finding ready-made products that are safer for your health and for the environment. www.ewg.org*