



ENVIRONMENTAL WORKING GROUP'S

# DIY

## CLEANING GUIDE

Recipes to Make Your Own  
Nontoxic Cleaners at Home

Save money.  
Skip the chemicals.  
Protect your health.



Know your environment.  
Protect your health.

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ewg would like to thank

our friends and expert contributors  
Sara Snow & Sophie Uliano.

and a very special thank you to

Annie B. Bond  
for her extensive review and advice on this project.

Your smart solutions lead people to healthier living every day!

# ENVIRONMENTAL WORKING GROUP'S DIY Cleaning Guide

A healthy home means a healthier you. At EWG we're committed to helping you create the best environment for your family – free of dangerous chemicals and wasteful material.

EWG's fans and followers are constantly asking us for tips to help them create cleaner and greener homes that are good for their families and the planet. To accompany EWG's Guide to Healthy Cleaning, we created this booklet to making your own household cleaners.

With our DIY guide chalk full of simple recipes to homemade cleaning products, EWG is bringing it back to the basics.

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# Stock Your Pantry

Pick up these basic ingredients to get started

Inexpensive to make and completely non-toxic to use, you'll find most of the ingredients you need in your home pantry. But there is an art and a science to green cleaning. That's why we curated recipes from experts in natural formulas and peeked inside the cleaning cupboards of our own staff. We hope it's a resource you turn to again and again as you embark on your DIY projects.

**Distilled white vinegar** – removes soap scum, grease and mineral deposits and acts as a deodorizer

**Baking soda** – absorbs odors and is a mild abrasive

**Lemons** – fight mineral scum and grease

**Fresh herbs, citrus peels**

**Olive or vegetable oil**

**Hydrogen peroxide** – bleaching agent and powerful anti-microbial

**Washing soap (sodium carbonate)** – great grease cutter. Slightly caustic so never for use on waxed floors (will remove the wax), fiberglass or aluminum

**Fragrance-free, non anti-bacterial liquid soap** – vegetable oil-based soap, sometimes referred to as **Castile soap** or **Vegetable glycerin**

**Sodium percarbonate** – a type of oxygen bleach (caution: may cause skin irritation, so always use gloves)

**Salt** – a natural abrasive

Stock-up on these essential reusable supplies

**Microfiber cloths** for dusting and general cleaning

**Rags, old clothing, and linens** for wet-washing

**Cellulose sponges** and an **abrasive scrub brush**

**Squeegee** for showers and windows

**Toothbrush** for scrubbing grout

**Measuring spoons and cups**

**Spray bottles** – either reused plastic or glass bottles

**Microfiber mop & bucket** and **broom & dustpan**







## Sophie Uliano

Green lifestyle expert Sophie Uliano is the author of three books, including the New York Times best seller Gorgeously Green.

Learn more on her site, [GorgeouslyGreen.com](http://GorgeouslyGreen.com)



### TOILET BOWL CLEANER

- 1 cup water, preferably distilled
- 1 cup of baking soda
- 1 cup liquid Castile soap
- ¼ cup white vinegar
- Bottle with a spout

Combine all ingredients in the bottle, minding that all the bubbles from the baking soda subside. Mix together and get cleaning!



### MILDEW & LIME SCALE REMOVER

You need only one ingredient for this – white vinegar!

Keep a sprayer of equal parts vinegar and water near or in your bathroom and spritz around the faucets, the shower curtain/door and in those pesky corners (once a week), to avoid mildew.



## FURNITURE POLISH

1/2 cup olive oil  
1/4 cup lemon juice

Mix together in a small jar. Using a soft cloth, dampen with the liquid and wipe across your wood furniture for a natural, streak-free, nourishing shine.

## FLOOR CLEANER

1 cup white distilled vinegar  
1/2 gallon of warm water

Combine in a bucket or large spray bottle. Using a rag or mop, clean the floors with the mixture. No need to rinse. Just wipe and go.



## Sara Snow

Sara Snow is a green living expert, TV host and author of Sara Snow's Fresh Living. Check out her many tips and video how-to's at [Sarasnow.com](http://Sarasnow.com)



## OVEN CLEANER

3 tablespoons baking soda  
1 tablespoon salt  
1 tablespoon water

### For the sides of the oven

Mix together in a bowl until you form a paste. Spread the mixture across the surfaces of your oven and allow to sit for up to eight hours. Scrape and wipe clean.

### For the oven floor

The key to making the baking soda work for the oven is to use enough of it. Sprinkle enough to cover the bottom of the oven so that it looks like it snowed and then spray it with clean water until it is damp all over. Let it set for up to eight hours. Scrape and wipe clean.



## SOFT SCRUB FOR TUBS, STAINLESS STEEL & MORE

This is my can't-do-without formula for countertops and the sink, bathtubs and shower stalls, and much more. Make it fresh for each cleaning session as it dries out quickly.

½ cup baking soda  
A few squirts of a liquid soap

Place the baking soda in a bowl and add enough liquid soap or detergent to make a texture like frosting. Scoop some of the mixture onto a sponge and scrub the tub, sink, or the stainless steel. Rinse well.

After cleaning stainless steel with the soft scrub, some people like to bring the metal to a high polish by rubbing the surface with straight household vinegar. I've found that just rinsing the soft scrub well does the trick, but to each their own. Make sure to stay away from all chlorine-based products on stainless steel.



## ALL PURPOSE SPRAY CLEANER

1/2 teaspoon washing soda  
a dab of liquid soap  
2 cups very hot tap water

Combine the ingredients in a spray bottle and shake until the washing soda has dissolved. Apply and wipe off with a sponge or rag. For tough dirt, leave the cleaner on for a few minutes before wiping it off.

## WINDOW CLEANER

1/4 cup vinegar  
1/2 teaspoon liquid soap  
2 cups of water  
spray bottle

Combine the ingredients in a spray bottle. Shake to blend and spray on your windows. Wipe off with newspaper or a rag. Shelf-life: indefinite!



## Annie B. Bond

Annie B. Bond is a green living expert and best-selling author of five books, including *Clean & Green*, *Better Basics for the Home*, and *Home Enlightenment*. Her website, [GreenChiCafe.com](http://GreenChiCafe.com), is a wealth of information.

## BLEACH ALTERNATIVE – WHITENS SINKS, TUBS & CLOTHES

Sodium percarbonate is a wonder if you want to whiten a sink, tub, or clothes, without using bleach. I've become a devoted fan because of what it will do for my kitchen sink!

For a sink, use a stopper to block the drain. Add 1/4 cup of sodium percarbonate, then fill the sink with hot water. Let set for an hour or so before draining out the water and lightly scrubbing with a sponge.



### **LIGHT AND LEMONY DUSTING CLOTH**

1/2 cup of freshly squeezed lemon juice  
Few drops of olive oil  
Soft cotton rag

Apply liquids to rag, start dusting!

### **BASIC DISHWASHING SOAP**

1 ounce liquid castile soap  
2 cups water  
1 teaspoon vegetable glycerin

Combine the soap and water in a bottle or jar. Add the glycerin, stir to blend. Pour some on a sponge and wash the dishes, or add a few teaspoons to a sink full of warm water.

# Ingredients, Tips & Tricks



# Deodorize Naturally



Most air fresheners contain toxic chemicals and, surprisingly, indoor air is often more polluted than outdoor air. The most important element is ventilation – open your windows! Crack a window every day, if only for a few minutes, even in winter.

Air freshening is simple.

You usually need only one or two ingredients to absorb and dispel odors.

So what to do when you need to get rid of a lingering smell or want to purify the air in your home? Skip the pricey candles, sprays, and plug-ins, and try these simple alternatives.

## Stovetop

1 lemon or orange, sliced  
(you can also use citrus peels)  
1 tbsp vanilla

Fill a saucepan or pot halfway with water and set on stovetop. Add fruit and vanilla. Set on low heat and simmer for an hour or more. Add water as needed.

### Other great combinations:

Nutmeg, cloves, or cinnamon and orange peels.  
Lemon or lemon peels and a few sprigs rosemary.



## Just Plain Vinegar

Place a bowl of vinegar or coffee grounds anywhere to absorb odors, and use baking soda in the fridge and the garbage can to deodorize.

## Air Freshening Spray

You can make your own spray air-freshener in just a few minutes using three simple ingredients. Just combine in a spray bottle and shake vigorously!

1 teaspoon vinegar  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
2 cups water



# Secret Ingredients

Strange but true uses for common foods.

Make them do double duty for your cleaning!

## Peanut Butter

### Strange but true use:

Removes tough residues.

Peanut butter is a great solvent that can take paint off your hands, remove sticker residue from price tags, or clean smudgy, oily build-up from surfaces like desks or counters.



## Cornstarch

### Strange but true use:

Clean grease spills on carpets or rugs.

Cornstarch blots up spots if applied shortly afterward. Pour onto spills and let sit for 15 to 30 minutes before vacuuming.



## Ketchup

### Strange but true use:

Removes tarnish from copper and brass cookware.

Squeeze ketchup onto a cloth and rub it on pots and pans. Rinse with warm water and dry with a towel.

# EWG Staffers' Tips



## Yoga Mats

"I do yoga all the time but a lot of the commercial mat cleaners are really expensive. So I started making my own by combining one part water with three parts white vinegar. Mix thoroughly and pour into a spray bottle. Spray liberally over the surface of your mat; sometimes I let the solution sit and soak in a bit before cleaning it off. Wipe the mat down with a wet cloth, followed by a dry one to finish. Make sure to do both sides and let it dry out thoroughly before starting class so you don't slip."

– Emily Ion Kosuge  
Marketing Specialist

## Drains

"I make this simple drain cleaner once a week and it works like a charm. Pour 1 cup baking soda into the drain followed by 1 cup of white vinegar. The mixture will start fizzing and bubbling. Let it sit for 15 minutes then pour one entire kettle of boiling water down the pipes to rinse. This trick really works best when done regularly to help prevent clogged drains, not once you've already got a mess on your hands."

– Heather White  
Chief of Staff

## Elbow Grease

"I favor things that scrub well without chemicals, like non-scratch sponges for counters, magic erasers for grout and window spots, stainless steel scrubbers for pots, and plastic scrub brushes for the tub."

– Nicole Oliver  
Foundation Coordinator

## Copper

Copper can be cleaned and polished with only lemon and coarse salt. Sprinkle the cut side of a lemon half with the salt, then rub it over the copper until it shines.

## Cast Iron

Scrub with coarse salt and a soft sponge. The salt, a natural abrasive, absorbs oil and lifts away bits of food while preserving the pan's seasoning. Rinse away salt and wipe dry.

## Stainless Steel

Stainless steel is prone to stains from heat and hard water. To remove them, apply white vinegar with a soft cloth and rub, then dry thoroughly after washing to prevent a film from forming. Never soak stainless steel cookware; this will result in pitted surfaces. Use club soda to shine up a scuffed stainless-steel sink. Buff with a cloth dampened with club soda, then wipe dry with another clean cloth.



# Tips for Your Healthy Home

## Coffee & Tea Stains

Stains in cups can be removed by applying vinegar to a sponge and wiping. To clean a teakettle or coffee maker, add 2 cups water and 1/4 cup vinegar; bring to a boil. Let cool, wipe with a clean cloth and rinse thoroughly with water.

## Shower Head

Remove shower head and soak in a bowl of equal parts vinegar and water for 2 hours. You may have to repeat if the lime scale is really bad.

## Wine & Ink

For red wine spills or ink stains – hydrogen peroxide! Blot up as much as you can with a paper towel, and then mix a teaspoon of eco-friendly dish soap with a cup of hydrogen peroxide. Blot it on the stain, with a dry towel behind the fabric to soak things up. This works on carpet, clothing, and other fabric, too.

## Leather

To clean leather surfaces (not suede!) both at home and in the car, mix one half cup olive oil and 1/4 cup vinegar in a squirt bottle and shake before each application. Rub gently with a soft cloth into leather surfaces for cleaning and conditioning.

## Shoe Polish

Olive oil with a few drops of lemon juice can be applied to shoes with a thick cotton or terry rag. Leave for a few minutes; wipe and buff with a clean, dry rag.

## Cutting Board

Clean your cutting board with one cup vinegar and one cup water.

## Food Processor

Bits of seeds and spices sometimes cling to the grinder in corners that you can't get to easily. Try running soft, fresh white bread through the grinder to pick up food and absorb any oil left behind.





Know your environment.  
Protect your health.

learn more

To help consumers inform themselves, we've culled ingredient data from packages and company websites to create EWG's Guide to Healthy Cleaning, with safety ratings for hundreds of products. Search the Guide to find better products, because what you clean with can affect your health and the environment.

[www.ewg.org/guides/cleaners](http://www.ewg.org/guides/cleaners)