



COUNTDOWN TO CLEAN

House prepped
for the holidays?
Pros offer
some advice

FIVE DAYS TO CLEAN

FIVE DAYS OUT:

Clean places people will probably never go to or will pass through. The porch, the entry. Get all that road grime off the door.

FOUR DAYS:

Clean the bedrooms and hallways.

THREE DAYS:

Clean the bathrooms top to bottom: light fixtures, vents, toilets, bathtubs, mirrors, floors. This might be a good time to replace the shower liner, which costs \$10 or \$15.

TWO DAYS:

Do the areas where your guests will congregate — the living room, the dining room, the patio. Dust.

DAY BEFORE:

If you have a house bathroom that'll be used by most of the guests, give it a quick touch-up.

By **MELANIE WARNER SPENCER**
STAFF WRITER

IT'S T-minus 19 days until your house is filled with friends and relatives for Thanksgiving. Before you can put away the pumpkins, Hanukkah and Christmas are in full swing.

While you might be prepared mentally, is your home? Organizing and cleaning for holiday entertaining is that most wonderful time of the year, when you suddenly notice those dust bunnies dancing on the ceiling fans.

Oh, what a feeling.

If you start now and organize, instead of fearing a visit from the A&E *Hoarders* crew, your rooms will be ready for a guest appearance on HGTV's *Mission: Organization* by the time you put the turkey in the oven.

The real down-and-dirty work is best left until about five days prior to your event. Tony Kirby, owner of Molly Maid of Midtown and Galleria, says you can get away with hitting only the areas where guests will congregate.

"Start in the areas that you don't use as often, building up to the high-use areas," Kirby says. "The day of the event, for example, you want to be doing the kitchen, since that's where most people congregate."

Kirby also advises working from the top down, so that all of the dirt ends up on the floor, then running the vacuum.

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CLEANING: If all else fails, close doors to dirty rooms

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"My most important advice is, don't buy anything until you get out everything that you already have," says Aimee Laun, a San Antonio-based certified professional organizer. "This will guarantee that you don't waste time and money by buying duplicate items, and if you purchased holiday items on clearance last year, you may not remember until you get out the holiday storage bin and see what is in there."

Laun says her quick tip is to keep countertops, corners and areas, such as under the beds, couch and chairs, clear. Also, she advises to organize for yourself and clean up for your guests.

"When you know where everything is and what you will need to host guests, then you can focus on the more fun things like decorating and house cleaning," says Laun.

If, despite your best intentions, you can't muster the time or energy to initiate and complete Laun's or Kirby's plans, there is hope.

"If you've got those rooms no one is ever going to go into, shut the door and lock it," Kirby says. "Other than that, you just have to be willing to roll up your sleeves and attack."

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SYSTEMATIC: One expert's suggestion is to clean from the top down so that dirt ends up on the floor, where it can be vacuumed up.

10 TIPS FOR CLEANING EFFICIENTLY

1 Before you clean, look at your rooms from a different perspective: For example, take a seat at your dining room table and look around.

2 Most often, the door frames, door panels and window sills are overlooked: Start at the top and move all the way to the floor, then move from left to right.

3 Another commonly missed area is the shower rim (that dumb ledge at the top of the shower enclosure wall): Go from top to bottom and left to right.

4 After you clean bathroom mirrors, turn off the lights to check for smudges.

5 Put things where they belong before you start cleaning, so you don't have to stop to take something to another room.

6 Get the kids involved — little children love to sweep the floor and help put

laundry away.

7 Put the job into perspective by breaking it into manageable pieces:

For example, start with the living room, dining room and kitchen, and then take a break. Move on to the bedrooms and then take a break. Finish up with the bathrooms, then take a nap.

8 For tough jobs, apply cleaning solutions and allow them to penetrate for a few minutes before wiping or rinsing. Always read product instructions and hazards before applying them.

9 Keep and carry all your cleaning supplies in a large bucket for convenience: You'll also save money by not buying duplicates.

10 Never use liquids to dust your TV screen, no matter what type it is.

Source: Tony Kirby, Molly Maids franchise owner