

How to Speed-Clean Your House In Under An Hour

These six sneakily strategic moves will make you look like you've got a cleaning crew hiding in your basement.



It's 6 p.m. The house is a mess. You're expecting guests at 7. Never fear: All you need is one hour to power through six sneakily strategic moves that'll make you look like you've got a cleaning crew hiding in your basement.

Our experts:

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1 Tackle Clutter

Deal with the piles first. Like the mountain of shoes near the stairs and the stack of mail on the counter. Starting at the front door and working your way through the rooms people will congregate in, load up a laundry basket with anything nonessential that doesn't count as decor. Be ruthless — stuff easily translates to mess. While you're at it, close doors to bedrooms and other areas off-limits to guests (meaning you won't have to waste a single second making beds).

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2 Hide-and-Go Stash

This is the sneaky part: throw that basket full of odds and ends into a closet that no guest will ever open. Next, stop kitchen. Clear the counters of the toaster, mixer, and any other appliance you won't be using and stash them in the garage or even the trunk of your car — that'll give party-guests zoned out about their drinks and plates, since everyone tends to hang out there anyway. Don't forget to take out the trash.



3 Spray, Soak, and Unload

Assess which surfaces are most dirty (we're looking at you, stovetop, sink, and toilet) and hit them with a cleaning spray. But don't wipe just yet — let the product sit for a bit so no scrubbing on your part is necessary. While these soaks marinate in solution, empty the dishwasher and add any other dirty plates and silverware. If there's not enough time to run the speed cycle, throw them into a box and — you guessed it — stow it in the garage to handle later.

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4 Dust and Wipe

You do not — we repeat, do not — have to give every inch of the house the white-glove treatment. Instead, follow the visibility rule. Focus on the spots guests are most likely to notice, like the TV, lampshades, and tables, and any reflective surfaces. A microfiber cloth or even a dryer sheet makes quick work of this (they'll attract dust, not push it around). So you don't have to bend over, take a long-handled tool like a Swiffer to skim over unsightly baseboards. Lastly, wipe down the areas you sprayed in step 3.



5 Fake Clean Floors

What if we told you to mop after your guests leave, not before? With company arriving any minute, just eyeball wood and tile floors for obvious spills and scuffs and sponge off those marks. Skip sweeping — you'll suck up loose dirt faster with the vacuum. Concentrate on the kitchen, bathroom, entryway, dining room, and living room. Don't bother moving furniture around, but do leave a few fake vacuum lines in the rug that say, "Look how clean my house is!"

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6 Zhush and Fluff

It's the home stretch. Give the house a last once-over: swing by the bathroom and swap in a new roll of toilet paper and a hand towel. Flip couch cushions and straighten throw pillows. If you discover stray pet hair, wet-rubber dishwashing gloves will pick strands right up. Finally, your secret weapon: Light a citrus-scented candle by the entryway to greet visitors (people will associate the smell of oranges or lemons with freshness). They'll be looking around for the maid service, and you can take all the credit.