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5 hacks from professional cleaners to speed up spring cleaning



Magic erasers, like this one from Mr. Clean, use micro-scrubbers to remove dirt and grime easily, and do so more efficiently than some all-purpose sprays. Just add water. Best for use on hard surfaces like ceramic, tile and plastic. (Target)

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Spring means it's time start fresh and clean out the house.

Think smarter, instead of working harder, when it comes to spring cleaning. We asked professional cleaners how to make it go faster and easier, and still get the work done right.

1. **Create a checklist.** It's easy to get overwhelmed by the idea of spring cleaning, said Meg Roberts, president of Molly Maid.

A spring-cleaning checklist can not only ensure you have all your tools and cleaning products, but make sure you have the right ones for each room, she said. What you need for bathrooms and kitchens is different from what you need for living rooms and bedrooms.

"Do a little bit of an audit of your cleaning materials," she said, adding that there's nothing more frustrating than starting to clean and realizing you need to go buy something.

2. Prioritize and declutter. Deep cleaning kitchens, bathrooms and bedrooms is always top-of-mind, but don't forget the less-obvious areas, like the laundry room, the linen closet, the coat closet. "Things of that nature need cleaning up as well, but maybe they're a lower priority," she said.

Dan Brosseau, franchise owner at Two Maids & A Mop, said to start by putting things away and recycling what you no longer use. "It's really hard to clean the home or, for that matter, even enjoy a clean home if there's just a lot of clutter around," he said.



Microfiber cloths are popular with cleaning professionals for their ability to remove bacteria with water alone. The Chiffonnette Variety Kit is \$42 at us.h2o-at-home.com. (H2O At Home /)

3. The right tools. Spring cleaning goes faster and is easier with the right tools. Both Brosseau and Roberts have two favorite products — microfiber cloths and magic erasers. They recommend buying several microfiber cloths, so you're not cleaning your kitchen with the cloth you used in the bathroom. Dedicate a different-color cloth for each room — red for the kitchen, etc.

Brands like H2O at Home sell packs of microfiber cloths, including the Chiffonnette Variety Kit (\$42, us.h2o-at-home.com).

"Microfiber is what's used in hospitals all across the world because it removes 99 percent of bacteria from all surfaces with no cleaning solution whatsoever," Roberts said. A truly green home can be cleaned with water and microfiber cloths."

Magic erasers, such as those made by Mr. Clean, (\$2.69 for a two-pack, Target) make cleaning easier when they're used wet, Brosseau said, especially in showers, toilets and high-touch areas, like light switches.

Brousseau also finds pumice stones useful. They can be found in beauty aisles (for example, from Harmon, \$2.49, Bed, Bath & Beyond) or hardware stores. The stones work great on rust and hard-water stains. Wet them, and use them as you would an eraser, he said.

Invest in a microfiber duster with an extendable rod, such as the Deluxe Hi-Reach Cleaning Kit (\$39.99, Bed, Bath & Beyond), to get into the high corners in a stairway or for other high ceilings, Roberts said.

4. **Watch the surface.** In your zeal to clean, make sure you're using the right product for the right surface; otherwise you may cause damage. Steam mops are great for tile floors, but be cautious with them on wood floors. "They can create a lot of water. Most homes today have a lot of wooden floors, and you do not want water (sitting on wood floors). If you put water down, you need a system to wipe it right back up," Brosseau said.

Earth Friendly Product's ECOS Floor Cleaner (\$4.99, Ecos.com) is one of the products designed for hardwood and laminate floors. It comes in a spray bottle and doesn't require water.

Keep magic erasers and pumice for tile and hard-surface areas. Don't use a magic eraser on walls, he said, as it will take the paint off, and pumice can scratch mirrors.

5. **Take it easy.** Roberts said cleaning shouldn't be exhausting. Instead, let the tools and the products do most of the work.

"We can tell when our new employees aren't cleaning properly because they're overcleaning. They're getting tired by scrubbing," she said.

Instead, she says apply cleaning solutions, like multipurpose cleaners, and let them sit for a bit. "Apply the cleaning solution in the shower, and walk away and go clean the sinks. By the time you get back to the shower, the solution is soaked in. You have to do a lot less scrubbing if you let the solution sink into the area that it's intended to clean," she said.

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