



Inexpensive Cleaning Recipes

Guide G-303

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The following homemade cleaners are effective, inexpensive and easy to make. The ingredients—ammonia, vinegar, baking soda, washing soda, whiting (sold at paint stores), turpentine and boiled linseed oil—are readily available in most homes, or from grocery, paint, hardware and drug stores.

GENERAL HOUSEHOLD CLEANER

Mix 2 tablespoons household ammonia, 2 tablespoons liquid detergent, and 1 quart water. Use for cleaning kitchen countertops and the outside of ranges and refrigerators.

WINDOW AND MIRROR CLEANER

Before using any cleaner on glass surfaces, dust with a soft cloth or paper towel. Apply the window cleaner with a cloth or sponge; rub dry and polish with newspaper or cloth. Be careful not to spill cleaner on the window sash or sill, as it may damage the finish.

Try one of these—

- Add 4 tablespoons of household ammonia to 1 quart warm water. Use this cleaner for removing heavy, greasy soil found on glass surfaces inside homes.
- Mix 2 tablespoons vinegar with 1 quart warm water. Vinegar is a mild acid that may remove rust or lime deposits accumulated on the outside of windows. For heavy accumulations, you may need a commercial rust remover containing oxalic acid or hydrochloric acid.

KITCHEN DRAINPIPE CLEANERS

- Once a month, flush 1/2 pound washing soda and 2 cups boiling water down the drain; rinse with clear water.
- To cut stubborn grease, pour commercial drain cleaner into the pipe and let stand overnight. In the morning, flush the drain with clear water.

RUST STAIN REMOVERS

Acids can remove brown rings around faucets, rust spots on faucets and window glass, and stubborn lime deposits. Use a mild acid such as lemon juice or vinegar to remove light stains or accumulations. For stubborn rust stains, commercial rust removers work best. However, strong rust removers are dangerous—follow the safety precautions on the label.

You can make your own rust remover using oxalic acid, which is a strong poison. Use oxalic acid with care, as it can be easily transferred from sinks or cleaning materials to food, dishes, or toothbrushes. After cleaning, rinse the area thoroughly with clear water. Safely dispose of cleaning cloths and brushes by placing in tightly covered garbage can. Label and store any leftover product where children can't reach it.

To make rust remover—Dissolve 1 teaspoon of oxalic acid in 1 cup hot water to make a solution.

To use—Wearing gloves to protect your hands, apply rust remover solution with a cloth. Rub the area with a brush; repeat if necessary. Rinse the area thoroughly with water. Dispose of leftover rust remover solution or label and store safely. Discard cleaning cloths and brushes by placing in a tightly closed garbage can.

SOAP JELLY

Combine soap jelly with other ingredients to make cleaners for porcelain, metal or painted surfaces.

Place 1 cup of soap shavings or soap flakes in a wide-mouth quart jar. Add very hot water and stir. Cover the jar until all the soap has dissolved; let stand until jelled.

CERAMIC TILE AND PORCELAIN CLEANERS

Commercial scouring powders easily scratch ceramic bath tile and porcelain used in many bathtubs, sinks and toilets. These surfaces can be damaged beyond repair and will then collect soil easily. Clean ceramic tile and porcelain with granular or liquid detergents, or use one of these recipes:

- Mix 1 cup whiting or baking soda with 1/2 cup pine oil. Store in a covered jar and use as needed.
- Add 2 tablespoons ammonia to 1 cup soap jelly. Store in a covered jar and use as needed.
- Mix 4 parts whiting with 1 part soap jelly. Store in a covered jar and use as needed. This mild scouring agent will not damage most surfaces.
- Mix a little ammonia with whiting to make a stiff paste. Apply. Wash the surface with soapy water and rinse well. (This cleaner may also be used to remove stains on chromium faucets, aluminum window frames, and laminated plastic countertops.)

PAINTED SURFACE CLEANERS

To make a gentle cleaner—Add enough mild detergent or soap jelly to warm water to make light suds. Dust the painted surface thoroughly. Then dip a soft cloth in the cleaning solution; wring it out. Wash a small area at a time. Rinse well with a damp cloth and wipe dry with a dry cloth.

To remove fingerprints or heavy soil—Mix 1/4 cup whiting and 1 tablespoon soap jelly thoroughly. Apply the cleaner with a soft cloth and rub lightly. Rinse well with a damp cloth to remove whiting.

DUSTLESS CLOTH

Keep furniture clean with treated cloths that gather dust instead of scattering it. Coat the inside of a

small screw-top jar with a few drops of furniture-polishing oil or wax; place a clean, lint-free cloth in it. Cover tightly and leave overnight. The cloth will absorb just enough oil or wax to dust and polish at the same time. (On waxed furniture surfaces, use only wax-treated cloths, as oil will soften wax finishes.)

FURNITURE POLISH

In a screw-top jar, mix equal parts:

- Denatured alcohol (from a hardware store)
- Strained fresh lemon juice (not canned or frozen)
- Olive oil

To use—Shake before using. Apply polish with a clean, absorbent, lint-free cloth, gently rubbing cloth over furniture. Polish with a dry woolen cloth. Cover jar and safely store polish.

FURNITURE CLEANER-CONDITIONER

A furniture cleaner-conditioner for natural wood finishes improves wood because it:

- Cleans furniture with a natural wood finish.
- Hides scratches.
- Removes cloudiness and dullness from smoke, grease and dust.
- Protects from dryness and heat.

Use a furniture cleaner/conditioner on varnish, lacquer or shellac finishes. If the surface has a shellac finish, use very little cleaner. (To find out if the finish is shellac, sponge a little denatured alcohol on the underside of the furniture. If it is shellac, the finish will soften and come off.)

To make the cleaner—Use pure gum turpentine and boiled linseed oil. (Hardware stores sell boiled linseed oil. Do *not* boil your own, as linseed oil is extremely flammable and you may start a fire.)

Pour 1 part gum turpentine and 3 parts boiled linseed oil in a glass jar with a screw top lid. Shake gently to mix.

To use, you will need—An old toothbrush, pad of number 000 steel wool, cleaner, clean cloths, small disposable container of hot water, saucer and pan.

To use—

1. Work outside or in a well-ventilated room. Protect indoor work places with paper.

2. Pour heated water into small container and place on a saucer.
3. Shake the cleaner well. Then pour enough cleaner into the container to cover the water. Do **not** stir.
4. Dip a clean cloth into the oily layer in the container.
5. Clean just a little of the furniture at a time with the cloth. On furniture joints, use very little cleaner, as it softens the glue.
6. Use an old toothbrush to clean carvings and joints.
7. If dirt is hard to remove, use number 000 steel wool (a fine steel wool). Dip steel wool in oil and rub lightly with the wood grain.
8. Dip a clean cloth in clear, warm water; wring out water and wipe off furniture (wring the cloth very dry if furniture has a shellac finish).

When water gets cold, empty the container and start with fresh hot water. Do not reheat the cleaning mixture, as you may cause a fire. Also, this makes the cleaner gummy.

When you are finished, discard oily rags and papers in a covered trash container.

Store leftover cleaner in a tightly covered jar in a cool place out of the reach of children.

Use this cleaner once a year; otherwise, dust furniture and polish with oil furniture polish, not wax.

For more information on home-made cleaners see Guide G-315, *Hazardous Household Substances: Alternatives that are Relatively Free of Toxic Effects*, available from your county Extension agent.

This publication was originally written by JoAnn Emmel, Extension Housing Specialist. It was later revised by Susan Wright, Extension Specialist.

As you work with cleaning solutions, use gloves and protect your clothing. Some cleaning products contain ingredients that may be harsh to your skin or may damage your clothing. Work in a well-ventilated area to avoid inhaling offensive or harmful odors.

After using cleaning solutions be sure to label and store them safely. Label any left-over cleaning solution and store out of the reach of children and pets. Keep ingredients in tightly closed well-marked containers.

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