

CLEANLINESS FACTS

TIPS AND TRENDS FROM THE SOAP AND DETERGENT ASSOCIATION

475 Park Avenue South New York, New York 10016

THE GREAT OUTDOORS Inspired by Indoor Decor

Today's accoutrements for outdoor living are a far cry from the vinyl tablecloths and citronella candles that once graced picnics and patios. Innovations in fiber and fabric technology have created outdoor-friendly fabrics. Solution-dyed acrylics and polyester coated with polyvinyl chloride (PVC) are sun-resistant, color fast, mildew and fungal resistant, durable, easy to clean and slow to fade. Dyes are imbedded into the fibers as they are manufactured, creating an expanded range of colors. Deep saturated jewel tones and earth tones, plus traditional tropical brights, appear in patterns and textures inspired by indoor decor. Consumers are often surprised to learn that many of these fabrics can be cleaned with common household cleaners, including bleach. To be sure, The Soap and Detergent Association reminds consumers to read and follow the care labels for all fabric-based outdoor items.

Other indoor innovations are finding a home outdoors. Slipcovers get out of the house, showing up as replacement covers for outdoor cushions. One manufacturer offers place mats and napkins coordinated to the covers.

Outdoor grilling goes gourmet. Larger, more expensive grills feature upscale options, such as special temperature controls for slow smoking, steaming and rotisserie cooking, and space for sautéing, grilling and frying. With special grill top cookware, outdoor chefs can cook anything from chopped onions to whole chickens and pizza on the barbecue grill or over an open fire. Barbecue tools, often packaged as gift sets, come in chrome-plated and more expensive non-stick versions.

Whimsical string lights are backyard brighteners. Fanciful motifs include cowboy boots, chili peppers, Coca-Cola memorabilia, tropical fish, upbeat florals and designs that specifically enhance special

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occasions, such as Easter, Halloween, Christmas and birthdays. Patio umbrellas with built-in lighting systems provide nighttime ambiance. Outdoor candles, set on their own giant stalks, are another way to add party shine. When citronella-scented, they also ward off uninvited guests. Here, too, fun and festive motifs, including fish, fruit, flora, stars and nautical designs abound.

Acrylic tableware is no longer an entity unto itself. Some collections echo the same outdoor motifs found in string lights and candles. Others mirror the trends in year 'round glassware and serveware - further evidence of the rapidly blurring line between indoor and outdoor decor. ■





CARING FOR WOOD FURNITURE

Simple Tips for Easy Care

When properly cared for, wood furniture will look great year after year, reports The Soap and Detergent Association.

Overexposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays can damage the finish, and may even bleach the wood. Closing drapes, placing the furniture out of direct sunlight, rotating it in place or changing the room arrangement are all good preventative measures.

Spilled liquids can penetrate or remove the finish and even damage the wood underneath. To avoid spill or moisture damage, use coasters under beverages and saucers under cups and flower pots. Hot items placed directly on the furniture's surface can cause a chemical change in the finish, leaving a white spot. Protect the surface with trivets or hot pads.

Soil plus perspiration and body oils pose another danger, particularly for headboards, chair arms and areas around drawer or door pulls. Protect these areas by using a furniture polish which can help prevent the finish from softening and eventually wearing away.

Finally, abrasion can scratch the finish and eventually dull the gloss. To prevent abrasion, avoid all of the following: dusting with a dry cloth, using abrasive cleansers, banging into the furniture with the vacuum cleaner, and sliding soiled objects across the surface.

Cotton diapers, terry toweling, cotton knitwear or flannel scraps all make prized cleaning cloths. Avoid synthetic or permanent press fabrics or fabrics that are coarse, linty or new, unless washed several times to remove sizing. Also avoid discarded clothing with snaps, seams, buttons or other details that could scratch the finish.

Furniture polish should be applied regularly to add shine and provide protection. For in-between maintenance, dust furniture with a soft, clean cloth and a furniture dusting product. Never use soap and water on wood furniture. At best, it will leave a dull film on the surface. At worst, it will penetrate the finish and damage the wood's grain. **For more information on cleaning dining/living room and bedroom surfaces, see the reproducible master on pages 3-4. ■**

CARING FOR UPHOLSTERY

Prolonging Fabric Life

Without regular care, even the most durable upholstery will look old and worn before its time. To prolong the furniture's life, The Soap and Detergent Association offers the following tips.

First on the care agenda is regular vacuuming. This simple operation removes the tiny bits of dust, food and dirt that can cause so much damage. When ground into the upholstery, these particles can make the fabric look dingy and cause premature wear. Use headrest and armrest covers to provide extra protection from body soils. If cushions are reversible, turn them over from time to time to prevent sagging and even out the wear.

To prevent fading, keep the furniture out of direct sunlight. If this isn't possible, rearrange the room periodically. Most upholstery fabrics are treated with topical stain protectors. Check the furniture labels and hangtags. If the fabric was not treated, consider a home or professional application. Since all these protectors are applied to the fabric's surface, they will eventually wear off. To extend the life of the fabric, the protector should be reapplied every few years.

When spots and stains occur, treat them immediately. To prevent the stain from spreading, always work from the outer edge of the spot to the center. Use a spoon to gently scrape off solids. Use a dry, white paper towel to blot up spills. Continue blotting, using a clean portion of the toweling, until the spill is absorbed. The next step is to use an upholstery cleaner. Before doing this, check the furniture care label, then choose a cleaner that is compatible with the care instructions or, if indicated, consult a professional cleaner.

Read and follow the label directions on the upholstery cleaner package. Before applying a cleaner to the spot, test it on an inconspicuous place for color fastness. For both testing and actual stain removal, apply the cleaner to a towel, then dab the stain with the moistened towel. Avoid over-wetting. It will only spread the stain. Blot, don't scrub. Continue, working patiently until all the color from the stain has been transferred to the towel. When finished, blot the area dry or use a portable hair dryer. ■

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May/June 1996 c/Facts

Living/Dining Room and Bedroom

CLEANING TIPS

- ✓ Use rugs or mats at all entrances to catch dirt and grit that can build up on floors and carpets.
- ✓ Choose a soft cotton cloth or paper towel for cleaning glass surfaces. Fabric softener on cleaned cloths can leave a residue; extra absorbent paper towels can leave lint.
- ✓ Always use coasters under beverage glasses, cups and flower pots to prevent water spots and rings on wood surfaces.
- ✓ Spray glass cleaners on a cloth instead of directly on a mirror or picture glass. This will keep the cleaner away from the frame and prevent it from seeping onto a picture.
- ✓ When washing windows, use a soft toothbrush or cotton swab to clean corners.
- ✓ Body oils can soften a wood finish and eventually wear it away, especially in areas that are used constantly, such as chair arms and the areas around drawer and door pulls. Regular cleaning and polishing will remove these soils and help prolong the life of wood finishes.
- ✓ Vacuum upholstery regularly to remove small soil and food particles that make it look unsightly and cause premature wear.
- ✓ Use headrest and armrest covers to protect the furniture areas that get the most wear.
- ✓ For carpets and upholstery, only use products formulated for cleaning those surfaces. Other cleaning products can discolor the fabric.

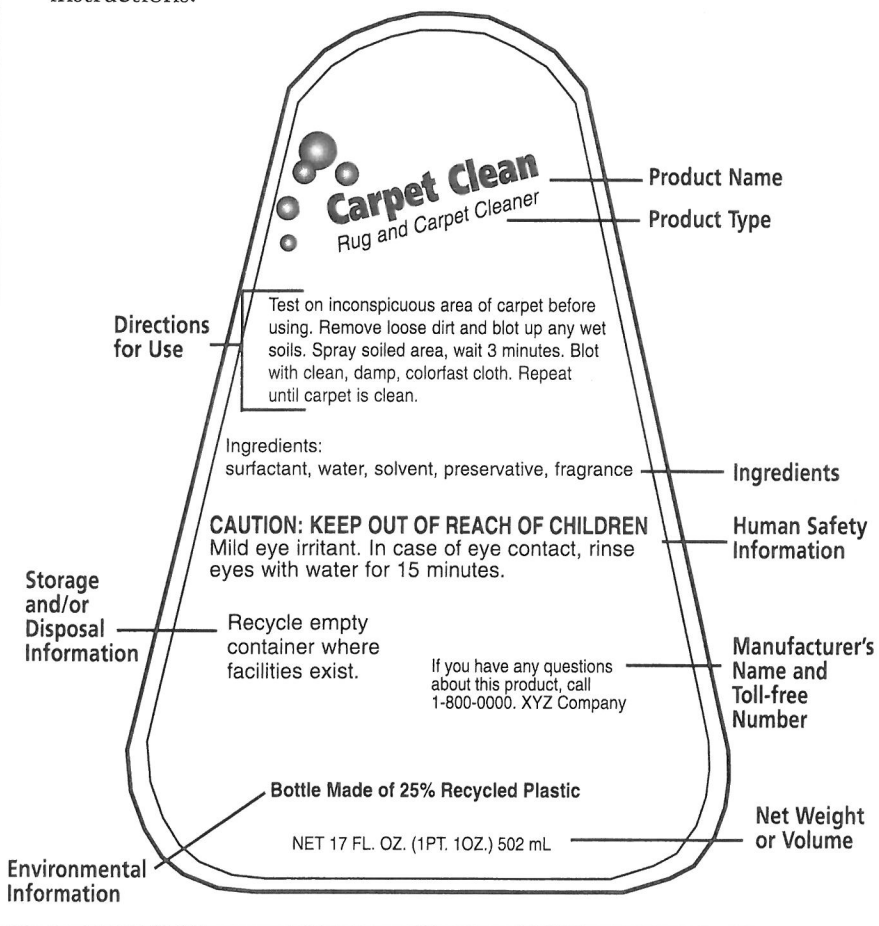
READ THE LABEL...

On Cleaning Products

Product labels provide just about everything about a cleaning product and its safe and effective use. Look for some or all of the information on the sample label shown below.

On Surfaces and Appliances

Most surface and appliance manufacturers give instructions for cleaning their products ... usually on a tag or sticker attached to the product. Or, contact your retailer or the manufacturer for care instructions.

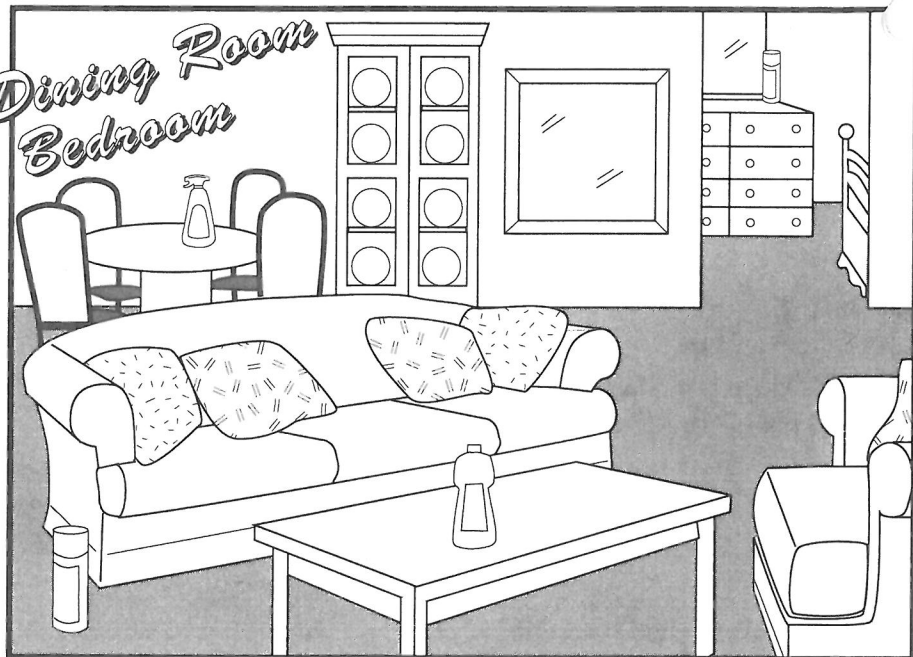


Cleaning House

A LOOK AT YOUR

Living/Dining Room and Bedroom

Living/Dining Rooms and Bedrooms serve up cleaning challenges. Dust and dirt tracked in on shoes ... spills and stains on carpets and upholstery ... rings on wood surfaces. Use this ✓ checklist to choose the right cleaning products for these surfaces.



CARPET

Vacuum frequently to remove dirt and grit particles which are ground in with every footstep and weaken carpet fibers.

- ✓ carpet or rug cleaner

Clean soils as soon as possible to prevent staining.

When cleaning, blot carpet until it is as dry as possible. Moisture promotes the growth of micro-organisms in fabrics.

GLASS

Use a product formulated specifically for glass to prevent streaking.

- ✓ glass cleaner
- ✓ glass and multi-surface cleaner

UPHOLSTERY

Using the wrong cleaner can damage fabrics. Read the cleaning product and upholstery care labels before cleaning any fabric.

- ✓ upholstery cleaner

Pretest on an inconspicuous area first.

WOOD FURNITURE

Dust on a regular basis to help prevent scratching the finish.

- ✓ dusting product to remove light dust and soil
- ✓ furniture cleaner or cleaner-polish to remove dust and stains, add shine and protect the surface
- ✓ furniture polish to add shine and provide protection

Dust wood furniture using a clean cloth with furniture polish on it. Dusting with a dry cloth can eventually scratch and dull the finish.

PAINTED SURFACES

Walls, furniture and woodwork are usually washable, but test the cleaning solution on an inconspicuous area first, especially if the surface is newly painted.

- ✓ nonabrasive, all-purpose cleaner
- ✓ wood cleaner

For more information on household cleaning, order SDA's "All the Dirt on Cleaning House" (no charge).

more →



CARING FOR CARPETS

Driving the Dirt Away

Frequent vacuuming is key to a carpet's long-lasting beauty. Areas receiving little traffic may require once-a-week vacuuming, while areas with heavy traffic may need daily attention. The goal is to vacuum as often as needed to remove dust and lint and prevent soil buildup, explains The Soap and Detergent Association.

Before routine vacuuming, remove toys, debris and other small objects from the carpet. Adjust the carpet pile height control to the correct setting and check the vacuum cleaner to see if the dirt bag needs to be emptied or replaced. Go over lightly trafficked areas with three or four strokes of the vacuum cleaner; for heavily trafficked areas, use seven strokes. In general, all carpeted areas should be thoroughly vacuumed about once a month with the vacuum cleaner suction on "high." For this vacuuming, move all the furniture.

Some types of dirt and grime will not respond to a simple vacuuming. When this happens, additional help is required. Powdered carpet cleaning compounds are formulated to release dirt from the fibers. They work especially well for wool carpets and woven carpets, which can be damaged by overwetting, and for non-colorfast carpets. Spray foams or shampoo concentrates with water do thorough cleaning. Here, too, care must be taken to avoid overwetting. Otherwise, the backing may shrink or the carpet may develop a discoloration problem known as browning. Hot water extraction uses a machine to distribute a hot water and detergent solution into the carpet, then extract the solution along with the dirt and soil. Always use a cleaner recommended by the machine manufacturer.

When it comes to spot and stain removal, use a cleaning product specially formulated for carpets. Read and follow the label directions. Scrape off solid or semi-solid substances with a spoon or a dull knife. Blot, don't rub, using a clean white cloth or paper towel. Work from the edge of the stain to the center. Pre-test the spot removal solution on an inconspicuous area of the carpet.■

MISCELLANY

Decorative Drapery Hardware

Window treatments that reveal the hardware underneath have been the catalyst for the growing demand for decorative rods, finials and other drapery hardware, notes The Soap and Detergent Association. Once the domain of designers and high-end specialty stores, these window accessories are now readily available in chain stores and home improvement centers.

The standard cafe rod is now available in distressed metals, woods and a variety of fashion colors. The simple end caps have exploded into decorative finials ranging from traditional pineapples and acorns to primitive spears and geometric shapes. Materials include wrought iron, urethane (a synthetic alternative to wrought iron), brass, wood, poly resin and ceramic.

Other innovations include wall sconces, which are often described as architecture for the wall. They can be used as an alternative to brackets or as a ledge to hold books, a vase or a small piece of sculpture.

Safety on the Stairs and in the Hall

In any home, stairways and halls are well-traveled thoroughfares that can also be places where danger lurks. The Soap and Detergent Association has put together some tips for making stairways and halls safe.

Good lighting is essential. Dark shadows can hide tripping hazards. Switches should be located at both the top and bottom of the stairway.

Install sturdy handrails on both sides of the stairs. Do not use the stairway as a resting place for toys, games, magazines, etc. that need to be transported from one level to another. Treads, risers and carpeting should be kept in good repair. If there are small rugs at the top and bottom of the stairs, they should have a slip-resistant backing. If they don't, use cut-to-fit rubber matting or two-sided tape to hold them in place.

Keep exits and passageways free of obstructions and storage boxes. If there are glass doors, mark them with decals or other decorations so no one walks through what looks like an open door.■





“KEEP IT CLEAN” BRIEFS

Sponges are often better than pads or cloths for cleaning kitchen and bathroom surfaces. They hold more liquid and distribute the cleaner faster and more evenly over the area being cleaned. A bonus is that they're easy to hold and you can even cut them to fit your own hand size.

Cellulose sponges are great for regular cleaning. Nylon-backed sponges are helpful for tougher jobs where you need a firmer grip.

To avoid transferring soils and germs from heavily soiled areas to lightly soiled ones or to food-preparations areas, use different colored sponges to clean different areas of the kitchen and bathroom — countertops, sinks, floors, toilets, etc. Launder sponges frequently to remove soils and germs.

When wiping up juices from meats and poultry, use paper towels. Clean up juices then discard the towel. Disinfect cutting boards or surfaces contaminated by the meat/poultry.

You can use sponges for cleaning and clean, dry cotton cloths for drying and shining surfaces. Cloths made from synthetic fibers, such as polyester, don't absorb water as well as cotton.

Cloths are great for getting into those small, tight areas where only a fingertip can reach. An old toothbrush is also useful for getting into small areas or scrubbing heavily soiled areas, such as the grout between bathroom tiles.

Don't use a fabric softener when laundering and drying cleaning cloths. The softener leaves a film that can leave cause steaking on the surface being dried.

Rubber gloves are helpful when cleaning because they protect hands from water and cleaning solutions. They allow hotter water to be used, and give extra protection when tackling those really dirty areas.

To make the gloves easier to remove, try putting your hands under cold water. ■

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