

THE PRACTICAL HOUSEKEEPER

CONTINUED Carolyn Erickson, a former housecleaner and contributing writer to The Housekeeping Channel (*housekeepingchannel.com*). Stick to a few basics like your toilet brush and some cleanser.

Maintain what you own Instead of relegating your old vacuum cleaner to the junk heap, get it cleaned and serviced once a year to keep it humming, says Erickson.

Avoid throwaways Use microfiber cloths rather than paper towels; dustrags (old T-shirts, for example) instead of disposable dustcloths; and an old-fashioned mop (with a removable, machine-washable head) rather than a mopping “system.”

Clean as you go The tidier you keep things, the less often you’ll have to do a big scrub, says Edelman, so you’ll use cleansers less frequently. When soaping up kids in the tub, use a non-oily bubble bath or shampoo, and swish out the tub afterward. Rinse well, and keep a microfiber cloth on hand to shine the faucets and quickly wipe down the edges (where soap spills collect).

Pause before washing Often, “dirty” clothes just need airing (or a spritz with a fabric freshener), says Alicia Rockmore, organization expert and coauthor of *Everything (Almost) in Its Place*. No need to fill a washer with once-worn jeans.

Fold like the Gap Seriously! Folding shirts and sweaters neatly keeps clothes in good shape and wrinkle-free, so they’ll last longer without needing to be replaced. Tops thrown all over are more likely to be tossed in the wash because you’re not sure what’s clean, says Rockmore.

Share the big stuff You want to keep your carpets shampooed, wood floors polished and a tall ladder in the garage, but do you really need to buy all these heavy-duty items? Instead of shelling out a lot of cash, get together with neighbors and share them.

Wash smart Using your dishwasher? Forgo the rinse-hold cycle (it uses 3 to 7 gallons of hot water!) and the heated drying cycle—both use a ton of energy. And dishes will still sparkle if you use half the recommended amount of detergent.

Schedule tasks to save If you have several loads of laundry to do, tackle as many as you can in one day; your dryer uses less energy when it runs consecutive loads. Same goes for ironing: Better to iron a week’s worth of shirts in one go.



DIY to save

Plumbing’s gone fritz? Bathroom in need of refreshing? If you think your only choices are to dole out cash, think again. Lou Manfredini, Ace’s Helpful Hardware Man, explains a few surprisingly simple fixes you can tackle yourself.

toilet won't flush?	Could be the fault of clogged holes under the rim, which block enough water from coming through. Use a pipe cleaner and some calcium cleanser (such as Lime-A-Way or CLR) and you should be good to, uh, go.
door stuck?	Find the hinge closest to where the door’s sticking to the door jamb, remove one of the screws that’s there and install a 3-inch wood screw into the hinge. Tighten the screw, and you’ll re-pitch the door.
tub or shower caulk looking dingy?	It’s not too hard or scary to replace. Scrape out the old caulk, clean well with cleanser and let dry overnight. Stretch blue painter’s tape along the rim of the tub and the walls, leaving a 1/8-inch gap between. Apply a thin bead of bathroom caulk (ask at the hardware store for the right kind), and smooth with your finger. Remove tape and let dry for 24 hours.
hole in the wall?	Go to the hardware store and get a metal self-stick patch, lightweight joint compound and a taping knife. Cover the hole with the metal patch, and use the knife to apply a thin coat of joint compound. Let dry, then apply another coat, in a wider circumference. Let dry, then apply a third coat. When that’s dry, lightly sand, prime and repaint to match the wall.