

Home Maintenance Hacks That Can Save You Thousands



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Abstract

Maintaining a home can be costly, but with a few clever hacks, you can save thousands. Regularly inspect and clean your HVAC system to improve efficiency and prolong its life, reducing costly repairs or replacements. Use weatherstripping around doors and windows to prevent drafts, lowering heating and cooling costs. Simple plumbing checks, like fixing leaky faucets and unclogging drains, can prevent major water damage. Opt for LED bulbs to reduce energy bills significantly. Additionally, DIY minor repairs and maintenance tasks, such as patching up small wall holes or resealing grout, can prevent larger, more expensive problems down the line. These proactive measures not only preserve your home's value but also keep your wallet intact.



1. Introduction

Home maintenance doesn't have to break the bank if you're strategic about it. Start by regularly cleaning your gutters to prevent water damage and foundation issues. Install a programmable thermostat to optimize your heating and cooling, significantly cutting energy bills. Insulate your attic and basement to improve energy efficiency and reduce heating costs. Regularly check for and seal any gaps or cracks in your home's exterior to keep pests out and maintain structural integrity. Replacing air filters monthly can keep your HVAC system running efficiently, saving on energy and repair costs. By staying on top of these

simple, yet effective, maintenance tasks, you can avoid costly repairs and maintain a comfortable, efficient home.

2. Repairing Leaky Roof



A leaky roof is a major problem that can cause a series of rapidly cascading home interior issues, from waterlogged attic insulation to ruined floors. Repairing a leaking roof is important to maintaining your home.

Leaky roof repair is a labor-intensive project that isn't for everyone. But if you're up to the task, it's relatively inexpensive and has a significant payoff in preserving the value of your home.

When to Roof a House

Roofing companies can repair a house roof at nearly any time of year because they have sufficient labor and experience to adapt to the weather. As a do-it-yourselfer, choose the driest and warmest time of year since the roof deck may be exposed for a day or two.

In most areas, this means fixing your leaky roof from late spring to mid- or late-summer and even into the fall. Check the immediate weather forecast before starting to seal your leaking roof.

Safety Considerations

Fixing a leaking roof is potentially hazardous. But with proper work practices, roofing repair can be a safe project. Always work with an assistant.

Avoid falls by never working on a wet, snowy or icy roof. Remove debris such as twigs, pine cones, leaves and moss. Wear soft-soled boots.

Use a Personal Fall Arrest System (PFAS) to slow and stop your fall off the side of the house. Or use a fixed Fall Restraint System to prevent yourself from reaching the unprotected edge of the roof.

Consult the comprehensive OSHA publication “Protecting Roofing Workers” for the full range of safety recommendations to keep you safe while sealing your leaking roof. Use all other personal protective devices, too, such as hearing and eye protection, gloves and a breathing mask.

Tools

- Flat pry bar
- Hammer
- Hook blade shingle cutter
- Utility knife
- Ladder
- Flashlight
- Caulking gun
- Chalk line
- Circular saw
- Tape measure
- Pencil
- Personal protection devices
- Materials
- Three-tab composite shingles

- Roofing paper or synthetic underlayment
- Roofing nails
- 8d common nails
- Roofing cement or exterior sealant
- Roof vent (if replacing a damaged vent)
- 7/16-inch exterior-grade plywood or OSB board (if fixing a damaged roof deck)

Instructions

1. Locate the Roof Leak



Start at the lowest point in the roof leak, such as a ceiling stain, and work your way upward. Using a ladder and flashlight, access the attic and visually follow a vertical line up to the roof. The leak may begin a few feet higher up the roofline, toward the roof ridge. The leak's location on the bottom of the roof deck may be stained black or white or may have mold or mildew,

Roof vents are a major source of roof leaks. Roof vents can include attic fans, turbines, plumbing soil stack pipes and any element with metal flashing that extends above the roofline. Or the roof leak's source may be damaged plywood roof decking (also known as sheathing).

2. Examine Roof Vents

If the leak stems from roof vents, return to the top of the roof and check on the condition of the vents. The housings or boots might have become cracked. The vents themselves may have become dislodged. Check for missing or dislodged nails holding the vents to the roof.

3. Remove Damaged Roof Vent

From the top of the roof, remove the damaged roof vent. First, use the pry bar to pull out nails holding the shingles to the vent. Next, use the pry bar to pull back the shingles covering the base of the vent. It helps to have an assistant hold the shingles. Do not remove the shingles. Remove nails that hold the vent to the roof deck. Finally, remove the vent.

4. Replace Roof Vent

Apply a thick bead of roofing cement or exterior sealant to the bottom of the vent's flashing. Have the assistant gently roll back and separate the shingles as you slide in the vent.

The lower section of the vent flashing should ride over the shingles to prevent leakage. Nail down the vent at all corners and every 4 inches. Cover the nails with cement or sealant.

5. Tear Off Old Roofing Shingles



If the leak is coming from damage to the roof deck, you'll need to remove shingles to gain access to the damaged section.

Slide the pry bar under the shingles from the bottom upward (toward the roof ridge). Start about two rows of shingles above the intended repair point. Then, work downwards through the rows, progressively prying nails loose and pulling shingles away.

6. Remove the Old Roofing Paper

Roofing paper or synthetic underlayment will separate the shingles from the roofing deck. Slice off the paper or underlayment with the utility knife. Keep as much intact as possible.

7. Mark the Deck Cut Area

Snap a chalk line down the roof rafters on both the left and right sides of the damaged section of roof deck. Be sure to snap the line in the center of the rafters. Follow existing nails as a guide to the rafter center.

Then, snap a chalk line crossways or 90 degrees to the rafters both above and below the damaged section.

8. Cut Away Damaged Roof Deck

Set the circular saw blade depth to the thickness of the roofing deck, plus another 1/16-inch. Follow the chalk lines to cut away the damaged section of roof deck. Be sure to kneel outside of the marked-off section when cutting.

9. Remove Roof Deck



Use the pry bar to pull out nails from the cut-out section of the roof deck. Then, pry the damaged plywood off but do not dispose of it yet.

10. Cut New Roof Deck Patch

Use the damaged section of roof deck as a template for marking the dimensions of the new roof deck patch. For safety, cut this patch on the ground.

11. Attach the Roof Deck Patch

On the roof, set the roof deck patch in place and nail it into place on the rafters with 8d common nails.

12. Lay Paper or Underlayment

Working from the bottom upwards, nail down the roofing paper or underlayment with roofing nails. Overlap each row by at least 4 inches.

13. Run the First Row of Shingles

Starting at the bottom-most row, lay the first row of new shingles. Maintain the established rows by leafing the new shingles into the existing shingles, from left to right.

Apply a bead of roofing cement along the bottom of the shingles. Nail down the shingles along the top of the shingles.

14. Complete the Shingles

Work upwards until you reach the top row of shingles. Mesh the new shingles with the existing shingles by sliding the new shingles under the top row.

3. Plumbing How To & DIY



No-plunger Approach to Declogging a Toilet

So, you're at a party and you clog the toilet -- we have all been there. Seeing as you do not want to interrupt the festivities to ask your host for a plunger, here is a wonderful hack to ensure a quick and stress-free return to the fun.

What you'll need:

- Water
- Large cup/wastepaper basket

Method:

Step 1- Before beginning any plumbing project, one must always remember to stop any flowing water, which could escalate or worsen a situation. In many cases this means physically bending down to the back of a toilet and turning the water off at the valve, but in the case of a simple plugged toilet, closing the flapper will do. To do this, take off the cover on the back of the tank, and follow the chain down to the bottom of the tank. Remember, this is clean water so do not be afraid to stick your hand in it. This chain is connected to a plug that literally stops water from running from the tank to the toilet bowl. Therefore, one must force this valve closed to stop the flowing water.

Step 2- Find something that can hold water. This can be a cup or even a wastepaper basket. Fill it up with hot water (the hotter the better).

Step 3- Pour this water into the clogged toilet. The heat often works quickly to break down the substance clogging the commode, therefore eliminating the problem.

Step 4- If steps 1-3 haven't worked, try adding soap. Whether hand soap or shampoo, the extra ingredients work to break down the toilet contents, clearing the plug.

How to Get the Kitchen Sink Sprayer Untangled

Do you find yourself jostling the cord to your kitchen sink sprayer before it can be pulled out for use? This simple hack is for you!

What you'll need:

- Pipe insulation
- Duct tape/ plastic ties

Method:

Step 1- When you find your kitchen sink sprayer unable to be retracted, it may be that the hose itself is getting caught on the pipes and hoses under the sink. Get some standard foam pipe insulation from a local home goods store, purchased to fit the diameter of the pipes and hoses in question.

Step 2- Using tape, adhere the foam around the pipes that are preventing the hose, when moved, to get trapped in its grooves. If you dislike the notion of using duct tape on a DIY project, plastic ties are a wonderful and often more permanent alternative.

Have pipes that leak where they connect? Before calling a plumber, try this simple and cheap trick!

3.1. Clean Drains With Baking Soda And Vinegar



If you notice that the water is going down your drains slowly, it might be time to do a deep cleaning. But instead of using store-bought liquid drain cleaners, there are two items in your pantry that will do the trick. These are the powerful cleaning solutions baking soda and vinegar which can easily remove dirt and grease from clogged drains. Baking soda and vinegar are also less harmful than store-bought drain cleaners as the latter contains toxic chemicals like sodium hydroxide. Thus, it is better to use baking soda and vinegar to clear clogs from your drains and keep foul odours out of your home. Before you see how to clean your drains with these two natural ingredients, you should know why it is necessary to maintain your drains regularly.

Why Is It Important To Maintain Your Drains

1. Helps Your Drains Last Longer When you regularly clean and maintain your drains and remove food, debris, oil and grease that clog them up, you will extend the lifespan of your drains. This will help your drains run faster and more efficiently, and you will not need to hire professionals to clear clogs or do repair work.

2. Promotes Better Air Quality In Your Home Food crumbs, dirt, grease and debris in your clogged drains can attract bacteria, germs and even harmful mould in your home. These germs can get airborne over time and hamper the indoor air quality in your home. Thus, with regular maintenance, you can eliminate these germs and bacteria and keep your air quality clean and hygienic.

3. Keeps Your Drains Smelling Fresh Dirty and clogged drains can cause quite a smell in your home, creating an unpleasant environment. But when you constantly clean your drains to remove stubborn food bits and grease residue you can prevent foul odours and keep your home smelling fresh. Tip Cleaning your drains will also get rid of rotten egg smells from your home. Now that you know why it is necessary to maintain your drains regularly, you can start cleaning them with baking soda and white vinegar in the following ways:

How To Clean Drains With Baking Soda And Vinegar

1. Gather Your Cleaning Supplies Bond cleaners in Brisbane recommend first gathering your cleaning supplies to have everything you need for this process. Here are some of the basic supplies you need to deep-clean your drains:

- 1 cup of Baking soda
- 1 cup of white vinegar
- 2 cups of hot water
- Dish soap
- ½ cup of salt
- Stopper

2. Clear Any Loose Debris With Dish Soap You should first start by heating one cup of water in a pan or microwave. While the water heats up, pour a few drops of dish soap into your drain and then pour the hot water over it. Combining dish soap and hot water will clear loose debris in your drain and clear clogs more easily. Caution Do not pour boiling water down your drains, as it can damage the sealing of your drainage pipes.



3. Sprinkle Baking Soda To Remove Grease And Grime Once the hot water and dish soap has gone down, sprinkle one cup of baking soda directly into your drain and leave it for about ten minutes. The alkaline baking soda is a naturally occurring mineral that can remove grease and oil residues and also helps prevent foul odours in your drain.

4. Mix Vinegar With Baking Soda To Create A Fizzing Foam Next, pour one cup of white vinegar into the drain and immediately cover it with a stopper. The alkaline baking soda and the acetic acid in white vinegar will react to create a fizzing foam of carbon dioxide and water. This foam will dissolve any stubborn food residue, grease, oil clogs and dirt from your drains. Using a stopper will prevent the cleaning foam from rising into your sink and keep it moving downward in your drain to deep-clean your clogged pipes.

5. Pour Hot Water Down The Drain To Remove The Solution After about 30 minutes, expert bond cleaners in Brisbane suggest pouring two cups of hot water down your drain. This hot water will help remove the baking soda and vinegar foam and the loosened debris to keep your drains clean and smelling fresh. If there are still clogs in your drain, you can repeat this process as needed. Tip You can also use baking soda and vinegar to clean your microwave.

Some Additional Tips

Keep leftover cooking grease and oil in a can to cool them down instead of pouring this down your drains.

Remove food crumbs, debris and eggshells from your drains regularly to prevent clogs.

Pour hot water and dish soap down your drains every week to keep your drains free of debris.

Use a drain strainer to catch hair, food particles, dirt and grime.

4. How to Do Home Electrical Repairs



Your home's plumbing and electrical systems may seem as different as any two things could be. But there are significant parallels. Water enters your home through a pipe under pressure, and, when you turn on a tap, the water flows at a certain rate (gallons per minute). Electricity enters your home through wires, also under pressure (called voltage, measured in volts). When you turn on an electrical device, the electricity flows at a certain rate (current, measured in amperes, or amps).

Unlike water, which is used as it comes from the tap, electricity is meant to do work: It is converted from energy to power, measured in watts. Since household electrical consumption is relatively high, the unit of measure most often used is the kilowatt, which is equal to 1,000 watts. The total amount of electrical energy you use in any period is measured in terms of kilowatt-hours (kwh).

The instrument that records how much electricity you use is called an electric meter. This meter tells the power company how much electricity they need to charge you for. There are two types of electric meters in general use. One type displays a row of small dials on its face with individual indicators. Each meter dial registers the kilowatt-hours of electrical energy. For example, if you leave a 100-watt bulb burning for 10 hours, the meter will register 1 kilowatt-hour ($10 \times 100 = 1,000$ watt-hours, or 1 kwh). Each dial registers a certain number of kilowatt-hours of electrical energy. From right to left on most meter faces, the far right is the one that counts individual kilowatt-hours from 1 to 10; the next one counts the electricity from 10 to 100 kilowatt-hours; the third dial counts up to 1,000; the fourth counts up to 10,000; and the dial at the extreme left counts kilowatt-hours up to 100,000. If the arrow on a dial is between two numbers, the lower number should always be read.

The second type of electric meter performs the same function, but, instead of having individual dials, it has numerals in slots on the meter face, much like an odometer in a car. This meter is read from left to right, and the numbers indicate total electrical consumption. Some meters also use a multiplying factor -- the number that appears must be multiplied by ten, for instance, for a true figure in kilowatt-hours. Once you know how to read your meter, you can verify the charges on your electric bill and become a better watchdog of electrical energy consumption in your home.

Three main lines (older houses may have two) are responsible for supplying 110-120/220-240 volts AC (alternating current) to your home. The exact voltage varies depending on several external factors. This three-wire system provides you with 110-120-volt power for lighting, receptacles, and small appliances as well as 220-240-volt power for air conditioning, an electric range, a clothes dryer, a water heater, and, in some homes, electric heating.

Electricity enters your home through the power company's service equipment, which is simply a disconnect device mounted in an approved enclosure. It's used to disconnect the service from the interior wiring system. Usually called a main fuse, main breaker, main

disconnect, or often just "the main," this disconnect might be a set of pull-out fuses, a circuit breaker, or a large switch.

Although main disconnects can be mounted outdoors in a weatherproof box, they are nearly always inside the house in a large enclosure that also contains the fuses or circuit breakers, which handle the distribution of power throughout the building. This is called a main entrance panel, a main box, or an entrance box. The three wires from the meter enter this box. Two of them -- the heavily insulated black and red lines -- are attached to the tops of a parallel pair of exposed heavy copper bars, called buses, at the center of the box. These two lines are the "live," or "hot," wires. The third wire, generally bare, is the "neutral." It is attached to a separate grounding bar, or bus, that is a silver-color strip in the main box. In most homes this ground bus is actually connected to the ground -- the earth -- by a heavy solid copper wire clamped to a cold water pipe or to an underground bar or plate.

Overload Protection

Power is distributed through your house through various electrical circuits that start in the main entrance panel. The 110-120-volt circuits have two conductors -- one neutral (white) wire and one hot (black) wire. The 220-240-volt circuits may have two hot wires alone or a third, neutral wire may be added. In all cases, the hot lines are attached directly to the hot main buses. The neutral wire is always connected to the ground bus and never, under any circumstances, should it pass through a fuse or circuit breaker.

Branch and Feeder Circuits



Circuits to all the devices in your home that require electrical power start from the fuses or circuit breakers. There are two types of circuits: feeder and branch. Feeder circuits use thicker cables that travel from the main entrance panel to smaller distribution panels called subpanels, or load centers. These auxiliary panels are located in remote parts of a house or in outbuildings, and they are used for redistribution of power, such as in a garage. Feeder circuits aren't found in all houses.

Electrical Safety Tips

Some home electrical repairs require a licensed electrician, but the repair or replacement of many electrical components can be done by a do-it-yourselfer. Make safety your first priority, and you'll be amazed at what you can do to maintain and upgrade the electrical devices in your home.

Electrical Grounding

Proper grounding of your electrical system is essential to your safety. Electricity always follows the path of least resistance, and that path could be you whenever an appliance or another electrical component is not grounded.

Grounding directs electrical energy into the earth by providing a conductor that is less resistant than you are. This is accomplished by attaching one end of the wire to the frame of an appliance and fastening the other end to a coldwater pipe. Most plastic-coated electrical cable contains a bare wire, which carries the grounded connection to every electrical box, receptacle, and appliance in your home. You can usually tell whether your electrical system is grounded by checking the receptacles. If you have the kind that accepts plugs with two blades and one prong, your system should have three wires, one of which is a grounding wire. The prong carries the safety ground to the metal frame of any appliance that has a three-wire plug and cord.

How to Restore a Circuit

The fuses or circuit breakers in your home electrical system are there for a purpose: to blow or trip if the circuit is overloaded. When that happens, as it does from time to time in almost every home, what do you do?

The first step should be taken even before a circuit trips. If you haven't already done so, make a list of all the branch circuits in your home by number and by what area each one controls. Then you can figure out which receptacles and fixtures are on each branch circuit. If you aren't sure the list is accurate and complete, you can verify it with a very simple procedure. Remove a fuse or trip a circuit breaker to its OFF position, then check to see what equipment or devices are deenergized. Of course, it's easy to see when a ceiling light goes out, but you can check a receptacle just as easily by plugging in a lamp.

Coping With a Power Outage

What do you do when all the power in the house goes off? Usually this is due to a general power outage in an entire neighborhood or district, but sometimes the problem lies in an individual residential wiring system.

The first step is to see whether the outage is a general power outage or restricted to your home. If it's nighttime, look around the neighborhood to see if everyone else's lights are off. During the day, call a neighbor to see if others are affected. Or, if you have a circuit breaker main disconnect, check to see whether it has tripped to the OFF position. If the main entrance is wired with fuses, pull the fuse block out and slip the fuses free. Check them with a continuity tester to see if they are still good. With a probe lead touched to each end of the fuse, the tester light will come on if the fuse is good.

5. Tips To Paint a House



Painting a house's exterior does a lot more than just make it look better. A proper paint job also protects the home by placing a preventative barrier against wind and water and other weather threats. With the time and financial investment involved in this home improvement project, care should be taken to make sure it is done correctly and with the best possible materials. This will prolong the time until your house needs to be painted again. Though the

work is time consuming, you can breeze through the instructions on how to paint a house. Just start with Step 1 below.

Preparing the House For Painting

Choose the right time of year. It's important to take the time of year into account when painting the exterior of your home, as very cold (below 40 degrees F) or very hot temperatures can ruin your paint job.

Clean the surface of the house. If you're lucky, the only real preparation you'll need to do before the paint job is to clean the surface of your house.[2] Use a hose to wash down the walls and go over any stubborn dirt with a wire brush and some warm soapy water.

Remove any defective paint. If there is any old, defective paint on the surface of your house, you will need to remove it before you can proceed. This includes any paint that is loose, blistered or chipped.

Make any necessary repairs. Before you begin painting, you will also need to inspect your house for damage and make any necessary repairs. It may seem like an effort, but it will ensure that your house looks its best once the paint job is complete.

Figure out how much paint you're going to need. It's a good idea to figure out how much paint you're going to need before you begin painting. This eliminates the risk of running out of paint halfway through.

Prime the surface. In some circumstances, you will need to apply a coat of primer to the surface of your house before you can begin painting. Primer provides a good foundation for the paint and will help it to last longer, as it provides extra protection from the elements.

Choose your paint. Choose a high quality exterior paint, such as 100 percent acrylic latex. This will produce a better color, dry faster and be more durable in the long run.

Mix your paint. If you bought several cans of paint, you will need to mix all of the paint from individual cans together in one large container.

Painting the House

Decide which paint application method to use. Whether you use a brush, roller or paint sprayer to paint your house is ultimately a matter of personal preference. Each method has its benefits - using a brush gives you greater control over the painting, using a roller makes the job more efficient, and using a paint sprayer provide heavier coverage.

Paint the sidings. Paint all of the sidings on your house before you work on the trim. This gets the bulk of the work out of the way, and also speeds up the process as you won't need to switch between colors.

Apply a second coat. Once you have waited the recommended amount of time for the paint to dry, you should consider applying a second coat - if time and budget allows.

Paint the trim. Once the sidings are complete it's time to go back and paint the trim, whether it's the same color as the rest of the house or not. This is can be quite time-consuming, but will really give your paint job a professional-looking finish.

6. Genius Cleaning Hacks That Will Make Your Life Easier



Cleaning your house can be a hassle, but it's less so if you're smart about it. Certain strategies (like using a daily shower spray) can lengthen the time between cleanings. Using the right cleaning tools can eliminate the need for extra scrubbing or dusting. And testing out some unusual cleaning hacks from the experts can even make cleaning—dare we say it—a little bit more fun.

We asked cleaning industry pros to share their secret cleaning tricks, from dusting and scouring to wiping down the upholstery and more. They came through with some truly unique tips that we can honestly say we'd never in a million years think up ourselves. Why not give some of them a whirl? Go ahead, enlist the sun to help you clean! (Seriously, it's tip #6.)

Clean the Rug With a Shower Squeegee

For a novel way to get fur and hair out of the carpet, we enlisted the help of Melissa Maker, founder of the Clean My Space Cleaning Company. She reminded us that there's more than one way to clean a carpet. Sometimes she passes up the vacuum and reaches for her shower squeegee instead.

The Motive

Vacuuming is a perfectly acceptable way to clean a rug. But it's not the only way. And sometimes stubborn fur can weave its way into the rug fibers, while hair can get tangled in the vacuum's brush roll. Is there another option?

The Method

Maker's suggestion: Run a dry squeegee across the rug in overlapping rows. Edged with rubber, a squeegee glides along a rug smoothly, creating static electricity that draws hair and fur from the carpet. Collect clumps as they form and discard.

Dust With Packing Tape



We contacted Maeve Richmond, founder of the organizational company Maeve's Method, about the task of dusting. We know that in terms of regular dusting, microfiber cloths pick up more dust than paper towels do. But Richmond weighed in on what to do in hard-to-reach areas.

The Motive

It's easy to ignore lampshades, speakers, and the insides of drawers because it's tough to get them clean with regular dusting. With its strong adhesive, packing tape is the answer—it grabs dirt from fabric and crevices.

The Method

Press a foot-long stretch of tape onto the surface, then pull it back to pick up the grime. To get crumbs out of drawers, ball up the tape, leaving much of the sticky side facing out. Tap the ball onto the debris, applying extra pressure to catch stubborn pieces.

Mop With Your Feet

Pam Young, the founder of cluborganized.com, has definitely perfected the art of making mopping fun—and easy. Her tip below is for anyone tired of getting on all fours to clean the floor.

The Motive

Cleaning floors and baseboards with a rag and the standard hands-and-knees method takes mettle. Legs are typically stronger than arms; the added force speeds the process.

The Method

Using a formula of equal parts water and white vinegar, spritz the bottoms of a pair of thick, absorbent socks, then put them on. Glide one foot across the baseboards. Spritz again, then skate around the floor to pick up dust, starting with the farthest corner and working toward the entryway.

When you're finished, toss the socks in the washing machine. Need to save your socks for the gym? Try Evri-holder Slipper Genie cleaning slippers (\$16, amazon.com).

Prevent Toilet Stains With Car Wax

It's hardly a surprise that someone who named her company Mary Moppins found a way to cut down on constant toilet bowl scouring. Cleaning expert Mary Finley doesn't suggest a spoonful of sugar, but her solution is just as odd: She uses car wax.

The Motive

You can scrub and scour the toilet bowl weekly, but those unsightly stains return again and again. Traditional toilet coating formulas work for a bit, but Finley's method coats the surface for six months, keeping it slick so nothing sticks.

The Method

Clean the toilet to remove existing stains, then back the water out. This is easy: Shut off the water valve by turning it all the way to the right; flush the toilet, holding down the handle until most of the water flows from the tank; and pour a bucket of water into the bowl.

Dry the interior with a cotton cloth, and use a separate cloth to apply the protectant. (Try 3M Performance Finish Synthetic Wax; \$20, amazon.com.)

Make sure to open a window for ventilation. Let sit for 10 minutes, then replenish the water by turning the valve left to open.

For upkeep, every three months pour ½ cup of distilled white vinegar into the bowl to prevent water rings from forming.

Tackle Marks on Upholstery With Shaving Cream



Cheryl Sousan, founder of the lifestyle blog tidymom.net, cleans her upholstery with an unconventional but highly effective method: shaving cream.

The Motive

Sometimes you don't have the right stain solution on hand. Shaving cream, which is essentially a whipped soap, is an ideal substitute. Its lather can penetrate nearly any stain and lift it to the surface. (Test first in an inconspicuous place.)

The Method

Apply a small dollop to a damp cloth. Use a standard white shaving cream, like Barbasol Original (\$7, amazon.com) rather than a gel version. Dab this onto the spot and let sit for 30 minutes, then blot with a clean, damp cloth. If any stain remains, reapply and let sit overnight.

Let the Sun Eliminate Stains on Food Storage Containers

Who says there's no such thing as a free cleaning product? Certainly not Donna Smallin Kuper, certified housecleaning technician and author of *Clear the Clutter, Find Happiness* (\$11, amazon.com). She uses the sun to bleach her food containers.

The Motive

Even if you put plastic food containers in the dishwasher, you can never get them fully good-as-new clean. The sun's rays are akin to natural bleach, eliminating most stains.

The Method

After washing the containers in the sink with dish soap and warm water, place them on a clean tea towel in the sun. Let sit for eight hours. Rinse and let dry.

Use Newspaper to Soak Up Garbage Spills

No one wants to clean up garbage spills, especially when you have to reach down into the bottom of the pail to reach them. Tara Aronson, lifestyle expert and author of *Simplify Your Household* (\$1.50, amazon.com) has a simple yet genius hack to eliminate this task completely.

The Motive

How can you save yourself time and effort when your trash bag inevitably leaks? Line the bin with something to catch and absorb the mess as it happens.

The Method

Place yesterday's news at the bottom of your trash bin with a plastic bag underneath to keep the paper from sticking to the can. A sheet of soft cardboard (such as the insert from your last Amazon package) can also absorb trash-bag leaks, so you don't have to wash out the bin later. Discard it all when you toss the trash.

Let the Blender Wash Itself

Kabashima from *Maeve's Method* says the best way to clean a blender is by simply pressing a button. We couldn't agree more.

The Motive

Some blenders are dishwasher-safe; others aren't. And hand washing a blender can be a real pain. In fact, its sharp blades and ridged interior can be tricky—and dangerous—to clean.

The Method

Fill the blender halfway with water, add a few drops of dish soap, and blend on low for 10 seconds. Wipe down the upper area with soapy water and a sponge, then rinse.

Clean Your Mattress With a Spritz of Vodka



Club Organized's Young has a trick for cleaning your mattress. First step? Head to your liquor cabinet.

The Motive

Mattress upkeep is often overlooked, even though pros suggest quarterly cleanings. Vodka can do more than spike your drinks; it can also deodorize your mattress.

The Method

Break out a bottle of vodka, which is an odorless disinfectant that evaporates fast. Using a vodka-filled spray bottle, spritz the mattress and pillows when changing the sheets. Get into this habit, and you'll never have to do a deep cleaning.

Erase Crayon Marks on Walls With Toothpaste

Sousan from Tidy Mom has good news: You already have a crayon mark remover on hand, and it's sitting in your medicine cabinet.

The Motive

Your child scribbled on the wall, and you're hesitant to use a cleaning spray, which can cause discoloring. You need a mild abrasive that can handle wax—but gently.

The Method

A white, non-gel toothpaste that contains baking soda acts as a fine abrasive to rub away wax without leaving a tint. Apply with a clean toothbrush, scrub gently, then wipe clean with a damp cloth.

Conclusion

By incorporating these home maintenance hacks into your routine, you can significantly reduce unexpected repair costs and enhance the efficiency of your home. Regular upkeep not only preserves your property's value but also ensures a safer and more comfortable living environment. With minimal effort and expense, these proactive steps can lead to substantial long-term savings, making homeownership more affordable and stress-free. Embrace these tips to keep your home in top shape while keeping your finances healthy.

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