

SMART HOME CHIC:
INTEGRATING SMART
HOME TECHNOLOGY
FOR STYLISH INTERIORS

Abstract

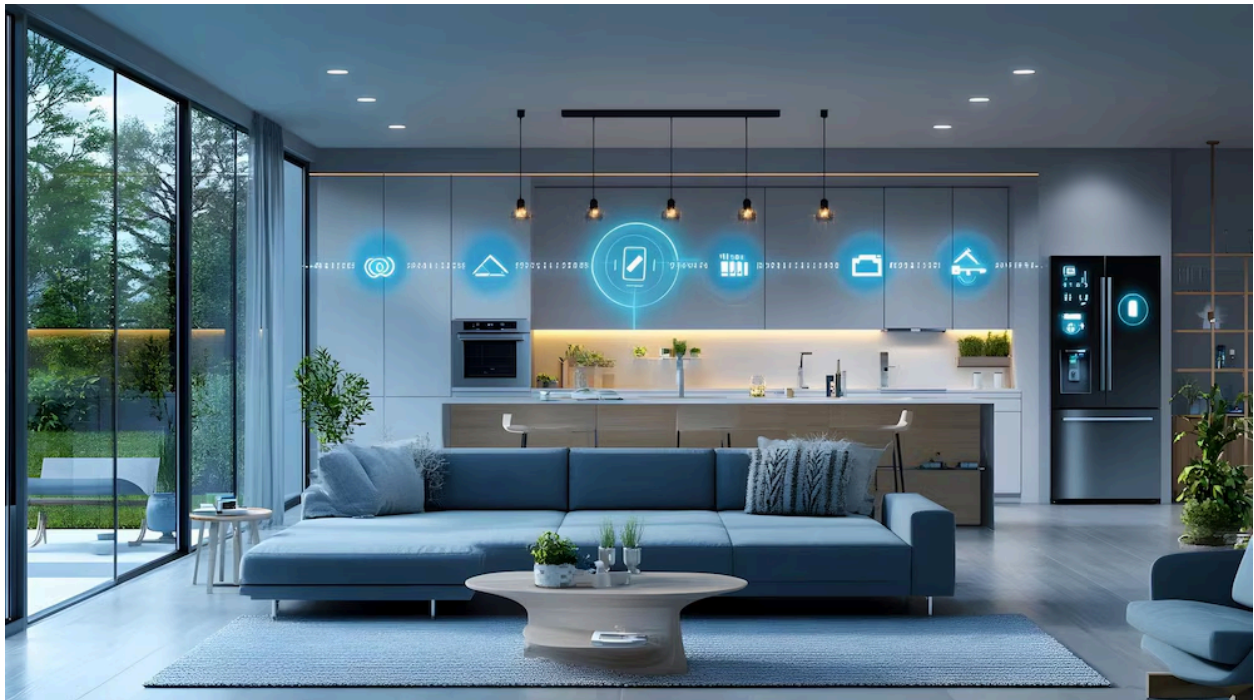
Nearly every fixture and appliance in your home—from the lights, the HVAC system and even the coffeemaker—can be controlled remotely with a Wi-Fi connection and mobile device. But choosing the best smart technology for your home can be tough, and for good reason. Some devices aren't compatible with Android, while others aren't well-suited for Mac OS. Some products present third-party privacy concerns; others have performance issues. So how does one decide? If you're feeling overwhelmed, and aren't sure where to start, this guide will help you crack the code to setting up a smart home with confidence.

It's about striking the perfect balance, where technology enhances the space instead of overpowering it.

Getting Started

Smart home technology can make your life easier while still keeping your home looking beautiful. In this guide, you'll learn how to blend the latest tech devices with stylish design, so your home stays modern and elegant. From smart lighting to automated temperature control, we'll show you simple ways to upgrade your space without ruining its look. Whether you're a fan of new gadgets or just want to refresh your home, this guide will help you create the perfect mix of style and smart living.

1. What Is a Smart Home?



It's no surprise that as technology continues to advance and change our daily lives, integrations and automations for the home have become more and more common. This has created a rise in the use of the term smart home, but it's worth noting that the functionality and features of a smart home can vary widely.

In this article, learn what is involved in creating a smart home, what the technology enables you to do, and how much it costs to outfit a home with some of the most popular features.

What Is In a Smart Home?

A smart home is a house in which anything electric, such as appliances, lights, locks, cameras, televisions, and other objects, are connected through the internet to share information. Referred to as the Internet of Things, or IoT devices, you can remotely access and control connected devices through an app on a smartphone or tablet, or a smart home hub—such as Alexa or Google Assistant.

Having a connected network of devices means that you can control aspects of your home with your voice or the touch of a button. You can even monitor or adjust the settings of home appliances or devices when you are away. For example, you can remotely unlock the door for the dog walker or turn off the sprinkler system if it starts to rain outside.

Pros and Cons of Home Automation

There are many benefits and a few downsides of having a smart home.

Convenient features help lower the use of electricity and natural resources, making smart homes a greener option.¹ By automating the home's daily cycles, smart homes add an extra layer of efficiency, security, and comfort to daily living. Smart home devices can also increase the safety of your home with things like motion detectors, smart locks, and doorbell cameras. The biggest pro, however, is the convenience. Having a smart automated home often means you can control settings from one place, like an app on your phone, and even do so remotely. Being able to access all of your devices from one place keeps things streamlined and easier to manage.

When it comes to cons of home automation, the biggest is the initial cost. Investing in smart home devices can be a bigger upfront cost to be able to save more money in the long run. These devices also rely on an internet connection, so if wifi goes out, you might experience outages or difficulty accessing. Finally, while the devices are often more user-friendly, if you aren't tech-savvy, they may feel intimidating to use/install at first glance.

Creating a Smart Home

Creating a smart home can be as simple or as complex as you like. For anyone wanting to stay small and test the waters, starting with a voice assistant and a few smart devices, such as some light bulbs and an outlet plug or two, is a great option. This allows you to incorporate IoT

devices without making a major investment. In truth, there are many smart home devices you may not even need.

For those ready to make the big switch, smart options are available for almost any home appliance, including thermostats, refrigerators, washers and dryers, ovens, garage doors, doorbells, and many more. A fully smart home can sense your arrival, open the door for you, turn on the lights and your favorite song, and order more eggs before you run out—all without you needing to do a thing.



Cost of a Smart Home

The cost of a smart home varies just as much as the options of smart appliances do. Wireless options will be less expensive than wired options. Small items, such as light bulbs or smart plugs, will be relatively inexpensive. Typically, you can make these smart home swaps for less than \$20.

To build a starter smart home package that includes things like a voice assistant or hub, wireless doorbell or lock, and security camera, may cost a few hundred dollars. Large appliances, such as a refrigerator or washing machine, are often a few thousand dollars each or more. Therefore, the cost of your smart home largely depends on your own preferences and goals, making smart home elements readily available to everyone.

2. How to Setting Up Your Smart Home

The Smart Home: It's a place that anticipates your needs and empowers you to fine-tune your environment. Well, that's the pitch at least. Putting it all together isn't a smooth ride, but the right setup and combination of devices can make your life easier and add real convenience.

With a myriad of ecosystems and standards to navigate, not to mention the diverse array of devices, the smart-home scene is daunting. We put together this smart-home guide to highlight your options, explain the jargon, and help you understand the consequences of the choices you make. A little planning goes a long way.

First, Pick Your Ecosystem

Before you start shopping for devices, decide which ecosystem works best for you. There are three main ones: Google Home, Amazon Alexa, and Apple HomeKit. If your home is filled with iPhones, iPads, and Macs, the latter is the obvious choice, but if you have an Android phone, you may prefer Google's Home platform. Third-party devices usually offer support for multiple standards, but things will run more smoothly if you pick one main ecosystem. Here's a quick breakdown of each:

- ❖ **Google Home:** Google Assistant, the voice assistant, is the main strength of the Nest ecosystem. It swiftly responds to voice commands, is smart enough for a conversational style of speaking, and understands complicated commands or follow-up requests that will confound Alexa or Siri. If you have an Android device, Google Assistant is baked in, and the Google Home app offers up quick access to smart-home shortcuts.
- ❖ **Amazon Alexa:** With a head start in the smart-home arena, Amazon's Alexa boasts the widest range of compatible products. You can ask it anything, though its answers aren't always as accurate as Google's. Alexa supports a wide choice of Skills (like smartphone apps) that have been developed by third parties, and its speakers and smart displays are the most affordable, especially if you wait for big sale events like Prime Day. If you want to control Alexa from your phone, you need to install the Alexa app, and it must be open before you can issue a voice command.
- ❖ **Apple HomeKit:** HomeKit is the most restrictive of the three, but it's still the best option for iPhone owners. Apple's tighter control over third-party certification ensures smooth operation for supported devices. You won't find as many HomeKit-supported devices as with Alexa or Google Assistant, but the major smart-home brands are covered. Apple's Home app is elegant and easy to use, devices are easy to set up, and its platform is the most secure. Apple collects less data by default, and data is kept on the device whenever possible. If you want to control devices when you're away from home, you need a HomeKit hub device, such as a HomePod Mini, Apple TV, or iPad. Siri is also the weakest of the three voice assistants, though it's getting better.

- ❖ **Other options:** There are a few other ecosystems you might consider if you want to avoid the big three. Home Assistant is an open-source platform that's designed to give you local control and safeguard your privacy. It is a powerful platform with an active community and offers many integrations and automation options, but it is also complex and time-consuming to understand and configure.

You could also try Samsung's SmartThings or Tuya's Smart Life, although both platforms use Google Assistant or Amazon Alexa for voice commands.



3. Smart Home Trends This Year

Smart trends are no longer reserved for the most high-end homes or saved for an upgrade years down the line—people are actually buying homes today with an eye on the existing smart home tech that's already included. These are some of the biggest smart home tech trends happening right now.

- **Integration**

One of the top smart home trends for 2021 is just how fully integrated smart home tech is becoming. As mentioned above, it has almost become an expectation instead of a luxury, and along with higher expectations has come connectedness and ease of use.

From a pure integration standpoint, more smart home devices are starting to communicate with one another. For instance multiple rooms in your home can be outfitted with Google Home speakers that can function in a group(s) instead of individual units. A Philips Hue lighting system can control the lights in your entire home and can follow specific routines that you create to turn the lights on or off across the household according to your schedule and needs.

When a smart refrigerator detects you're low on milk it could add it to the shopping list stored on your Amazon Alexa device. Connection is key when it comes to expanding the smart home system.

Ease of use continues to improve, too. You don't need to be tech-savvy to set up many smart tech devices. If you have a smartphone, a Wi-Fi connection and an outlet, most people are set to connect a lot of devices—which makes the barrier to entry lower for smart home tech across the board.

- **Artificial Intelligence and Internet of Things**

Thanks to voice assistants like Amazon Alexa and Siri, most people are familiar with at least some aspects of AI functionality. Artificial intelligence continues to improve, understanding commands better and responding in more relevant ways. AI in smart homes helps residents play music, update their to-do list, turn lights off and on and much more.

The internet of things (essentially taking all the things in the world and connecting them to the internet) is still a more complicated process to understand, but progress made in the smart home world in regards to IoT will have a lot of implications for making life easier, particularly in the smart kitchen and smart bathroom space.

- **Touchless Tech**

This trend had already started to permeate the smart home arena and the Covid-19 pandemic accelerated it in 2020 and 2021. You've likely seen touchless hand sanitizer dispensers in retail environments, and while they're likely not smart-enabled, the potential is there—and the touchless concept is expanding.

For example, touchless doorbells are a new innovation for guests to announce their arrival without touching a shared surface that could potentially spread germs. And of

course, many home devices are controlled via mobile apps so each individual that has control touches only their own phone and not the device itself.



- **Smart Thermostats**

Following smart speakers, smart thermostats have been one of the most widely adopted smart home tech devices. They are generally easy to install and can be completely customized to your preferred temperature, as well as your routines, making it easy to adjust the environment in your home from anywhere.

Smart thermostats are also touted as eco-friendly because you can easily turn heating and cooling off and on when you're away from the home, and budget-friendly because using one can cut down your utilities bills. Nest claims to save U.S. customers an average of 10% to 12% on their heating bills and about 15% on their cooling bills annually.

- **Health Tech**

Another trend that was accelerated by the pandemic, plenty of smart home tech started to either focus completely on, or at least emphasize, health benefits for 2021. As mentioned, smart thermostats have been one of the most popular smart tech devices for a while, but now some are integrating features like humidity sensors to help with air quality; stand-alone humidity sensors are a growth area, too.

Smart air purifiers and air conditioners are also on the rise to assist in elevating and maintaining air quality during this global health crisis. Some smart doorbells are

integrating temperature-taking functionality so that people can screen their guests for one of the most basic Covid-19 indicators before allowing them inside.

In smart home tech that is less Covid-inspired, smart water filtration systems are helping with overall health. Far beyond your typical toilet, advanced smart toilets are going so far as to use sensors to analyze waste and skin to provide insight into the user's health and alert them about any issues that may arise, with the hope that users can seek professional attention before a problem worsens.

4. Ways To Make Your Smart Home Still Look Stylish

As smart home technology becoming more and more integrated into our everyday lives, one challenge persists — how to keep it stylish and cohesive with the rest of our interior decor.

Behold, 5 ways to have the smartest home on the block, without sacrificing an ounce of style.

1. Pick pretty pieces

Gone are the days when high-tech gadgets were oversized eyesores. Now it's entirely possible to find sleek, attractive tech pieces that won't draw attention. Take Sonos for example, whose PLAY:1 speakers are small enough to be tucked away on a bookshelf and come in classic colors, like black and white with silver accents, that complement any design scheme.

2. Rethink the TV console

With TVs designed primarily for hanging, it's harder to find an armoire or cabinet to store it. Instead, artwork or mirrors stand in, providing a hideaway for TVs that are not in use.

3. Consolidate your control center

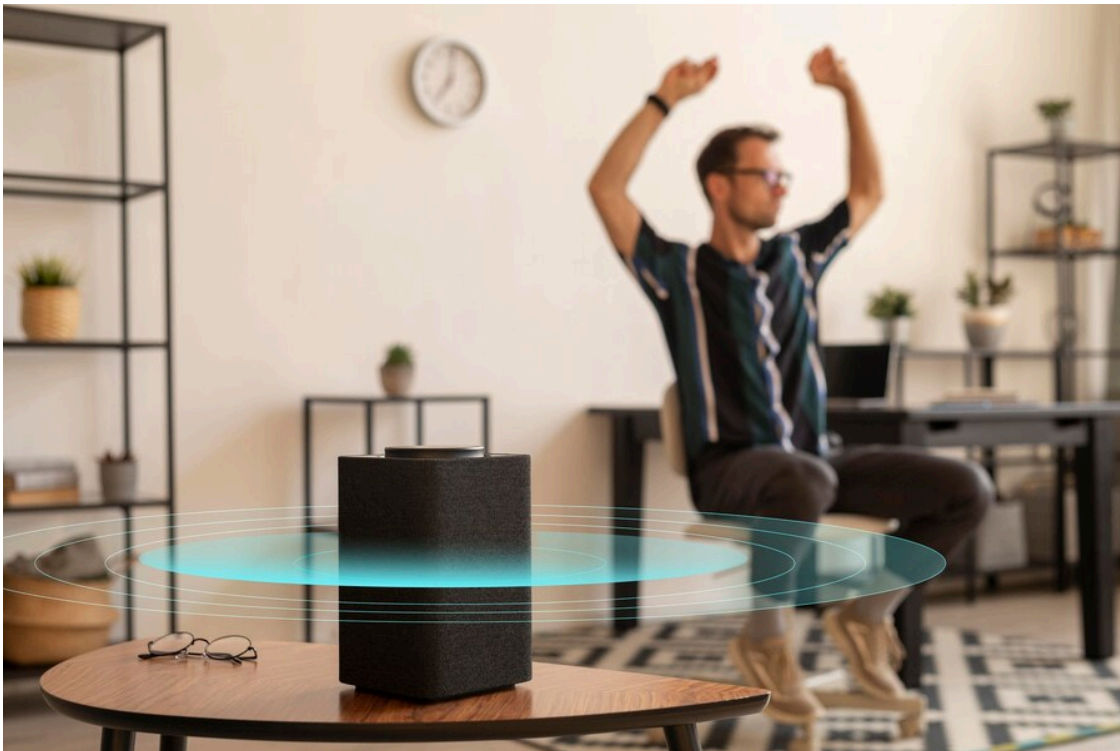
Instead of installing different monitors throughout your home -- one for security, one for temperature control, one for leak detection -- invest in one piece that can do it all. Notion is a new wireless home monitoring system, currently available for pre-order, that takes less than five minutes to set up, and can be used to monitor a number of important things around the house, while sending automatic updates straight to your phone. The best part? The sensor itself is so small you'll barely notice it.

4. Corral clutter

Nothing's more frustrating than finding the perfect tech piece and getting it all set up, only to realize it requires numerous unsightly consoles that totally clash with your decor. Luckily, wall mounts, like Hide It Mounts, have come a long way, too, offering plenty of options to tuck everything, including video game consoles and cable boxes, behind your TV.

5. Make it multifunctional

Just because a tech piece was invented for one main purpose, doesn't mean it can't be put to use in other ways. By investing in items that have more than one role in your home, you free up plenty of space for the rest of your decor. For example, the Notti by Witt Design, is a smart light designed to deliver important notifications by lighting up when you get a call, text message or social media alert. But it can also be used as your morning alarm, and as an LED light with several color options that can change the mood of any room. Brilliant.



5. Smart home must-haves – the 8 smart products to upgrade your home and lifestyle

Smart home devices are revolutionizing households, and with a smart solution personalized for every room and issue, they can elevate your space and make everyday life easier.

Integrating smart home devices into your home's interior design ensures a seamless and cohesive look while enhancing the functionality of your space by adapting to your lifestyle and needs. While some smart products and installations may have a heftier price tag, this is usually outweighed by their benefits, including their efficiency in terms of energy, time, and usage, making these our expert-recommended 'must-haves'.

'Luxury and tech have not always been synonymous when it comes to interior styling, but that has radically changed in recent years,' says, Alinta Lim, senior designer at King Living Design Studio. Our experts have recommended their top 8 smart-home must-haves to invest in.

Smart home must-haves

'Smart home technology integration can include features like smart appliances, automated lighting, and integrated sound systems for a modern and convenient home,' says Mariya Snisar, head of interior design at Renowell.

As well as built-in tech and specialized products, the ability to control and manage various aspects of your home through smartphone apps or voice commands can elevate your overall living experience and add a touch of modernity to any space.

Benefits of smart home devices

Convenience: Smart home devices offer remote control and automation features, making daily tasks more efficient.

Energy Efficiency: Smart thermostats, lighting, and appliances can optimize energy usage, leading to cost savings and reduced environmental impact.

❖ Smart lighting

Innovative home upgrades such as smart lighting and motorized blinds can enhance a space and reduce energy use, saving you money. Karen Miller, owner of the Miller Design Group says, 'Incorporating these lights into your design scheme not only enhances the space's functionality but also creates a more secure, comfortable, and aesthetically pleasing environment. 'The vivid colors and the spectrum of whites these bulbs produce have transformed countless spaces I've worked on, making them lively during the day and soothing for the evening.

❖ Integrated technology headboard

'One of the incredible features available in bed designs is an option which most customers don't necessarily think of when they look to purchase – an integrated technology headboard,' says Alinta Lim. 'These four designs – Jasper, Neo, Encore and Bellaire – incorporate electronic tables, bedframes, and pockets, meaning you have the possibility to easily charge phones without wires or attach wireless lighting. Forget the need for cluttered, tangled cables, or bedside tables which take up valuable floor space, these multifunctional, high-tech designs mitigate the need for additional furniture, look sleek, and add style.'

❖ Smart storage

'As the modern kitchen evolves into an ever more multifunctional room, the need for finding innovative ways to conceal the practical side of cooking takes priority,' comments Sean Drumm, CEO of kitchen company Falmecc.

Incorporating kitchen islands with kitchen countertops into your kitchen design can make this functional cooking area a space that can easily turn into a breakfast bar or entertaining space. You can find kitchen islands with cooking appliances such as with a sink and hob that can be seamlessly covered when needed. This is the ideal installment for smaller spaces that need these multifunctional options.

❖ Smart kitchen appliances

'The kitchen is often the heart of the home, and smart kitchen appliances add a whole new level of convenience and functionality. From smart refrigerators that allow users to see the contents through a built-in camera to voice-controlled ovens and coffee makers, these gadgets make daily tasks more streamlined,' recommends Richard Zi.

❖ Smart security system

'The modern smart home is incomplete without a comprehensive home security system,' says owner of Miller Design Group, Karen Miller. 'They've become more of a necessity than a luxury these days, combining convenience, peace of mind, and design streamlining.'

Jacky Chou explains, 'It consists of devices such as cameras, doorbells, locks, sensors, and alarms that work together to protect your home from intruders, fire, flood, and other threats. You can monitor and control it with your smartphone or voice assistant or set rules and alerts to notify you of any suspicious activity. For instance, your camera can show you who's at the door, your front door can unlock automatically when you arrive, or your alarm can sound when a window is broken.'

Overall, smart home gadgets and upgrades offer a range of benefits, including convenience, energy efficiency, security, personalization, and improved aesthetics,' says Dave Roebel of

Northeast Mechanical Services. 'These innovations can greatly enhance the functionality and enjoyment of a home from an interiors perspective.



6. How Modern Techniques Have Transformed House cleaning?

Home cleaning is one of the most laborious, monotonous and time-consuming tasks, especially for working professionals.

However, new-age technologies, gadgets and pro techniques have revolutionised the way people used to spruce up their abode a few decades ago. Nowadays, dusting, scrubbing, mopping, and disinfecting surfaces become super-easy, efficient, effective, eco-conscious and achievable.

That's why many businesses use smart techniques to carry out a budget end of lease cleaning Adelaide. They can easily remove stubborn stains, grime, grease and other allergens and help get the full bond back after a successful rental inspection. The best part is that seasoned professionals follow tried and tested new-age cleaning methods that can drive desired results without causing any damage or any other complexity at the end of a tenancy.

Below is a complete guide to help you understand how modern techniques and technologies have transformed house cleaning. You can also leverage these techniques and make your life easier.

Floor Cleaning: Brooms & Mops Replaced with Robotic Vacuums

Cleaning floors using modern techniques is one of the most significant revolutions in households. You don't need to scrub the stain hard or kneel to remove dust underneath heavy furniture.

People have replaced ordinary brooms and mops with robotic vacuum and mop cleaners. This is an automated cleaning technology that can take care of the floors, nooks and crannies without human intervention.

These devices can navigate the floors using cameras, sensors and mapping technologies. The best part is that you can control the gadget via your smartphone apps. Robotic vacuums have inbuilt top-notch filtration system to trap even the tiniest dust particles and allergens to improve indoor air quality. It can also remove spills and splatters without leaving scratches behind.

So, whether you are at home or not, keep your floors clean, stain-free and shiny.

Microfiber Cloth Preferred Over Cotton Cloth

Earlier, cotton cloth was the preferred choice to wipe dust, absorb spills and clean hard surfaces. But, the hype of microfiber cloths and dusters left traditional dusting tools behind. It is one of the most ideal dusting techniques to keep your house clean and shiny. Here are some of the key reasons:

Super-Absorbent: Microfiber cloths are highly absorbent and can easily soak up spills and splatters.

Fetch Dust Effectively: These finer fibres can fetch smaller dust particles and bacteria in no time.

Highly durable: They can be washed and used multiple times for different cleaning tasks. This will reduce the landfill waste and save you money.

You can use this super absorbent cleaning tool to clean almost all surfaces. Use it to remove accumulated dust and other tiny contaminants from hard surfaces like ceiling fans, walls, shelves, windows, blinds etc. You can also use it to eliminate spills from countertop or absorb excess liquid from delicate surfaces like a carpet or upholstery furniture.

Dampen in vinegar solution and blot on a carpet to remove stubborn stains without causing any discolouration. So, what are you waiting for! Add this affordable, sustainable and super-effective dusting tool in your cleaning caddy.



The Rise of Eco-Friendly Cleaning Products

There is a growing demand for organic or green cleaning products to maintain a healthy and shiny indoor environment. Of course, store-bought cleaners are effective and time-saving, but they are laden with harsh chemicals that can harm the environment and humans.

People have understood the drawbacks of these products, and therefore, preparing natural or non-toxic cleaners at home. White vinegar, lemon, essential oils, baking soda, hydrogen peroxide, castile soap, etc are some of the great products to help clean stains and grime without causing any pollution.

Tip: Make sure you read labels and avoid harmful cleaning chemicals if using store-bought products.

Steam Cleaners to Effectively Clean Carpets & Rugs

Carpets and rugs take a lot of wear and tear, especially if you have kids and pets at home. Earlier, there were no fancy tools and gadgets to remove carpet spills and stains, except carpet shampooing.

However, this technique is labour-intensive, time-consuming and requires harsh chemicals to banish tough stains. The worst part is that this method often leaves moisture in the fibres, causing mould and damage.

On the other hand, steam cleaning is a modern technique that has transformed the carpet cleaning process. This method is highly recommended by professional end of lease cleaners in Adelaide.

Steam cleaning doesn't require harsh chemicals or detergents to remove stains and germs. It cleans by blasting hot water and steam through the delicate surface.

Make sure you pre-treat the stains using natural cleaning products, such as vinegar. It is good to read care labels to clean upholstery stains effectively. This modern, clean hack can keep your carpets, rugs and couch shiny all year round without much effort.

Smart Apps to Schedule House Cleaning Tasks

Managing a house cleaning schedule becomes super easy using user-friendly, intuitive and robust mobile applications. These smart software tools let you create chore lists, assign tasks and schedule a daily, weekly and monthly checklist to maintain a clean and tidy abode.

It can also help you monitor cleaning quality and performance, especially if you are a busy parent or working professional.

Disinfecting Surfaces After Cleaning

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way people used to clean their homes. They are becoming more aware of disinfecting contaminated surfaces to eliminate lethal germs, bacteria and diseases.

In fact, people hire professional end-of-lease cleaning in Adelaide to ensure that they will thoroughly clean and disinfect the property using tried and tested methods. They can help you get full bond back without any dispute.

Households have been using disinfecting wipes and rubbing alcohol to clean high-touch areas, including doorknobs, faucets, light switches, remote controls, sinks, chair handles, floors, etc, to keep germs and viruses at bay.

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