

## YOUR MUST-HAVE TOOLS

The experts we consulted agreed that these six multitasking marvels are essential for super-quick scrubbing up.

**MICROFIBER CLOTHS** They practically attract dirt. Use them wet or dry to remove dust from furniture, blinds, and more. Lightly douse one with white vinegar to clean stainless-steel appliances and wipe away messy fingerprints. Bonus: They're machine-washable (just don't use fabric softener).

**DISTILLED WHITE VINEGAR** This workhorse removes odors and inhibits the growth of mildew, and kills some bacteria, such as salmonella. Add a cup to laundry to get rid of mildew odors, or use it to clean your coffeemaker, remove stains on plastic, and make scrubbing the mineral deposits on your showerhead a cinch.

**DRYER SHEETS** Run an unused one along your baseboards to repel dust. After doing a load of laundry, fish out the used one to wipe out the lint filter in the dryer.

**SCRIGIT SCRAPER** This pocket-size tool is a safe (and manicure-preserving) way to remove food, candle wax, paint, stickers, and soap from almost any surface.

**DAWN DISHWASHING DETERGENT** It works on clothing stains that are oily, and it's tough enough to clean fireplace bricks. Also great for soap scum in the bathtub.

**WINE AWAY** This product performs the miracle of removing red wine from fabric, carpets, and upholstery, and will lift other red stains, like cranberry juice and tomato sauce, from tablecloths and linens.



## TAKE A PASS ON THESE TASKS (FOR NOW)

Don't let anyone tell you that you need to deep-clean once a week. That's crazy talk. Instead, fit these jobs in when you can.

### ONCE A YEAR

**Clear out the medicine cabinet.** Check the expiration dates on everything. Expired medications can be harmful to your health, and no one should be wearing sunscreen from 2006. Chemicals break down over time, so all those bottles are just clutter.

**Call in a pro to do windows and rugs.** This is one area where it's worth the extra money; the experts will do it faster and better. Carpet cleaning is necessary to rid your home of germs—think of all the dirt and crumbs yours collect.

### ONCE A SEASON

**Wipe blinds and ceiling fans.** Grime on fans can mess with performance, and dust on blinds contributes to allergies. Soak a clean old sock in rubbing alcohol for aluminum or vinyl; on wood, use hot water and lemon oil.

**Machine-wash duvet inserts and pillows.** It'll remove the buildup of skin cells. Then toss the items into the dryer with tennis balls to keep them fluffy.

**Freshen trash cans.** Sprinkle baby powder inside, add water, and let sit for one hour. Swish, wipe, and rinse.

### ONCE A MONTH

**Sanitize your keyboard, mouse, and remote controls.** Every member of your family touches this stuff, so you'll all stay healthier if you periodically sanitize with a disinfectant wipe. Use a toothbrush to scrub food particles, too. (Take batteries out of the remote first.)

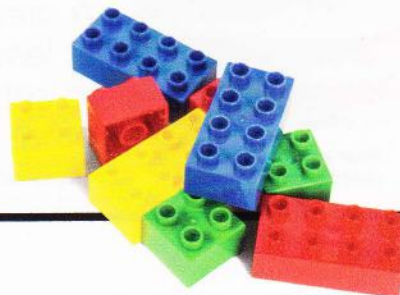
**Vacuum your couch.** Do the cushions and the base to pick up food, hair, and pet fur that's fallen into the cracks. These things can break down the fibers in many fabrics, so removing them will help extend the life of your sofa.

### READER TIP!

“I always keep one dresser drawer empty in the kids' room.

If my mother-in-law shows up early (and she always does), I use it to hide anything that I didn't have time to put in its rightful place. Then I just empty it out later when I have time.”

—NICOLE CRANE, NEW YORK CITY



FROM TOP: CARLA LANE INTERIORS; STEPHAN ZABEL/GETTY IMAGES.