



SPRING

CLEANING STRATEGIES

Soon enough, winter will be winding down and springtime temperatures will be hopping right into our backyards. And that means it's time to prepare for spring cleaning. Rather than providing you a cleaning checklist this year, let's focus on some of the strategies to make this Spring Cleaning a successful one!

STRATEGY #1: CLEAR IT OUT

Recycle it. Even with the availability of reading online, some people still prefer the paper versions. Gather up any newspapers and those magazines no one has ever quite gotten around to reading. If your community also recycles mixed papers, check the regulations and then start a bin where you can toss those papers as you clean.

Sell it. Garage sales, tag sales or consignment shops are a great way to get rid of items that are in excellent condition but that you no longer need. Collect them in one spot, and then, once spring cleaning is done, decide how to dispose of them.

Donate it. Items that are in good condition but no longer fit your lifestyle can be donated to a charity or "freecycled" away.

STRATEGY #2: INVENTORY YOUR SUPPLIES

Before you start cleaning, make sure you have all the necessary supplies on hand. The basics should include an all-purpose spray cleaner (for small, washable areas), an all-purpose powder or liquid cleaner (for large washable surfaces like floors and walls), an abrasive cleanser (to remove heavy amounts of soil in small areas), a nonabrasive cleanser (for gentle cleaning on easily scratched surfaces, including porcelain sinks and ceramic tile), chlorine bleach (an effective disinfectant, particularly where mold and mildew are present), glass cleaner, furniture-dusting product (such as a spray and a clean cloth, or a microfiber cloth, mitt or duster) and toilet bowl cleaner.

You may also need to add cleaners specific to your surfaces, such as metal polishes and granite cleaners, or your personal preferences, such as wipes and special-purpose sprays. And don't forget to check your supply of vacuum cleaner bags and trash bags.

STRATEGY #3: MAKE A PLAN

Decide on your cleaning style. Some people find it more effective to clean one room at a time. Others prefer to group tasks – such as cleaning windows in several rooms at once or leaving all the vacuuming until the end.

Prioritize. If one room at a time is your style, decide on the order. Generally, it's best to do the rooms that need the most work or get the most traffic first. That way, if your cleaning plans get derailed, you can still be proud of what you've accomplished.

Consider the big stuff. Do the curtains need to be laundered? What about comforters, blankets, bed skirts, slipcovers and shower curtains? Are your area rugs and draperies due for professional cleaning? Once these items are removed from the room and on their way to getting cleaned, it will be easier to tackle the rest of the space.

STRATEGY #4: RECRUIT HELP

It's not necessary to do everything yourself.

Enlist family members. Establish a Spring Cleaning Day. Start early. Assign tasks according to age and ability. Have lunch preplanned – maybe even delivered – so your helpers don't lose momentum. And make it fun. Hide some favorite treats in places that need to be cleaned. Play lively music that keeps everyone's energy up.

Pair up with a friend. If you live alone or family members can't help, find a like-minded friend and clean together – your house in the morning, his/hers in the afternoon. If needed, schedule a second day.

Call in the professionals. If your budget allows, you don't have to do every bit of cleaning yourself. Someone else can come in and wash the windows ... or buff the floors ... or shampoo the carpets ... or clean the upholstery ... or even do the majority of the cleaning after you've removed the clutter.

