

Reseal Grout Lines

The cement-based material between wall, floor, and countertop tiles is extremely porous and stains easily. Protect it with a penetrating grout sealer; it's best to apply it with a small foam brush.

Vacuum and Shampoo Rugs

Synthetic carpets and rugs with waterproof backings can be deep-cleaned with a rotary shampoo machine and a hot-water extraction machine. Rugs without backings, including Orientals, require professional cleaning.

Dust Books and Shelves

Take everything off the shelves, and brush them (along with the books) with a feather duster. Use the dust brush or crevice tool on a vacuum to reach into tight spots. Wipe the spines of leather-bound books with a clean, soft cloth.

Clean Upholstered Furnishings

Take cushions outside and gently beat them by hand to remove dust. If there are stains, check the pieces for care labels. Use a vacuum's upholstery and crevice tools to clean under seat cushions.

Polish Metal Door and Window Hardware

Liquid polishes and polish-impregnated cloths work well for medium-tarnished surfaces; pastes and creams are best for heavier work. If the tarnish doesn't come off, try a stronger product.

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Dust Your Home Thoroughly

This includes hard-to-reach places, such as the tops of ceiling fans and window casings. Always work from the top of a room down, vacuuming the dust that settles on the floor. Avoid using dusting sprays.

Wax Wooden Furniture

Wipe surfaces with a soft cloth dampened with water and mild dishwashing liquid. Apply paste wax, such as Butcher's wax, a few feet at a time with a cotton rag folded into a square pad. Let the wax dry; buff with a clean cloth.

Ensure Fire Safety

Change batteries in smoke detectors (this should be done twice a year), and make sure units are free of dust. Teach everyone in your household how to use a fire extinguisher, and review escape plans.

Wash Window Screens

Using warm water and a mild dishwashing liquid, scrub each screen with a brush; rinse thoroughly.

Clean Window Treatments

Many draperies and curtains are machine washable; check labels. Dry clean fabric shades. Wipe wooden blinds with a damp cloth; warm water mixed with a mild dishwashing liquid is safe for metal and vinyl blinds.

Wax Non-Wood Floors

Vinyl and linoleum floors that have lost their shine should be waxed with a polish designed for these surfaces. Most stone and tile floors can be treated with either a paste or a liquid wax designed for the material.

Source: marthastewart.com

