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help wanted



Don't spray me directly onto furniture, OK? Put me on a cloth first, to beat buildup.



I'm a bathroom rock star! Just wipe me dry to beat streaks on tile.

if your cleaning products could talk

They'd dispense a load of grime-fighting tips.

STYLING: JUDITH TREZZA FOR R.J. BENNETT REPRESENTS

your disinfectant would say...

It's not all about me.

Reality check: No amount of disinfectant will clear the air if the odor-causing culprit—smelly dishes, old garbage, dirty cat litter—has not been addressed. Get rid of the offender, open a window, or turn on a vent for a few minutes to air out the space, then spray.

Give me time.

Disinfectant sprays have to stay put for anywhere from 30 seconds to up to 10 minutes to be effective, depending on the product and the surface sprayed. So read the label.

I have (mostly) magical powers.

Disinfectant sprays can kill viruses and bacteria, including rhinovirus, staph, and E. coli. Most only do the job on hard, nonporous surfaces like porcelain, ceramic, and stainless steel. Avoid putting ones with harsher disinfectants, like concentrated bleach, on sealed granite and laminate, as they can dull the finish.

your laundry detergent would say...

Put me in the right way.

Don't just dump detergent over clothes or it won't disperse properly. If your machine lacks a dispenser, let water flow in, then add the liquid. Or, if possible, hit pause, then add detergent.

I can pretreat stains.

If you don't have stain remover handy, just rub a little liquid laundry detergent into the spots and let sit for five to 10 minutes before throwing the soiled items in the wash.

I like it warm.

You typically can't go wrong with warm water, unless the clothing label specifies cold. Hot water can add to your energy bill, shrink delicate fabrics, and make dyes run in all-natural ones. Cold water might not be enough to battle stains.



your microfiber cloths would say...

Color-code me, please.

Use different-hued cloths for different parts of the house to prevent cross contamination—so a cloth you use to scrub your bathroom counter won't smear germs on your kitchen one.

Dogs love me too!

Grab a cloth to clean your pet's muddy paws on a rainy day. They're also handy for buffing finger smudges off photos and eyeglasses.

I'm best when I'm beefy.

Microfiber cleaning cloths remove dust, dirt, and grease, and they're great for windows because they're devoid of lint. Go for a polyester and nylon blend with a weight of 250 grams to 350 grams, listed on the label; the heftier and denser the fabric is, the better it absorbs liquid and dirt.

your glass cleaner would say...

Overcast skies make me happy.

Glass cleaner works especially well on cloudy days, since sunrays can prematurely dry it when it's sprayed on windows and doors, resulting in streaks.

Take me from the top.

It's your choice: You can wipe in small circles or figure eight patterns on whatever glass you're cleaning. Just work your way from top to bottom to prevent drips on areas you've already tackled.

no-streak shine!

glisten-x
glass cleaner
AMMONIA-FREE

I can make all sorts of stuff sparkle!

Use glass cleaner to shine smooth precious stones, like diamonds, emeralds, sapphires, and rubies; avoid spraying it on turquoise, pearls, and anything porous, which may become discolored. It can make crystal vases and cut glass pieces glisten and also clean dry-erase marker off whiteboards.



help wanted

your wood polish would say...

Know how I glow.

Furniture polish flows into scratches on a piece's finish, smoothing it for shine. Some have silicone to spread easier; avoid it for things you might refinish, as buildup will make the job harder.

I've got dust covered.

There's no need to wipe down wood furniture first, as polish is designed to remove dirt and dust while adding gloss. (If you prefer wax, however, clean first or it will just smear filth around.)



I can pretty up your sink.

Apply a spritz of furniture polish to a stainless steel sink: It'll help water run off more quickly and minimize spotting. Buff it into the metal afterward so it won't get onto items awaiting a wash.

your tub and tile cleaner would say...

Take your formula pick!

Tub and tile cleaner removes soap scum, hard-water buildup, and calcium and lime stains. The longer it clings to the surface, the thinking goes, the better—it's why some are available as nonrunny foams and gels.

I work best on a dry surface.

Otherwise you can dilute the formula, making it less effective. Have a stiff grout or scrub brush handy, or even an old toothbrush—you'll be more successful tackling tough stains.



Bleach not required.

It's only key for whitening mold stains, and it isn't recommended for regular use on grout, as it can strip away its water repellent, leading to discoloration. Consider a bleach-free kind to avoid inhaling that chemical. If you do use one with bleach, open a window or turn on a fan for ventilation.

your toilet bowl cleaner would say...

I'm only as good as my brush.

Look for an antimicrobial brush made of sturdy nylon bristles, with a rounded handle for a good grip. Spritz the head with disinfectant spray after each use, and rest on the toilet rim to dry.

I don't need to be too harsh.

Heavy-duty chemicals like hydrochloric acid are required only for rust or water rings; cleaners with bleach, for mold. Otherwise look for one with quaternary ammonium, a milder disinfectant.



It's not what form you use, it's how you use me.

Toilet bowl cleaners come in liquid, gel, and foam formulas. They're all effective—the key is to let them sit, so don't just squirt and get to work. Direct the nozzle under the rim and around the toilet bowl, leave for 10 minutes (or as directed), then scrub.

OUR EXPERTS: Carolyn Forte, director of home appliance and cleaning products and the textiles labs at the Good Housekeeping Institute; Melissa Homer, chief cleaning officer at MaidPro; Jacqueline Janus, owner of Two Chicks and a Broom; Melissa Maker, author of *Clean My Space*; Becky Rapinchuk, creator of *cleanmama.net* and author of *Simply Clean*; Joshua Zeichner, M.D., director of cosmetic and clinical research in dermatology at The Mount Sinai Hospital



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