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A Clean House with Modern Methods

Michigan State University Extension Service

Home and Family Series

Revision of F-213 "Take It Easy When Cleaning"

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a clean house with MODERN METHODS



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Revision of Extension Folder F-213, "Take It Easy When Cleaning,"

by Ruth C. Kettunen, formerly of Dept. of Home Management and Child Development

Facts About Cleaning

1. The average homemaker considers cleaning one of the most tiring jobs in her home.

The amount and kind of cleaning done in each home depends on the number and age of the family members and their standard of cleanliness. How tiring the job will be depends on the style, size, and condition of the house, the money available for equipment and hired services, and the help given by members of the family. Climatic and local conditions and the time, energy, skill and managerial ability of the homemaker are also factors.

2. Work-saving rules can make any job easier. Cleaning includes many different tasks to which you can apply these work-saving suggestions. When you do this, you will save time and energy, reduce fatigue, gain an increased feeling of accomplishment, and discover that the search for ways of doing a job efficiently can make it more interesting.

Use Your Head — To "Save Your Heels."

• Simplify Your Work — Ask Yourself:

1. WHAT is the job?

Start by considering the job that is most tiring, that you think takes too much time, or that is repetitive or boring.

2. WHY is the job done?

Use this question to help decide the importance of jobs, or to eliminate some tasks in whole or part.

3. WHERE is the best place to do the job?

You can relocate some jobs or arrange the work place better.

4. WHEN should the job be done?

You may find a better day or a better time of day to do a certain job than the one you are using.

5. WHO should do the job?

Decide who is best fitted to do the job. Get help from the family "team"; consider their aptitudes, interests, time and energy.

6. HOW should the job be done?

Use this question to find a way to do the job satisfactorily with the least time and energy.

• Plan Your Cleaning Jobs

1. A plan is a sensible guide worked out ahead of time to fit the family situation.

2. Let the family members help plan and give them a choice of the jobs they will do.

3. Think out or write down what jobs must be done, who is to do them, and what equipment, tools, and supplies are needed.

4. Arrange a work schedule that is to be followed regularly but that can be changed if emergencies arise. List the daily jobs, weekly jobs, and less frequent jobs. Avoid too many seasonal jobs by planning better weekly and daily cleaning. Spread out the hardest jobs to avoid peaks of overwork.

• *Prevent Dirt From Collecting*

1. Keep walks, steps, and porches clean; use door mats and foot scrapers so dirt won't be tracked in.

2. Provide storage space near entrances for outdoor clothing, rubbers, and boots.

3. Remove surface dirt before there is too much or before it has become embedded.

4. Choose easy-to-clean furnishings and fabrics, as well as easily-cleaned wall and floor finishes.

5. Reduce the number of decorative small articles that you must handle, dust, clean, or give special care.

6. Discard or put away seldom used or nonessential articles and furnishings.

7. Close off any rooms that are not in use.

• *Provide Convenient Storage*

1. Provide suitable storage for the family's clothing and personal belongings. When this is done, it is reasonable to expect family members to put their things away when not in use.

2. Well-organized and conveniently located storage for cleaning supplies, tools, and equipment reduces the "get ready" and "clean up" time of cleaning. Store major equipment at a centrally located place. Provide duplicates of the less expensive items. Example: Have cleaning supplies on each floor of a two-story house.

3. A well-planned cleaning closet is one where tools, supplies, and equipment are easy to see, easy to reach, and easy to grasp.

• *Take One Job at a Time*

1. List all details as you now do the job: question each step.

2. Work out a new and hopefully better way.

3. Try the new way; continue to use it unless you can work out a still better way. Recognize that at first the new way may be awkward until you break old habits and learn new skills and techniques.

• *Standards—Check Yourself*

A clean and orderly house is a good thing—for your family's health, comfort, and well-being. But watch yourself! Sometimes a thorough job is necessary in order to have a healthful and sanitary home. Sometimes "a lick and a promise" is best—to save your energies and time for more important things. Suit your efforts to your needs—not necessarily to "the way I always do it," or "what the neighbors think."

Guides For Cleaning

• *Make the Best Use of Your Body*

1. Remember that each part of your body has weight, and that the less weight you move the less energy you use—so save energy by doing less walking, climbing stairs, stooping, stretching, and using unnecessary body and hand motions.

2. You will tire less when you maintain good posture as you work.

3. Use leg muscles instead of back muscles for lifting. Example: When bending to pick up large objects on the floor, bend knees instead of bending at the waist.

4. Use both hands for productive work, not just to hold things. Use both hands at such jobs as dusting, washing woodwork, or washing windows.

5. When moving furniture or other large objects, push or pull instead of lifting with back muscles.

6. When carrying, hold load close to body in front, or divide load and carry part with each arm.

7. Use rhythmical, sweeping, continuous motions instead of short, jerky ones.

8. Work at a comfortable, easy, relaxed pace and avoid tension.

9. Sit whenever possible—even for part of a job, as when dusting small articles or arranging magazines.

10. Rest before you become tired. Try to rest 10 minutes out of every hour when possible.

11. Wear comfortable and suitable clothes. Wear clothing that allows free arm and shoulder movement. Shoes should give comfort and support.

• *Use the Best Tool for the Job*

1. Make effective use of the vacuum cleaner and its attachments. Use the floor brush for walls and bare floors, instead of brushes and dust mops that often scatter dirt instead of collecting it.

2. Use long-handled floor mops and brushes to avoid bending down to the floor or stretching for such jobs as washing floors and walls or cleaning bathtubs.

3. Use cellulose sponges for wipe-up jobs and washing surfaces.

4. Use carts and tables on wheels to move cleaning equipment and supplies to where they are to be used.

• *Get the Most Good From Your Vacuum Cleaner*

1. Use the vacuum cleaner with its attachments to reduce time and energy for many different jobs. The vacuum cleaner will clean rugs and carpets; wood, linoleum, and tile floors; walls; woodwork; upholstery; draperies; curtains; furniture; lamp shades; light fixtures; radiators; cold air registers; windows and shades; venetian blinds; drawers; and hard-to-get-at corners and shelves.

2. Move the cleaner at a moderate pace; you will use less energy and the cleaner cleans best when pushed slowly.

3. If space permits, when you are cleaning rugs or carpets, push the cleaner the length of the room before turning instead of pushing and pulling it back and forth in a small area. When the cleaner must be moved back and forth, use easy, rhythmic motions.

4. Give the vacuum cleaner good care. Save the direction book the manufacturer provides and read it often. Then follow the directions for the care and operation of the cleaner.

5. Keep brushes free from hair, string, and thread.

6. Never use the vacuum cleaner to pick up small metal objects or broken glass.

7. Empty the dust bag often — this does much to insure good cleaning suction. In the average home, this should be done at least once each week.

• *Try New Products — With an Open Mind*

New commercial products can make some jobs easier, such as cleaning agents that do not require rinsing, furniture polishes that clean as well as polish, and treated disposable dusting paper.

• *Improve Your Order of Work*

Try different ways to find what is best for you. For example, try these:

1. Collect tools and equipment you will need, and arrange them in the best order for the job. A cleaning basket can be used to keep small supplies and tools together where they are needed. A cleaning apron with pockets can hold small items often used.

2. Plan to do all the work in one place before going on to another section. Example: Use the vacuum cleaner attachments on all surfaces to be cleaned in one part of the room, then proceed to the next section of the room.

3. Use a table on wheels to provide a work center where everything that you need is within easy reach. For example, when washing windows, arrange all supplies on the table and wheel it to the window about to be washed.

How Is Your Attitude?

1. Can you accept the things you can't change? Replace worry, discontent or irritation with interest and enthusiasm?

2. Don't expect the impossible, because even if you have a good cleaning plan and the right tools, there is still work in keeping a house clean. Work simplification is an important tool to use in reaching the goal of a clean, orderly home that provides a place for happy family living.

Other Bulletins You May Find Helpful

E442 — Choosing and using your Cleaning Appliances. CE29 — Electricity in the home.

E415 — How Many Persons is a Homemaker?

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