

Make a Clean Getaway

Cleaning your apartment or house to
get your rental security deposit back.

by Andrew McFallon

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Introduction

This guide will help you clean your rented apartment or house on your move-out day. You'll learn what to clean and how to clean it. You can then move out--and move on--confidently knowing that your damage deposit is going with you.

There may be some items and tasks that you overlooked while living in your space. Your regular cleaning practices may not have included this kind of one-time deep cleaning. The focus of this guide is on what matters in your landlord's eyes.

Your time counts for something, and you're probably keen to get a move on. There are many time-saving tips, including using supplies to their full, time-saving advantage. It should take less than four hours to complete everything in this guide.

To clean what needs cleaning, you'll need all your stuff out of the way. The work starts after you've moved your things out, but before you hand back the keys.

Ready? Let's clean up and get out of here.

Equipment and Supplies

You need some equipment and supplies to complete your move-out day cleaning.

Equipment:

- Bowl (1-litre)
- Bucket
- Cleaning sponge
- Dish cloths (5)
- Dust cloths (2)
- Mask
- Mop
- Rags (10)
- Rubber gloves
- Screwdriver (multi-head)
- Scrub brush
- Scuff eraser sponge
- Stepladder
- Squeegee (25-cm width)
- Toothbrush (old)
- Vacuum
- Wrench

Supplies:

- Abrasive cleaning powder
- Bleach
- Cream cleanser
- Dish soap
- Disinfectant soap
- Disinfectant spray cleaner
- Floor cleaner
- Garbage bags (4)
- Glass cleaner
- Newspaper
- Oven cleaning spray
- Paper towels

Cleaning the Kitchen

Cleaning the kitchen means removing dirt, grease buildup, and bacteria from the areas that have the most contact with food. Landlords look closely at the condition of the fridge, stove, and sink as a measure of kitchen cleanliness.

Cleaning the fridge

Cleaning the fridge means removing odours, grime, grease, and stains. This involves defrosting the freezer, washing the shelves, drawers, interior and exterior walls, and reassembling the fridge.

This task should take less than 25 minutes to complete, providing the fridge is already defrosted.

To defrost the fridge

1. Disconnect from the power source.
2. Open the doors of the fridge and freezer compartments.
3. Remove all shelves and drawers.
4. Place a rag on the floor to catch meltwater beneath the door opening.
5. Wait four hours, leaving doors open.
6. Lift the rag from the floor and mop up meltwater.

To wash the fridge shelves and drawers

1. Fill a sink with warm water and 30 ml of disinfectant soap.
2. Soak the shelves and drawers in the disinfectant soap solution.
3. Wipe and scrub using a cloth and scrub brush.
4. Leave to air dry.

To wash the fridge interior and exterior

1. Move the fridge at least 1.5 metres from the wall and clear of surrounding counters.
2. Vacuum the front, sides, and rear of the fridge.
3. Fill a bucket with warm water and 30 ml of disinfectant soap.
4. Wipe and scrub all surfaces using a cloth and scrub brush and the disinfectant soap solution.
Wash the outside first, moving from top to bottom. Remember to wash the top and all compartments and doors.
5. Use abrasive cleaning powder to loosen grease spots.
6. Scrub the folds within the door gasket using an old toothbrush.

To wipe and polish the fridge interior and exterior

1. Wipe using a dish cloth and clean, warm water.
2. Dry using a clean rag.
3. Polish inside and out using paper towel and glass cleaner.
4. Reposition the fridge against the wall.

To reassemble the fridge

1. Replace the shelves and drawers.
2. Reconnect to the power source.
3. Close the fridge and freezer compartment doors.
4. Reposition the fridge back against the wall.

Cleaning the stove and oven

Cleaning the stove and oven means removing all traces of grime and grease and polishing to a shine. This involves pretreating, presoaking, washing all surfaces and components, and reassembling.

This task should take less than 30 minutes to complete providing you have pretreated the oven interior and oven racks.

Note: If the oven has a self-cleaning function, follow the instructions included in the appliance manual. Do not use oven cleaning chemicals inside a self-cleaning oven.

Warning: Avoid hazardous fumes. Open a nearby window and turn on the vent fan. Wear eye protection and rubber gloves when using oven cleaning spray.

To pretreat the oven interior

1. Open the oven door.
2. Remove the oven racks.
3. Wrap the heating elements with aluminum foil.
4. Spray oven cleaning spray evenly throughout the oven interior.
Do not allow spray onto the oven window or the interior oven light.
5. Close the oven door.
6. Place flattened sheets of newspaper on the floor beneath the oven door opening to catch leaks.
7. Leave overnight.

To pretreat the oven racks

1. Place the oven racks on flattened sheets of newspaper.
2. Spray the racks with oven cleaning spray.
3. Place the racks inside a garbage bag.
4. Tie and seal the bag.
5. Leave overnight.
6. The next day, remove from the bag.

To presoak the stove drip pans, knobs, and rims

1. Fill the sink with warm water and 10 ml of dish soap.
2. Remove the drip pans, knobs, and rims from the stove.
3. Place the components in the sink.
4. Leave overnight.
5. The next day, remove from the sink.

To wash the oven racks, drip pans, knobs and rims

1. Fill the sink with warm water and 10 ml of dish soap.
2. Scrub the components in the sink using a scrub brush and the dish soap solution.
Use abrasive cleaning powder to loosen hardened grease spots. Loosen hardened grease spots using small amounts of oven cleaning spray.
3. Rinse using a dish cloth and clean, warm water.
4. Leave to air dry.

To wash the oven interior

1. Open the oven door.
2. Wipe any residue with loose sheets of newspaper.
3. Fill a bucket with warm water and 10 ml dish soap.
4. Scrub using a scrub brush and the dish soap solution.
Remember the door hinges.
5. Rinse using a dish cloth and clean, warm water.
6. Dry using a clean rag.

To wash the stove top and exterior

1. Move the stove at least 1.5 metres from the wall and clear of surrounding counters.
2. Vacuum the front, sides, and rear.
3. Fill a bucket with warm water and 10 ml dish soap.
4. Wipe and scrub all surfaces from top to bottom using a cloth and scrub brush and the dish soap solution.
Use abrasive cleaning powder to loosen hardened grease spots.
5. Rinse using a dish cloth and clean, warm water.
6. Wipe dry using a clean rag.

To reassemble and polish the stove

1. Replace the oven racks.
2. Replace the stove knobs and drip trays.
3. Wipe and polish all surfaces using paper towel and glass cleaner.

Cleaning the kitchen sink

Cleaning the kitchen sink means making it shine. This involves removing grease and grime, and disinfecting and polishing the sink and faucet.

This task should take less than 15 minutes to complete.

To remove grease and grime from the sink

1. Scrub the sink using a soft cloth and cream cleanser and a 1-litre bowl of warm water.
Use an old toothbrush to scrub the seams around the faucet and drain.
2. Remove mineral deposits using white vinegar.
3. Scrub the drain stopper.
4. Rinse with warm water.

To disinfect and polish the sink

1. Fill the sink with warm water and 30 ml of disinfectant soap.
2. Let stand for five minutes.
3. Drain the sink.
4. Rinse with warm water.
5. Polish from top to bottom using paper towel and glass cleaner.
Remember to polish the drain stop, faucet, and knobs.

Cleaning the Bathroom

Cleaning the bathroom means removing all dirt, soap buildup, and bacteria, and polishing to a shine. Landlords look closely at the condition of the toilet, sink, and bathtub as a measure of bathroom cleanliness.

Cleaning the toilet

Cleaning the toilet means scrubbing every surface and thoroughly disinfecting and removing all stains. This involves removing and washing the seat, all the toilet surfaces, and reassembling and polishing the toilet.

This task should take less than 15 minutes to complete.

To remove and wash the toilet seat

1. Remove the toilet seat using a wrench and screwdriver.
2. Partially fill a bathtub to a depth of 2 inches with warm water and 30 ml of disinfectant soap.
3. Place the seat and hardware into the bathtub.
4. Soak for 10 minutes in the disinfectant soap solution.
5. Scrub the seat using a scrub brush.
6. Drain the bathtub.
7. Rinse with clean, warm water.
8. Leave to dry.

To wash the toilet exterior

1. Spray disinfectant spray cleaner from top to bottom, paying special attention to edges and seams.
2. Fill a bucket with warm water and 30 ml of disinfectant soap.
3. Scrub all surfaces using a scrub brush and the disinfectant soap solution.
4. Scrub the seam between the floor and the toilet bowl using an old toothbrush and abrasive cleaning powder.
5. Rinse from top to bottom using a clean rag and clean, warm water.

To wash the toilet bowl

1. Pour 100 ml of bleach into the toilet bowl.
2. Let stand 10 minutes.
3. Flush the toilet to rinse.
4. Fill a bucket with warm water and 30 ml of disinfectant soap.
5. Scrub the bowl using a scrub brush and the disinfectant soap solution.
Remove stains using a scrub brush and abrasive cleaning powder.
6. Flush the toilet to rinse.

To reassemble and polish the toilet

1. Reattach the toilet seat using a wrench and screwdriver.
2. Polish the toilet from top to bottom using paper towel and glass cleaner.

Cleaning the bathroom sink

Cleaning the bathroom sink means removing dirt and soap scum, disinfecting, and polishing to a shine.

This task should take less than 10 minutes to complete.

To remove dirt and soap scum from the bathroom sink

1. Fill a 1-litre bowl with warm water.
2. Scrub the sink and faucet using a soft cloth and cream cleanser and warm water.
Scrub the seams around the faucet and drain using an old toothbrush.
3. Remove mineral deposits using an old toothbrush dipped in white vinegar.
4. Scrub the drain stopper.

To disinfect and polish the bathroom sink

1. Rinse with warm water and 10 ml of disinfectant soap.
2. Wipe dry from top to bottom using a clean rag.
3. Polish from top to bottom using paper towel and glass cleaner.
Remember the drain stop, faucet, and knobs.

Cleaning the bathtub and shower enclosure

Cleaning the bathtub and shower enclosure means removing dirt and soap scum, disinfecting, and polishing to a shine.

This task should take less than 45 minutes to complete.

To remove dirt and soap scum from the bathtub and enclosure

1. Fill a 1-litre bowl with warm water.
2. Scrub the tub and shower enclosure from top to bottom using a soft cloth and cream cleanser and warm water.
Scrub the corners and the areas around the faucet and drain using an old toothbrush.
3. Remove grout stains using a scrub brush and a solution of 10 parts warm water to one part bleach.
5. Remove mineral deposits using an old toothbrush dipped in white vinegar.
6. Scrub the drain stopper.
7. Rinse with warm water.

To disinfect and polish the bathtub and shower enclosure

1. Fill the bathtub to a depth of 8 inches with warm water and 30 ml of disinfectant soap.
2. Wipe all surfaces from top to bottom using a dish cloth and the disinfectant soap solution.
3. Let stand for five minutes.
4. Drain the bathtub.
5. Rinse from top to bottom using a dish cloth and clean, warm water.
6. Polish all surfaces using paper towel and glass cleaner.
Remember the faucet, knobs, shower nozzle and drain stop.

Cleaning the Living Room

Cleaning the living room means working from top to bottom to remove dirt and scuffs from every surface. Besides ceilings and walls landlords look closely at the condition of less obvious areas like baseboards and ceiling light fixtures as a measure of living room cleanliness.

Cleaning ceiling light fixtures

Cleaning ceiling light fixtures means making them shine. This involves disconnecting the power source, removing and washing the light shade, dusting and washing the remaining light fixture hardware, reattaching the light shade, and reconnecting the power source.

This task should take less than 15 minutes to complete.

⚠ Warning: When using a stepladder, have a partner hold the ladder steady and follow the operating and safety instructions.

To disconnect the power source

1. Locate the home's electric circuit breaker panel.
2. Find the circuit switch that corresponds with the light fixture.
3. Move the circuit switch to the OFF position.

To remove and wash the light shade

1. Standing on a stepladder, remove the light shade using a screwdriver with the appropriate head.
2. Fill a sink with warm water and 30 ml of disinfectant soap.
3. Wash and scrub the shade in a sink using a dish cloth the dish soap solution.
4. Rinse with clean, warm water.
5. Leave to dry.

To dust and wash the light fixture hardware

While standing on a stepladder:

1. Dust the fixture with a clean dust cloth.
2. Partially fill a 1-litre bowl with warm water and 10 ml of dish soap.
3. Wipe and scrub the fixture using a dish cloth and the dish soap solution.
4. Let stand five minutes.
5. Polish the fixture using paper towel and glass cleaner.

To polish and reattach the light shade

1. Polish the shade inside and out using paper towel and glass cleaner.
2. Standing on a stepladder, reattach the shade using a screwdriver.

To reconnect the power source

1. Locate the home's electric circuit breaker panel.
2. Find the circuit switch that corresponds with the light fixture.
3. Move the circuit switch to the ON position.

Cleaning walls and baseboards

Cleaning living room walls and baseboards means removing every mark and scuff. This involves vacuuming, washing and scrubbing, and rinsing.

This task should take less than 35 minutes to complete.

To vacuum walls and baseboards

1. Attach the hand brush attachment to the vacuum arm.
2. Vacuum the walls from top to bottom.
Vacuum in 1.5-meter-wide sections, moving in one direction.
3. Attach the crevice attachment to the vacuum.
4. Vacuum the baseboards along the entire length of the wall.

To wash and scrub walls and baseboards

1. Fill a bucket with warm water and 30 ml of disinfectant soap.
2. Wash and gently scrub the walls from top to bottom using a dish cloth and the disinfectant soap solution.
Wash in 1.5-meter-wide sections, moving in one direction. Rinse the cloth after each section.
3. Remove scuffs and marks using a scuff eraser sponge dipped in the disinfectant soap solution.
Remove stubborn marks with a small amount of cream cleanser.

To rinse walls and baseboards

1. Fill a bucket with clean, warm water.
2. Rinse from top to bottom using a clean rag and warm water.
Wipe in 1.5-meter-wide sections, moving in one direction. Rinse the rag after each section.
3. Leave to dry.

Cleaning the floor

Cleaning the living room floor means getting rid of dirt, streaks and stains. This involves vacuuming, washing and scrubbing, and rinsing and drying.

This task should less than 20 minutes to complete.

To vacuum the floor

1. Attach the floor attachment to the vacuum arm.
2. Vacuum back and forth over the floor moving sideways.
Begin in the corner farthest from the entrance to the room.
Vacuum in 1.5-metre-wide sections, moving back towards the entrance to the room.
3. Unplug and store away the vacuum.

To wash and scrub the floor

1. Fill a bucket with warm water and 60 ml of floor cleaner.
2. Mop from side to side in a figure eight motion.
Beginning in the corner farthest from the entrance to the room. Mop in 1.5-metre-wide sections, moving back towards the entrance to the room. Rinse the mop every 20 turns.
3. Remove stubborn marks using a scrub brush and the floor cleaner solution.

To rinse and dry the floor

1. Fill a bucket with clean, warm water.
2. Mop side to side in a figure eight motion.
Begin in the corner farthest from the entrance to the room. Mop in 1.5-metre-wide sections, moving back towards the entrance to the room. Rinse the mop every 10 turns.
3. Wait 5 minutes.
4. While kneeling, wipe the floor from side to side in a figure eight motion using a clean, dry rag.
Replace the rag as it becomes damp.

Cleaning Throughout the Home

Cleaning the home well means paying attention to the places where dirt is mostly likely to show. Landlords look closely at the condition of windows, light switches, and doors as a measure of home cleanliness.

Cleaning windows

Cleaning windows means getting rid of dirt and streaks. This involves washing and wiping the windows with a squeegee.

This task should take less than 20 minutes to complete.

To wash windows

1. Remove loose dirt from the windows using a dry scrub brush.
2. Partially fill a 1-litre bowl with 300 ml warm water and 300 ml of white vinegar.
3. Wash and scrub the windows using a cleaning sponge and the vinegar solution.
Do not rinse.

To wipe windows

4. Dampen the rubber edge of a squeegee with clean warm water.
5. Wipe the windows in a top to bottom motion using the squeegee.
Maintain even pressure. Start from the upper left corner of the window.
6. Wipe water from the squeegee edge with a clean cloth.
7. Repeat the top to bottom wiping motion along the width of the windows.
Overlap the squeegee 5-cm over the previous wipe.
8. Mop up any spilled water from the window frames using a clean cloth.

Cleaning light switches

Cleaning light switches means disconnecting each switch from its power source, washing the switch and plate cover, and reconnecting each switch to its power source.

This task should take less than 15 minutes to complete.

To disconnect the power source

1. Locate the home's electric circuit breaker panel.
2. Find the circuit switch that corresponds with the light switches.
3. Move the circuit switch to the OFF position.

To wash a light switch and plate cover

1. Remove the light switch plate covers using a screwdriver with the appropriate head.
2. Fill a sink with warm water and 10 ml of dish soap.
3. Wipe and scrub the covers using a dish cloth and the dish soap solution.
4. Rinse with clean, warm water.
5. Leave to dry for 10 minutes.
6. Spray a dry cloth with disinfectant spray cleaner.
7. Wipe the switch mechanisms to remove dirt and marks using the cloth and cleaner.
Adjust the switches between ON and OFF positions to clean entirely.
8. Reattach the plate covers.

To reconnect the power source

1. Locate the home's electric circuit breaker panel.
2. Find the circuit switch that corresponds with the light switches.
3. Move the circuit switch to the ON position.

Cleaning doors

Cleaning doors means removing every mark and scuff. This involves washing, scrubbing, and rinsing the doors on all sides.

This task should take less than 15 minutes to complete.

To wash and scrub a door

1. Fill a bucket with warm water and 30 ml of disinfectant soap.
2. Wipe and gently scrub the doors on all sides using a dish cloth and the disinfectant soap solution. Wipe from top to bottom in 30-cm-wide sections, moving in one direction. Rinse the cloth after every five sections.
3. Remove scuffs and marks using a scuff eraser sponge dipped in the disinfectant soap solution. Remove stubborn marks with a small amount of cream cleanser.

To rinse a door

1. Fill a bucket with clean, warm water.
2. Rinse on all sides using a clean rag and warm water. Wipe from top to bottom in 30-cm-wide sections, moving in one direction. Rinse the rag after every five sections.
3. Leave to dry.