



## Alternative Household Cleaning Solutions

Many of the ready-made solutions we purchase to clean and maintain our homes contain poisonous or toxic chemicals. While the labels on these products contain signal words (*caution, warning, danger* or *poison*) to alert us about proper use or potential harm, many do not list the chemical ingredients in the product or hazards associated with the chemical. In most cases, safer alternatives are available. The basic ingredients listed below can be mixed or used alone for many household cleaning tasks. Also, in the event of an accident, these ingredients can be identified by most consumers and health care professionals.

### Selected Basic Cleaning Ingredients

Ingredient	General use
Baking soda	cleaner, deodorizer, fire extinguisher, scouring powder
Boiling water	drain cleaner
Borax*	cleaner, disinfectant, laundry aid, water softener
Lemon	cleaner, deodorizer, stain remover
Salt	cleaner
Soap	cleaner
White vinegar	cleaner, deodorizer, grease cutter
Washing soda*	cleaner, laundry aid, grease cutter, stain remover, water softener, disinfectant. It can be found in the laundry section of grocery stores near the dry bleach.

\*These products are not completely nonpoisonous but are less toxic than their ready-made counterparts.

### Cleaning Hints

- Wear gloves to protect hands.
- Use the simplest, mildest cleaner that will complete the job.
- Never mix bleach with ammonia or products that contain these ingredients. A poisonous gas will be produced.

Use these and other cleaning solutions with CAUTION. Keep cleaners out of the reach of children during storage and use. Penn State University assumes no responsibility for the effectiveness of these alternatives.

### Key to Abbreviations

- c = cup
- gal = gallon
- T = tablespoon
- t = teaspoon
- qt = quart

### All Purpose Cleaners

1. Mix 1 t. borax with 1 qt. of warm water. Add a splash of lemon juice or vinegar to cut grease
2. Mix 2 t. borax and 1 t. soap in 1 qt. of water. Can be stored in a spray bottle.
3. Mix 3 T. of washing soda per qt. of warm water.

### Air Fresheners

1. Place desired amount of baking soda in closed areas such as refrigerator and closets.
2. Put 2 to 4 T. of baking soda or vinegar in desired locations throughout rooms that need deodorizing.
3. Boil cinnamon, cloves or your favorite spice.
4. Burn matches or a candle.

### Carpet Deodorizers

1. Sprinkle carpet with baking soda. Wait 15 minutes or longer and vacuum.

### Disinfectant

1. Mix 1/4 c. borax in 1/2 gal. hot water

### Drain Cleaners

1. Prevention is the best method. Use a drain strainer. Do not pour grease down the drain.
2. For maintenance, pour about 1 gal. of boiling water down the drain weekly.
3. Use a plunger or metal snake (snakes may be available at rental stores).

### Floor Cleaners

1. Wood or vinyl floors. Mix 1/4 c. oil soap with 1 gal. of warm water.
2. Use a mild detergent. Add a few drops of vinegar to help remove grease.

### Copper

1. Apply catsup; wash off quickly.

### Silver

1. Rub with a paste of baking soda and water.
2. Place a piece of aluminum foil to cover the bottom of a pan. Add 2 to 3 inches of water, 1 t. baking soda, and 1 t. salt per quart of water and bring to a boil. Add silver pieces and boil 2 to 3 minutes. Make sure the water covers the silver pieces. Remove silver; rinse, dry, and buff with a soft cloth.

### Oven Cleaner

1. Prevention. Put a sheet of aluminum foil on the oven floor. Be careful not to touch the heating element. Clean up spills as soon as they occur.
2. Mix 3 T. of washing soda per quart of warm water. Spray on and wait 20 minutes. Scrub with a fine steel wool pad if necessary.
3. Mix thoroughly 2 t. of borax, 2 t. liquid soap and warm water. Put in a spray bottle. Spray it on and leave for 20 minutes. Scrub with a fine steel wool pad if needed.

### Tile/Tub/Toilet Cleaner

1. Use a detergent and cloth, or a stiff brush and one of the following: baking soda or borax.

### Window and Glass Cleaners

1. Mix 1 part water to 1 part vinegar in a spray bottle. Wipe off with cleaning cloth. (Note: If unusual streaking occurs during the first time you use this solution, it is due to the wax that some chemical glass cleaners contain. Remove wax with a little rubbing alcohol and then clean with above solution).

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