

5 Basics for Non-Toxic Cleaning

Learning to clean from scratch—making homemade recipes—can truly work if you take time to understand a bit about the chemistry behind how the materials work. Here are the five ingredients that I find to be the safest, most effective, and useful for cleaning.



Baking Soda

A commonly available mineral full of many cleaning attributes, baking soda is made from soda ash, and is slightly alkaline (its pH is around 8.1; 7 is neutral). It neutralizes acid-based odors in water, and adsorbs odors from the air. Sprinkled on a damp sponge or cloth, baking soda can be used as a gentle non-abrasive cleanser for kitchen counter tops, sinks, bathtubs, ovens, and fiberglass. It will eliminate perspiration odors and even neutralize the smell of many chemicals if you add up to a cup per load to the laundry. It is a useful air freshener, and a fine carpet deodorizer.

51 Fantastic Uses for Baking Soda

<http://www.care2.com/greenliving/51-fantastic-uses-for-baking-soda.html>

Washing Soda

A chemical neighbor of baking soda, washing soda (sodium carbonate) is much more strongly alkaline, with a pH around 11. It releases no harmful fumes and is far safer than a commercial solvent formula, but you should wear gloves when using it because it is caustic. Washing soda cuts grease, cleans petroleum oil, removes wax or lipstick, and neutralizes odors in the same way that baking soda does. Don't use it on fiberglass, aluminum or waxed floors—unless you intend to remove the wax.



White Vinegar and Lemon Juice

White vinegar and lemon juice are acidic—they neutralize alkaline substances such as scale from hard water. Acids dissolve gummy buildup, eat away tarnish, and remove dirt from wood surfaces.



23 Ingenious Uses for White Vinegar

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Liquid Soaps and Detergent

Liquid soaps and detergents are necessary for cutting grease, and they are not the same thing. Soap is made from fats and lye. Detergents are synthetic materials discovered and synthesized early in this century. Unlike soap, detergents are designed specifically so that they don't react with hard water minerals and cause soap scum. If you have hard water, buy a biodegradable detergent without perfumes; if you have soft water you can use liquid soap (both are available in health food stores).



Mold Killers and Disinfectants

For a substance to be registered by the EPA as a disinfectant it must go through extensive and expensive tests. EPA recommends simple soap to use as a disinfectant. There are many essential oils, such as lavender, clove, and tea tree oil (an excellent natural fungicide), that are very antiseptic, as is grapefruit seed extract, even though they aren't registered as such. Use one teaspoon of essential oil to 2 cups of water in a spray bottle (make sure to avoid eyes). A grapefruit seed extract spray can be made by adding 20 drops of extract to a quart of water.



Caution: Make sure to keep all homemade formulas well-labeled, and out of the reach of children.

Read more: <http://www.care2.com/greenliving/five-basics-for-nontoxic-cleaning.html#ixzz3CvNfnl8P>