

Receipt Books : A Guide to Domestic Housekeeping
A home-based lesson plan

In the colonial and early American time periods, women often kept receipt (modern day translation - recipe) books filled with instructions for food preparation and preservation, medical treatments, cleaning formulas, and other useful household tips.

Below are some receipts from a book called *The Workwoman's Guide by a Lady* originally published in 1838. Read them together and discuss them. How did people take care of household chores in the past? Are there similarities or differences between housekeeping then and now?

Receipt No. 35

To make linen white that has turned yellow

Heat a gallon of milk over the fire, and scrape into it one pound of cake soap, when it is quite dissolved, put the linen in, and let it boil some time, then take it out, put it into a lather of hot water, and wash it properly out.

Receipt No. 54

To make starch

Peel and grate a quantity of potatoes, put the pulp into a coarse cloth, between two boards, and press it into a dry cake; the juice thus pressed out of the potatoe, must be mixed with an equal quantity of water, and in an hour's time it will deposit a fine sediment, which may be used as starch.

Receipt No. 57

To destroy flies

Ground black pepper and moist sugar mixed in equal quantities, and diluted with milk, put into saucers, adding fresh milk, and stirring the mixture when required.

Receipt No. 61

Scent bags to lay in drawers

Half a pound of coriander seeds, half a pound of rose leaves, one of cinnamon, half an ounce of cloves, three ounces of lavender flowers; mix them well together, and sew them up in muslin or silk bags.

Activity - Make your own Receipt Book

Supplies

- Paper
- Pencils, markers, crayons, etc.
- Stapler (optional)

Instructions

1. Fold a couple of pieces of paper in half, hamburger style, to make a booklet. Optional - staple the binding of the booklet.
2. Write a title on the front page. Example - "The Johnson's Receipt Book"
3. Talk to your family and write down receipts that your family uses to accomplish household tasks. Example - "Receipt No. 1 - Washing windows - Mix equal amounts of water and vinegar in a spray bottle. Spray the mixture on the glass. Use a clean rag or paper towel to wipe the glass clean."

Activity - Make your own "Scent Bags to Lay in Drawers"

In the past and in modern times, people like to put dried herbs and spices in little cloth bags, or sachets, and place them in their dresser drawers and closets to make their clothes smell good.

Supplies***

- Fabric cut into a circle or square (about 8 inches across)
- String/ribbon/yarn cut into pieces (about 12 inches)
- Dried herbs and spices (examples - mint, rosemary, cloves, cinnamon, lavender, etc.)

***Have a parent or guardian cut the cloth and string and help with tying, if needed. Get creative! Which spices do you have in your pantry? Do you have any herbal teas in the house?

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Instructions

1. Start with one cut piece of cloth and cut piece of string and assemble your dried herbs and spices.



2. Put a small amount of two or more herbs in the center of your cloth.



3. Draw up the edges of the cloth towards the center and use the string to tie closed.



4. Place in your dresser drawer or closet!