



How To Get A Jump On Spring Cleaning

Six tips and tricks for taking the stress out of spring's most chore-ful holiday.

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As the days begin to stretch and the cold sting in the air begins to soften, it's hard not to start counting the days until spring, even if there's still snow on the ground. As spring approaches, so too does the joyful, fearful, rejuvenating and too often overwhelming tradition of spring cleaning. A truly mixed blessing for the chore-averse, spring cleaning allows us to save any deep-cleaning efforts until the windows are open, the soggy boots are stowed away and sunshine fully illuminates the winter's worth of dust that has accumulated. But putting off that burden until spring has one obvious downside: it's a *big* clean. Often too big, resulting in one half-hearted attempt on March 20 giving way to a never-ending series of delays.

But it doesn't have to be that way. With a little preparation in the winter, spring cleaning can still be the revitalizing interior overhaul we crave after winter without depleting a season's worth of elbow grease. So says Shannon Brehm, a design specialist at Chicago's [Interior Define](#)

. Brehm knows a thing or two about interior cleaning. “Our showroom has to be spotless,” Brehm said. A dusty showroom doesn’t do much to move couches. Still, “we can’t afford to lose a full day to spring cleaning.” So Brehm and her team take steps in advance to minimize the burden of spring cleaning.

Brehm says her team cleans the showroom every day, both before and after open hours, but it still require a major cleaning every now and then, including in the spring. To prepare for those big cleans, Brehm says there are a few important steps.

1. Make a Plan

This is the big one. If you heed no other item on this list besides this one, you can still get through spring cleaning if you make and stick to a plan. (But read on, the others are good too.) Having a plan is essential to avoid feeling overwhelmed when cleaning day arrives. “We’ve got a large space,” Brehm says, “if we go in there without a clear strategy, it’s just too much. You don’t know where to start.”

A good spring cleaning plan should have at least two specific items. First, schedule a specific time to clean. Most people, needing at least a few solid hours to clean, are going to opt for a weekend, but come Saturday, there are going to be more exciting things to do than clean and plenty of reasons to wait until next week. Pick a date in advance and schedule around it.

Second, create a list of exactly what needs to be cleaned and who is going to clean it. “Because we’ve set a plan of who is going to clean what, it doesn’t feel like we’re all undertaking this enormous task of cleaning the entire store,” Brehm says. “Each of us just has a few specific tasks or areas, and we know how to tackle them.” If you are cleaning your space by yourself, plan which rooms to clean first, so you aren’t left to make decisions on the fly come cleaning day.

2. Shop Smart

You’re going to need some supplies. Don’t wait until you are halfway through cleaning a room to decide you need some rubber gloves. Figure out what you need in advance and have it on hand for the clean.

“Microfiber cloths are essential,” Brehm says. “We go through a ton.” Other key cleaning items include heavy-duty scrub pads, buckets (a 10-quart bucket will be big enough to hold a mop), a squeegee, a duster (look for one with an extendable handle), a toothbrush (for grout and corners) and cleaning solution for each surface in your home, including windows, hardwood, linoleum, marble, mirrors and carpet.

3. Declutter

“We don’t have a lot of extra stuff at the store,” Brehm says, “but at home, it can be a problem.” When it comes to cleaning, extra stuff can be a problem for a lot of us. Too much stuff—magazines, mail, games, books, even furniture—can be a time-consuming distraction come cleaning day. Before cleaning, make sure everything that can be put away, is. Better yet, get rid of whatever you don’t need. Throw away, give away or sell whatever you’re willing to part with. Nothing slows down a deep clean like searching for a space to store the waffle iron that has sat on the kitchen counter, untouched, for over a year.

4. Pay Attention to Utilities

This is where spring cleaning gets real. Giving some love to the mostly unseen but hardworking pipes and vents in your home can pay off. Literally. “It costs a lot of money to heat and air-condition a big space like ours, especially with people coming in and out all day,” Brehm says. “Twice a year, we’ll clean our ducts, vents, and filters, which can save a lot of money in the long run.”

A filthy filter has to work a lot harder to pass clean air through, and that applies to more than just HVACs. Pull your fridge away from the wall and check the coil. Is it covered in dust? Yes, it is covered in dust. That dust is taking a toll on your fridge and your energy bill, and it can cause malfunctions down the line. Check your stove, washer, dryer and any other major appliances as well.

5. Get Help

If you’ve prepped properly for spring cleaning—and if you’ve followed this list, congratulations, you have!—then there won’t be much left to do on spring-cleaning day other than cleaning. Still, while scrubbing and vacuuming may have some beneficial zen properties, they can take a lot of time. Some people may find the time it takes to clean more valuable than the cost of hiring cleaners, and to those folks, Brehm says go for it.

“We always hire professionals to take care of the heavy-duty cleaning,” Brehm says. “They are fast and they do a great job.” A professional cleaner won’t be able to declutter your home or clean your HVAC (though scheduling a tune-up with an HVAC professional isn’t a bad idea either), but when it comes to making your surfaces spotless, they can get it done fast. And to be frank, they can do a better job than you. So if you’re willing to swap some cash for time, start checking out the reviews of your local cleaning services for help on the big day.

6. Enjoy It

“I love a freshly cleaned space, whether it’s our store or my home,” Brehm says. “I always have a plan to enjoy it when we’re finished cleaning. We’ll have a drink in the store, or I’ll have a book ready at home so I can relax and enjoy the space.”

The feeling of renewal that comes with a clean home can be inspiring, but fleeting. It only takes a few days to get used to a spick-and-span home, so take advantage of the feeling while you can. Luxuriate in your fresh, spotless spaces. Take it all in. Then go outside—it's spring!