



1. Use Humidity to Defy Dust

Low humidity levels cause static electricity. Not only does static attract dust, it makes it stick, so it's difficult to remove. High humidity causes problems, too -- it's an ideal environment for dust mites. These microscopic critters are a double threat: They're a common allergen, and they contribute to dust production.

What to do: Keep your home's humidity level between 40% and 50%. That'll eliminate static while decreasing dust mite growth.

Tip: About 80% of dirt in homes walks in from the outside. Stop dirt with a bristly doormat before it's tracked inside.

2. Apply a Car Product to Keep Shower Doors Scum-Free

You can eliminate soap scum build-up by coating your glass shower doors with a rain-repellent product made for car windshields. When applied to glass, products like these create an invisible barrier that causes water, oils, and debris (like soap suds) to bead and roll off.

3. Seal Your Stone Countertops

Natural stone countertops, including granite and marble, are porous, so if they're not sealed, liquids like red wine, juice, or soy sauce can stain them. A countertop sealer repels stains by causing spills to bead instead of getting absorbed. Most countertops are sealed when installed, but the sealant does wear down.

What to do: To keep your countertops in tip-top shape, re-apply sealer twice a year. To see if you need a fresh coat, pour a tiny bit of water on your natural stone countertop. If the water doesn't bead or doesn't stay beaded for two to three minutes, it's time to reseal.

4. Use Protectants on Furniture and Carpets

Protective furniture sprays and carpet sealants, like Scotchgard and Ultra-Guard, guard against inevitable spills by causing liquids to bead on the surface instead of being absorbed.

Some of these products also protect fabrics from fading and resist mold, mildew, and bacteria.

What to do: Apply the appropriate sealer once a year after a deep upholstery and carpet cleaning.

5. Clean Your Oven the Old-Fashioned Way

Forget oven cleaners that promise an easy job. Most cleaners give off noxious fumes and make a horrible mess. The basic ingredient in many oven cleaners is lye, which can burn your eyes and your skin; it's usually fatal if swallowed.

What to do: Use a wet pumice stone to scrape off dirt and grease. It's faster than oven cleaner and toxin-free.