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Spring Cleaning Checklist

With spring selling season arriving, take the time now to polish your home to perfection.

1. Let the sun in. Make any room look brighter with clean blinds and windows. Mix a solution of one part white vinegar to eight parts water, plus a drop or two of liquid dishwashing liquid, for a green window cleaner. Spray on and wipe with newspaper to avoid streaks. (Washing on a cloudy day also reduces streaking.)

Showing tip: Replace heavy drapes with lightweight sheers during warmer months to give a room a brighter, lighter feel for prospective buyers.

2. Sniff out smells. Check the drip tray underneath your refrigerator and wash out any standing water from defrosting. Remove inside odors by washing the inside of the fridge with a baking soda and water solution. Boil lemon juice in your microwave and add it to your dishwasher to eliminate bad smells. Also, put the lemon rinds down the disposal. Add activated charcoal in the fridge to keep odors at bay.

Showing tip: Make the fridge smell fresh instantly with cotton balls soaked in vanilla extract or orange juice.

3. Make your bed better. Vacuum mattresses and box springs, and then rotate and flip over. Do the same for removable furniture cushions. This is also a great time to wash or dry-clean the dust ruffle and mattress pad.

Showing tip: Add new loft to a lumpy comforter by having two people vigorously shake the quilt up and down to redistribute stuffing.

4. Clean those coils. Improve energy efficiency by vacuuming grates, coils, and condensers in your furnace, stove, and refrigerator (either underneath or in back). If a vacuum won't reach, try a rag tied to a yardstick.

Showing tip: Shut some air conditioning vents on the first floor or basement so that more air will reach and cool the second floor. Reverse the process in winter for heat vents.

5. Wash the walls. Grease, smoke, and dust can adhere to walls and make even the best decorating look dingy. Wash walls using a general-purpose cleaner with hot water. Start at the top of the wall to avoid drips and in a corner so that you wash one wall at a time. Rinse the mop head frequently in clean water. And don't press too hard because flat latex paint won't absorb too much water.

Showing tip: Resist the temptation to spot-clean walls since it will make the rest of the wall look dingy.