

10 Top Tips


to keep the house clean with less effort

BY JAN BLAUSTONE



1. Bathrooms are where most accidents happen, and cleaning them is part of the problem. The good news is that it's a whole lot easier to clean them now than it was even one year ago. If you haven't tried the Mr. Clean Magic Reach extender system for shower and tub cleaning, do so. For about \$25, it's like an arm extension and works fairly well with very little scrubbing.

There are also toilet wands to make that chore easier. A clean throne makes a happy queen.



2. Working at the kitchen sink is no fun. But recently I discovered the Black & Decker Powered Kitchen Scrubber and it's changed my life! Maybe not quite, but the Scrubber is one incredible helper for those of us who have limited arm and hand strength. Lightweight, submersible, and easy to grasp, it scrubs, brushes, and scours my sink and dirty pots and pans magnificently on only four AA batteries. It's \$22.99.

3. The iRobot Roomba Vacuuming Robot (www.irobot.com) took the world's floors by storm a few years ago and, for a pricey \$280, I rushed out and bought one. As a three-dog householder, I was skeptical but hopeful.



While the hands-free vacuum criss-crosses my home, I find that it isn't as efficient as a human-powered vacuum. But if I run it once or twice a week, it eliminates my need to sweep up dog hair on virtually all the hard-surfaced flooring.

The little carpeting we have ends up in stripes of clean vs. dog haired, but it's a small job to touch up. Must-have accessories include infrared sensors creating "virtual walls," the fast charger (meaning under 3 hours), and the scheduler that lets you program when you want it to clean. Roomba prices now range from \$120 to \$370. The Roomba Scheduler, including all those options and more, sells for about \$330 at specialty and department stores.

4. What's even better than a hands-free vacuum? A robotic floor scrubber, of course!



The clever iRobot people have been at it again, this time with the Scooba. Scooba offers "four cleaning steps in one pass: preps, washes, scrubs and dries all by itself." The only downside I see is that it isn't suitable for unsealed wood floors or laminate flooring. Slightly heavier than the Roomba (which is 6 pounds), the Scooba weighs in at 9 pounds and sells

for between \$300-\$450. Research online. You could do better.

5. For a floor cleaner in a lower price range, try Euro-Pro's Shark Cordless Intelligent Sweeper. It sells for as little as \$60 online. Using three speeds, it claims to brush up any kind of mess, wet or dry, in a 13-inch path. It's cordless and has a height-adjustable handle. Though it has to be pushed, it's lighter than a regular sweeper and doesn't require a dustpan.

In the mid-price range, try one of Hoover's Floor Mates. The 3060, designed for hard floors, vacuums, scrubs clean, and sucks it all back up. Unfortunately, it is not cordless but it's much easier than a mop. Tile and grout cleaning applications are a plus, too. It retails for about \$245 but you can pick it up online for as low as \$161.



6. Stash trash in an 8-gallon iTouchless Plastic Trash Can. When your hand is 6 inches from the sensor lid, the top opens automatically. It closes a few seconds after you release the debris. It needs 4 D-sized batteries to perform this magic. Line it with ordinary plastic garbage bags or even grocery bags. They stay in place with a retainer ring. There's a more expensive stainless steel version but the plastic can costs \$70 from iTouchless

Innovation Housewares & Products, Inc. (Call 800-660-7978 or go to www.touchlesstrashcan.com.) You might find it



for less on other sites or at discount home improvement stores.

7. Moving on to laundry, if you've been struggling with a heavy bottle of detergent it's a no-brainer to try a concentrated laundry soap—there are dozens of kinds. I can get 32 loads out of the lightweight All Small & Mighty bottle, plus I make very few spills.



If you've replaced your top-loading washer and drier with front-loading models, lucky you! The best complement to

a front-loading system is a pedestal. They come with storage drawers and raise your appliance off the floor by 8–16 inches. Whether



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you build pedestals yourself or buy one for about \$150 to \$200, the extra height makes diving into your washer or drier after lost socks effortless, especially from a wheelchair.

8. Who wants to lift a heavy iron or deal with an ironing board no matter what your level of ability? For several years, I've relied on Wrinkle Releaser by Downy. Just a few light sprays, a slight tug or two, and the wrinkles virtually disappear. It really works ... too bad it's only for clothes.

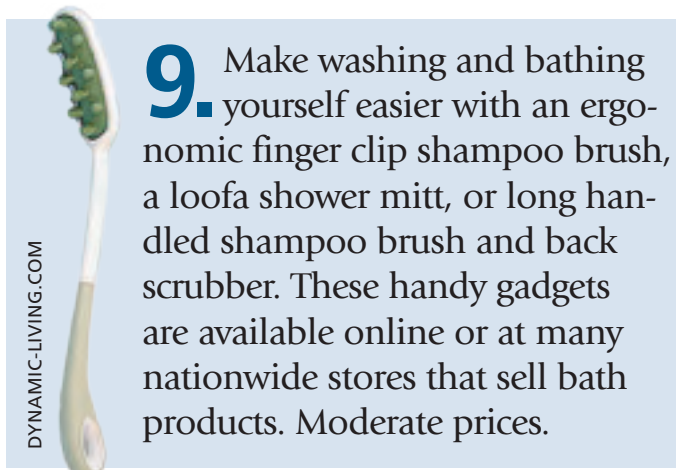
Spraying a small amount of



fabric softener mixed with water can also combat wrinkles. Mix one capful into a 32 oz. spray bottle filled with water. After spraying, you may need to smooth out the garment and hang it to dry.

Now that the house is clean, how about a couple of tips for easier care of yourself?

9. Make washing and bathing yourself easier with an ergonomic finger clip shampoo brush, a loofa shower mitt, or long handled shampoo brush and back scrubber. These handy gadgets are available online or at many nationwide stores that sell bath products. Moderate prices.



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10. There's nothing like drying off, or simply drying your hair, with a blast of ionic air, heated (or not). Powerful blow-dryers are available as freestanding, pivoting, hands-free units. Try the Salon Pro Ionic Conditioning Hair Dryer for \$50.



Other hands-free dryer stands (without dryer) can be ordered for around \$20 to \$30. (www.dxmarket.com/lianneproducts) ■

Jan Blaustone wrote this companion article for her home safety article in the September–October 2006 issue of QUEST, adapted and reprinted with the kind permission of the Muscular Dystrophy Association of the United States.