

The microwave lemon trick – and 10 other household hacks that actually work

Level 1: Elementary / Pre-Intermediate

1 Warmer

a. Discuss these questions.

1. What cleaning and washing do you do at home?
2. Do you like doing housework?
3. Do you have any advice to give others about washing and cleaning at home?

2 Key words

a. Fill the gaps in the definitions and the sentences using these key words from the text.

cap

chemicals

cotton bud

eco-friendly

sort

1. A lid or _____ is a small cover on a container that can be removed.
Can I help you to get the _____ off that bottle?
2. A _____ is a small stick with a little bit of cotton (a soft white material) on each end used for cleaning the skin or putting on make-up.
I used a _____ to clean my computer keyboard.
3. A _____ is a substance that is used in or made by a process that involves changes to molecules or atoms.
I try to eat natural foods that do not contain any _____.
4. If something is _____, it is not harmful to the environment, or it tries to help the environment.
This toothbrush is _____ because it is made from bamboo and not plastic.
5. To _____ is to group things that share similar characteristics.
We need to _____ the rubbish – all the plastics should go in the blue bin.

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dusty

grounds

repellent

spray

washing soda

6. _____ is a substance that is used to keep something away.
This insect _____ doesn't smell too bad.
7. _____ are the tiny grains of coffee that are left at the bottom of a cup.
Keep your coffee _____ and use them on your plants.
8. _____, bicarbonate of soda, or baking soda, is a white powder that is used to make foods rise when they are baked (not baking powder).
You will need flour, eggs, oil, baking powder, and _____ to make this cake.
9. If something is _____, it is covered in a powdery dry dirt.
The bookshelf is so _____ that it made me sneeze when I cleaned it.
10. To _____ means to spread a liquid over an area in tiny drops, usually using a bottle.
You should only _____ a little bit of perfume. It has a strong smell.

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Rebecca Seal

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1 Make a watering system

Armen Adamjan explains how to keep pot plants alive while you're on holiday. Take a plastic bottle, make a hole in the cap, and put a cotton bud through the hole. Fill the bottle with water, replace the cap, and tape a stick longer than the bottle to its side. Turn it upside down at the bottom of the plant. The water will slowly drip down until you get back.

2 Make your own cleaner

To not use bad chemicals, Nancy Birtwhistle created a homemade toilet cleaner. She says it will clean almost anything. Mix 200g citric acid with 150ml boiling water. Stir in 20ml of eco-friendly washing-up liquid, cool, then pour into a 400ml spray bottle.

3 Take the work out of laundry

KC Davis helps people who find it hard to look after their homes or themselves. For example, she says that if you find laundry too difficult, do it once a week: wash everything on cold and don't sort by colour. When the clothes are dry, she doesn't fold them. And the world does not end.

4 Make your own bug repellent

Save used coffee grounds, then put them out to dry for a few days. Put a couple of spoonfuls of the dry grounds on a heat-safe plate, light the top, and leave to burn (outside). The smoke smells like roasting coffee and keeps wasps, flies, and mosquitoes away.

5 Remove stains

According to #CleaningTikTok, for stained machine-washable fabrics, you need a bag of washing soda, about £2 a kilo. Mix up a strong solution in hot water and soak for an hour or so before washing as normal.

6 Clean your computer screen

Adamjan recommends using a wet teabag to clean a dirty or dusty computer screen. Dip the bag in a cup of cold water, rub it all over the screen and then wipe with a clean, dry cloth or paper towel. This also works well on mirrors.

7 Clean the microwave

Food writer Samira Kazan says lemon is the best way to deal with a greasy or sticky microwave. Squeeze a lemon into a microwave-safe bowl and add the outer skin of the lemon. Cook for five minutes, leave the door closed for 10 minutes, and then open and wipe down.

8 Clean almost anything with vinegar

If your fridge really, really stinks, washing soda won't work, but a good clean with vinegar will. Dilute distilled white vinegar 50:50 with water. Spray, then wipe everywhere inside the fridge. Use the same spray on glass and most kitchen surfaces.

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Glossary

hack: a good solution or piece of advice

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3 Comprehension check

a. Match the ingredients and their uses.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Water a plant while you are away. ____ | a. a lemon |
| 2. Make toilet cleaner. ____ | b. a plastic bottle |
| 3. Make bug repellent. ____ | c. a teabag |
| 4. Remove stains. ____ | d. citric acid, washing-up liquid, water |
| 5. Clean your computer screen. ____ | e. coffee grounds |
| 6. Clean the microwave. ____ | f. vinegar |
| 7. Take the bad smell out of your fridge. ____ | g. washing soda |

4 Key language

a. Write the words from the box to complete the noun phrases below.

bottle bowl coffee fabrics toilet cleaner washing-up liquid water

1. plastic _____
2. homemade _____
3. boiling _____
4. eco-friendly _____
5. roasting _____
6. stained / machine-washable _____
7. sticky _____
8. microwave-safe _____

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b. Complete the questions with nouns from the previous activity. Ask and answer the questions.

1. Do you usually drink from a plastic _____?
2. Do you like the smell of roasting _____?
3. Do you use (a) homemade _____?
4. Do you own a microwave-safe _____?
5. Does your _____ get sticky?
6. Is your _____ eco-friendly?

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- “I like my house to be very clean.”
- “I enjoy cleaning. It makes me feel good.”
- “Keeping my house clean is difficult.”
- “I learn hacks that help me with the housework.”

6 In your own words

a. You are going to share a life hack (tip) with the class. Choose one of the ideas below. Think of something you know how to do well or would like to learn to do better. Write your hack.

health / exercise

beauty / clothes

cooking / kitchen

cleaning / house

technology

work

b. Present your hack to the rest of the class.