



H O U S A B I L I T Y

BASIC CLEANING SCHEDULE

MAINTENANCE ROUTINE

The maintenance routine is the work that you will repeat regularly to keep your house clean and tidy. It's designed for if you're already up to date with the cleaning.

If your house is very untidy or in need of a thorough clean, this system will still work if you do it more often (while you catch up) and work in zones – described later. Alternatively, you can tackle decluttering and/or thorough cleaning first and then start using this routine.

How often you clean is up to you. I live in a medium-sized (UK) four bed detached house, with my husband and son (both messy and untidy) plus two dogs, one of whom sheds. I find that cleaning every day works for me, but on alternate days I do a minimal version and we don't clean on Sundays. Because you are doing it frequently **and** regularly it doesn't take long, and your house is always clean enough (even if you miss the odd session).

In the **Housability cleaning system** I divide the regular maintenance cleaning tasks into manageable chunks. We (my family) complete the tasks one-by-one by **type of work** in the whole house (or the whole zone*) instead of doing a room at a time. For example, I do all the dusting in the whole house before I move on to another task. This really helps to maintain focus and efficiency. It works best if you clean in the same order every time – you're much less likely to miss anything.

* If you have a very large house or limited time, you can just clean one zone each time, for example upstairs/downstairs or family rooms/reception rooms.

The **types of work** I include in the basic cleaning schedule are tidying, dusting, sanitising and vacuuming. These are described in detail later.

I create tailored plans for my clients and recommend a set amount of time for each task (and cleaning frequency) based on what I know about their home and lifestyle. In this case, only you know your home and how much time you can spend. Even 10 minutes per task will make a difference if you do it often. I can complete my full routine in under 30 minutes for each **type of work**. I share the work with my husband and teenage son, each of us taking one type of work so it all gets done in 30 minutes. When we do the minimal version it's 10-15 minutes.

Work quickly and do one type of work at a time. Use the right tools, eg. a feather duster (with actual feathers) allows you to dust surfaces very quickly without needing to move many things. The first couple of times you follow the routine, it may take a little longer. You will get quicker as you get used to the routine.

THE CLEANING TASKS

TIDYING

Always do this first. Allow minutes.

This task can be split between the people who will be cleaning, or between upstairs and downstairs or any other split that works for you. Move round the house quickly, clearing surfaces so that it's easy to **just** clean. Move everything that's not where it should be and put it in its home. If it doesn't have a home, put it out of the way (e.g. on a bed or sofa) and come back to it when you've finished cleaning. Because you're doing this frequently you should find that it doesn't take long.

If your house is very untidy or cluttered, it will be harder to tidy quickly, but by doing a small amount several times a week, you will make steady progress. As you reduce clutter, you will also find that cleaning is easier and quicker.

DUSTING

Allow minutes. Using a long-handled feather duster, dust all of:

- ♥ Ceiling lights and fittings
- ♥ Architrave tops
- ♥ Window frames
- ♥ Windowsills
- ♥ All horizontal surfaces and ornaments e.g. book shelves, mantels, tables, lamp bases, lamp shades, piano keys etc.
- ♥ All wall-hung items eg. pictures, mirrors, musical instruments, light switches, radiators.
- ♥ Skirting boards in upstairs rooms. NB. If you have pets shedding hair in upstairs rooms, you may want to vacuum the skirtings instead.

It's a good idea to carry a slightly damp cloth with you when dusting. Small cleaning jobs (eg. rings on coffee tables) can be quickly dealt with as you go along. It's usually best to dust the surface first and then wipe off any stubborn marks – that way you're using the right tools for whatever you're removing from the surface.

My minimal version – just what I'll see. I leave out very high or hidden areas.

SANITISING

Allow minutes per room. In the kitchen, utility room and bathrooms, work from room to room, use a damp cloth and wipe:

- ♥ Sink / basin. Part fill with warm water and your chosen cleaning product. If you live in a hard water area, ensure that you remove any limescale build up*. Pay attention to drains and plug holes.
Use this water to clean everywhere (where appropriate). If you have a stainless-steel sink, you'll get a better result if you dry it when you've finished. Using a microfibre cloth should let you squeeze out most the water and leave surfaces fairly dry.
- ♥ Taps – old toothbrushes are great for getting round and behind taps.
- ♥ Worktops - move all items and clean under them (regular dusting makes this job easier).
- ♥ In the kitchen
 - wipe the hob
 - wipe out the microwave and the oven**
- ♥ Shower screens
- ♥ Shower fittings
- ♥ Bath top edges
- ♥ Use the toilet brush to scrub the toilet bowl. Use your judgement about whether or not to use a cleaning product.
- ♥ With a separate cloth (for hygiene reasons), paper towel or some toilet tissue, wipe the toilet seat, bowl rim and sides.
- ♥ Finally, go round the house wiping up any significant marks you noticed while dusting.

* White vinegar is effective at removing limescale. Never use at the same time as bleach (or mix them) as this combination creates seriously dangerous fumes.

** This is assuming that the oven has been properly cleaned recently – if not, leave it.

My minimal version – a quick wipe of worktops, sinks, basins, taps and toilets

VACUUMING

Allow minutes.

- ♥ Using your vacuum with a long tube and nozzle attachment (if you have one), vacuum along the top and bottom of all the downstairs skirting boards*. Or you can use a small-headed broom, a stick with a sock on the end or a brush.
- ♥ Vacuum the edge of each stair with a nozzle attachment (if you have one). Alternatively, use a stiff brush to clean the edges. Vacuum the stair treads. (I use a hand-held vacuum for skirtings and edges. I go up the stairs doing the edges and then change to the rotating brush attachment and come back down doing the treads.)
- ♥ Vacuum all the floors downstairs and upstairs. (I use a rechargeable upright vacuum for this.)
- ♥ Empty the vacuum cleaner bag/dust collector and recharge the vacuum cleaner if required.

You might need to adapt this process depending on the type of vacuum cleaner you use.

*This depends on the traffic through your home, whether you have pets that shed hair and where those pets are allowed in the house. Eg. my Labrador sheds hair for much of the year, but is only allowed downstairs. (I need to vacuum the downstairs skirting boards several times a week, but I only need to dust the ones upstairs.)

My minimal version – downstairs with just the upright vacuum, upstairs if there's enough time.

DEEP CLEANING TASKS

Doing the tasks detailed above on a regular and frequent basis will keep your home clean and tidy but there are many cleaning tasks that aren't covered here such as:

- ♥ Cleaning windows
- ♥ Wiping out kitchen cabinets
- ♥ Washing woodwork
- ♥ Cleaning the oven (yuk!)

My personalised plans (**Housability cleaning system**) include a detailed schedule of deep cleaning tasks. You can get me to create one for you (see www.housability.co.uk/cleaning) – contact me through the website. Alternatively, you can work out your own schedule based on this one.

Good luck with the Housability cleaning system – I hope it works well for you!