



Homekeeping 101

Thirty years ago, when I became a wife and started keeping my own home, I was already prepared and had trained for my new career. My Mother and Grandmother taught me with diligence and care all the homemaking skills that I would need for this new era in my life.

Often today, women begin homekeeping without the luxury of already having the knowledge they need. They have to learn as they go, a little here and a little there. That's one of the reason I started Christian HomeKeeper in 1996. I love teaching homemaking skills to eager learners.

Since I can't come and teach you in person, this little eBook will teach you some basic homekeeping skills. I hope they are helpful and you will go to www.christianhomekeeper.org for more homekeeping ideas.

In His Grace and Joy,
Sylvia Britton



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Creating Routines

Even if you don't know you have a routine, you probably do. Whatever you do each morning or throughout the day is your routine. But is your routine efficient? Does it work well for you? If you don't purposely build your daily routine, it will build itself. You get up, make coffee, read, get the children up, brush your hair, all in the same general order each day. If you work outside your home you probably do each thing in a certain order and subconsciously change the order and manner of doing those things to fit your morning and get you out of the house on time. However, if you build your routine on purpose you will have a more efficient system and have it more quickly. Here are some tips for modifying your routine so that it works better for you.

Let's build a sample evening routine.

First, list what you know you need to do every evening so that the next morning will go more smoothly:

1. Wash all the dishes, wipe down counters, put away all the food.
2. Make sure all the clothes for the next day are ready. Get into the habit of laying out tomorrow's clothes!
3. Get all the backpacks, purses, keys, etc. ready to go.
4. Find everyone's shoes and lay them out.
5. Sweep the kitchen.
6. Straighten the living room.

Now, with this list in hand, you will work on getting it all done each evening before bedtime. You can enlist the help of family members, especially with finding their shoes and everything they personally need the next day. This should become an every-evening event at your home if you want to get organized and make your mornings less stressful. This is what routines are for!

My routine...

You may be wondering what the daily routine of other women, maybe even women at home, look like. How often do I plan meals for my family, when do I fit in those errand days and library days? Here is a peek inside my day. Hopefully it will be helpful for you as you set your own daily routines!

- Getting up, personal grooming, and dress.
- Time for reading, coffee, and devotion!
- Run a sink of hot, soapy water. I use this water to help me keep the kitchen clean and the dishes rinsed for the dishwasher.
- Fix breakfast, and clean up afterward.
- Start school by 9 AM.
- While the children are working on school, I sit with them, working on the CHK Network site, reading, studying, and writing.
- Lunch is at 11:30 and we break until about 12:30.
- Afternoon chores are next. I work on laundry, cleaning, straightening, and sweeping.
- More school until about 2:30 in the afternoon.
- Tea time at 4 PM.
- Supper preparation from 4:30 to 5:00 in the evening.

This is a pretty simple routine and it works for me. I challenge you to create a routine for either morning or evening that will help you stay on track with your day!

Cleaning a Room

1. Clean the messiest room first
If you clean the messiest room first, everything else will be down-hill.
2. Work from the ceiling down
Start by cleaning cobwebs and dust from the ceilings and walls.
3. Remove window curtains
Take down window treatments and either wash them, or hang them out in the yard to air.
4. Clean windows and doors
Clean the tops of windows and doors as well as the windows themselves.
5. Pictures and wall decor
Take down pictures and wall decor, clean them, and set them aside.
6. Clean the walls
And make sure to get those baseboards, too!
7. Get out the dusting rag
Dust the furniture and knick-knacks.
8. Cart away the rugs
Remove any rugs and either wash them, or hang them outside to air.
9. Clean the floor
Sweep, vacuum, or apply a damp rag-your choice!
5. Put everything back
Hang up the pictures, lay down the rugs, adjust the window curtains to perfection...

"If you don't purposely build your daily routine, it will build itself. But is your routine efficient? Does it work well for you?"



Uses for Natural Cleaning Ingredients

Common ingredients in natural cleaners and their general uses.

1. 3% hydrogen peroxide
Good for lightening stains and as an antibacterial agent on clothing.
2. Baking soda
Good for gentle abrasive cleaning. It can also be used as a mild bleach, and can neutralize acid-based stains.
3. Citrus solvents
All-purpose stain removal! But don't use it if you have cats.
4. Cornmeal
Good for absorbing oily, messy stains.
5. Enzymes
I use digestive enzymes like pepsin or papain. They are good for getting milk and formula stains out. Really, any kind of carbohydrate stain.
6. The freezer
Freezing gum and candle wax before attempting to remove it helps a lot.
7. Glycerin
Softens old stains.
8. Laundry detergents
There are some stains that I just can't get out with natural stuff—like lipstick, make-up, ring around the collar, and other oily stains—except detergent.
9. Salt
Salt kills some bacteria and is good to add to your cleaners to make a mild abrasive.
10. Soap
Soap is an all-around good cleaner, but don't use it on fruit stains of any kind—it can set them! (Wine, jam, juice...)
11. Washing soda
I love this stuff. It's one of the heavy-duty natural cleaners.
12. 5% white vinegar
White vinegar is a good way to remove stains. It also deodorizes.

Cleaning Method: Focus Room

I've heard of this method for years but just got around to trying it out this school year. It's called the Focus Room method of organizing and cleaning.

Basically, you choose one room per day for the whole family to focus and work on. You can have a list of things to be done in that room or just give oral instructions for you family to follow.

One thing I like about this method is that it involves the whole family working together to accomplish a necessary household task. It also offers some good opportunities for teaching how to do particular chores.

Here is my Focus Room schedule for this year:

Monday: The Bathroom and Hallway

Clean tub, commode, and sink.
Pick up rug, just shake it, or take it to the laundry.
Sweep and scrub shower.
Spray shower and shower curtain with vinegar solution.
Wipe down walls and all surfaces with essential oil cleaner.

Sweep and mop hallway.
Dust shelf.
Arrange items on shelf and wash stand.
(All my natural cleaners and disinfectant recipes can be found [here](#).)

Tuesday: The Living Room

Pick up everything that doesn't belong.
Replace all books.
Straighten sofa and chairs.
Dust furniture.
Organize video/game cabinet.
Straighten and organize bookshelves.
Sweep and mop.

Wednesday: The Dining Room

Pick up everything that doesn't belong.
Dust and polish furniture.
Dust glassware and knick-knacks.
Wipe down table and chairs.
Sweep and mop floor.

Thursday: The Kitchen

Remove everything from counters.
Clean and disinfect counters.
Replace everything.
Straighten inside cabinets.
Clean stove-top.
Clean fridge, inside and out.
Wash trash cans.
Sweep and mop floor.
Arrange baker's rack.

Friday:

Free day!

Natural Cleaners

I use most of cleaners below on a weekly basis, but with a house full of children and a few pets, I find that every now and then I need to pull out chemical cleaners for a major cleaning. Be sure to check labels on commercial cleaners and do your research to see if they are acceptable for your home. I like the new Clorox Green cleaners, but when I look at the label I realize that it's just about exactly what I've been making here at home!

Disinfectant Cleaner Spray

12 oz water
20 drops lavender essential oil
20 drops tea tree oil
20 drops rosemary or thyme essential oil

Shake and pour into a spray bottle.

Antiseptic Spray

A handful each of dried lavender, rosemary, sage, rue and mint
A large glass jar
1/2 gallon organic cider vinegar

Place the herbs in the jar, completely immersed in the vinegar. Cover tightly and let sit for about 6 weeks. Strain into a spray bottle (be sure to label the bottle!). It will store indefinitely. Use this spray to disinfect clean surfaces.

Lavender Antibacterial Spray

A handful each of dried lavender, rosemary, sage, rue and mint
A large glass jar
1/2 gallon organic cider vinegar

Pour water into a spray bottle, and add essential oil. Shake gently to mix. Spray surfaces and allow to sit for 15 minutes before wiping or rinsing.

All-Purpose Cleaner and Disinfectant

1 teaspoon borax
1/2 teaspoon washing soda
2 tablespoons lemon juice

In a spray bottle that will hold at least a pint, combine the ingredients. Add 1 cup very hot water and shake well, mixing and dissolving the dry ingredients.

To use, simply spray and wipe. This can be stored indefinitely.

Heavier-Duty Soft Scrub

Straight washing soda mixed with a little liquid soap is a good heavier duty scrub. You will need to use gloves with this because it is quite alkaline.

Homemade Soft Scrub

1/2 cup baking soda
Liquid soap
5-10 drops pure antiseptic essential oil such as lavender, tea tree oil or rosemary

Place the baking soda in a bowl. Slowly pour in liquid soap, stirring constantly, until the mixture resembles frosting. Add the essential oil. If you have hard water, use a liquid detergent instead of a sap. I use a "green" product because it has no synthetic dyes or perfumes. If you have soft water, you can use castile soap.

Store this mixture in a jar. Scoop out some on a cloth and scrub surfaces, then rinse.

Mirror and Window Cleaner

1/4 tsp all-purpose liquid detergent (a pure, non-synthetic soap is best)
1 cup water

Just combine the water and soap in a spray bottle. Spray on the surface and wipe clean with a cotton cloth (use a pure cotton cloth so that you won't get lint on mirrors and windows when cleaning them). Be sure to label the bottle. It keeps indefinitely.

Tile and Glass Cleaner

1/2 cup vinegar
1/2 teaspoon mild liquid detergent
2 cups very hot tap water

Combine all ingredients in a spray bottle. Shake well. Spray onto tiles and glass surfaces, rinse with a sponge. Label the bottle. Keeps indefinitely.

Another Glass and Mirror Cleaner

1/4 cup white vinegar
1 tablespoon cornstarch
2 cups warm water

Put all ingredients in a large spray bottle. Shake well to dissolve the cornstarch. To use, spray liberally on the glass, wipe with a clean cloth. Buff to a streak-free shine with a wadded up piece of newspaper.

Mildew Cleaner

1 tsp tea tree oil
2 cups water

Combine in a spray bottle. Spray onto the mildew, but don't rinse. Label and store indefinitely.

Something for the Toilet

Pour about 1 cup of borax into the toilet and let it sit for a few hours.

Scrub the inside of the bowl using a toilet brush.

Spray straight 5% vinegar onto the toilet rim, seat, and top. Scrub the rim. Wipe the seat and top.

Periodically, spray the toilet rim with your antibacterial spray and let it dry naturally.

Another Toilet Bowl Cleaner

1 cup borax
1/2 cup white vinegar

Flush the toilet to wet the sides. Sprinkle borax all along the sides of the inside of the bowl. Then, drizzle the vinegar over the borax and leave overnight.

Next day, scrub with a toilet brush and flush.

Hard Water Stains and Scale Cleaner

Use an acid like vinegar or lemon juice. Just spray on, let sit for 10 to 15 minutes, then wipe off. For large areas, soak a wash cloth in vinegar and then lay it on the stained area overnight. Next morning, the scale should be easy to scrub off.

Soak shower heads in vinegar to remove hard water buildup. Use an old toothbrush to scrub it away.

Damp/Dust Mop

1 part vegetable glycerin
1 part vinegar
1 old, clean, dust-free cloth

Mix the first two ingredients. Soak the cloth in the mixture until it has absorbed all it will absorb.

Take the cloth out of the liquid and gently squeeze excess liquid from the cloth.

Cover a mop with the cloth and use all over your hard floors, ceilings, walls, and woodwork to pick up dust and dust mites. It will also repel mites and neutralize allergens.

Using Essential Oils: A Primer

An Essential Oil (EO) is a liquid that is generally distilled (usually by steam or water) from the bark, roots, stems, leaves, flowers or other parts of a plant.

EOs contain water and the essential part of the the plant that contains medicinal and fragrance qualities. EOs are highly concentrated and a little goes a long way. Despite the name "oil", EOs are not oily at all. It is the plant essences that are distilled from the plant parts which are called "oils". EOs are watery and usually clear in color, though some of them are yellow or amber.

They differ from Fragrance Oils (FO) in that FOs are artificially created, contain artificial substances or carrier oils. FOs and EOs are not interchangeable. Don't try to use an FO in a recipe that calls for an EO.

When you purchase EOs, the oil will usually be in amber or other colored glass containers. Keep the oil in its original container and store it in a cool, dark place. EOs will lose some of their therapeutic qualities and potency over time, so storing them correctly is, well, essential!

There are several EOs that have antibacterial, anti-mold, and disinfectant qualities. Below is a list of oils that can be used to clean and disinfect your home. While there are many more EOs that have some disinfectant qualities, these are, to my knowledge, the strongest and best to use in the household and the ones that I have personal experience using.

Why use essential oils instead of chemical cleaners? There are numerous reasons, but my personal motives have to do with the massive amounts of chemicals in our environment, rampant allergies and chemical sensitivities, and the desire to have a home that is less immersed in chemicals. EOs allow me to clean my home without using so many chemicals.

After many years of using EO cleaners, I've yet to find one EO that does it all. There are some kinds of clean that I don't feel you can achieve using EO, such as surgically clean or super-disinfected clean. That kind of clean can probably only be achieved using chemicals such as bleach, detergents, alcohol or other chemical disinfectants. So I do periodically continue to clean particularly needy areas—such as around the toilet—with chemicals, but only periodically.

Remember to use caution when using EOs. Some of them are strong and can burn the skin, eyes, and mucous membranes. Keep them out of the reach of children.

Here is the list of EOs that have antibacterial, anti-mold, and disinfect qualities:

- Thyme
- Citrus (such as lemon, lime, orange, or grapefruit)
- Lemongrass
- Lavender
- Eucalyptus
- Cinnamon
- Rosemary
- Clove
- Fir
- Spruce
- Pine
- Bergamot
- Oregano
- Tea Tree (*Melaleuca alternifolia*)

A very old and famous blend of EOs is the Thieves' Blend, which contains cinnamon, cloves, rosemary, eucalyptus, and lemon oils. These essential oils blended together can be used in all kinds of household cleaning preparations.

Some of the new household cleaners such as Clorox Greenworks contain EOs along with something known as a surfactant. The surfactant is a chemical that helps the oils adhere to the surface that you are cleaning. They are one of the few green cleaners that actually list all the ingredients on the label. If you are unable to make your own cleaners from EOs, Greenworks is a good alternative.

Making your own cleaners is much less expensive than buying a cleaner. It's also easy to customize your cleaners for a scent that you love and can live with. In addition to the EOs that you will use for disinfecting and cleaning, you can also choose to add a few EOs strictly for their fragrance. Once you find a blend that suits you, write it down so you can use it over and over.

Below are some recipes for disinfecting sprays and cleaners. More recipes can be found on my blog, www.christianhomekeeper.org.

Basic Easy Disinfectant Spray

*Approximately 12 ounces pure water
5 drops each of 3 of the disinfecting essential oils (any combination)
1 teaspoon clear, natural, liquid soap*

Shake gently. Use for all general cleaning.

Liquid Dish Soap

You can improve the fragrance and disinfectant quality of your dish soap by adding 5 drops of any of the disinfecting essential oils.

Dishwasher Help

To keep your dishwasher clean and fresh smelling, add 2 to 3 drops of pine, peppermint, or any citrus oil to an empty machine and then run it through a wash and rinse cycle.

Two Floor Cleaners

*1/4 cup white vinegar to a bucket of water
5 to 10 drops of your favorite oil. Tea tree, spruce, and pine oil are good for this, but any will do.
Around 2 teaspoons of dishwashing soap, depending on how dirty the floor is.*

This cleaner is great for hard, solid floors.

Bathroom Floor Cleaner

*1/4 cup white vinegar to a bucket of water
10 drops lemon oil
4 drops oregano oil*

Essential oils can be used in many more ways. You can put a few drops of an essential oil on a cloth and place the cloth in a vacuum bag or canister. When you run the vacuum, the oil will impart an agreeable fragrance to the air. You can also use essential oils mixed with water as a room deodorizing spray. This kind of spray is especially helpful in a nursery or sick room, but can give a pleasant, clean scent to the whole house as well.



How To Clean The Bathroom

The bathroom is the one room in my house that has to be cleaned every day. I don't deep-clean like the directions I giving here, however, so check out the sidebar where I've provided an abbreviated list.

The first thing to do for the bathroom is to put everything away—all the bottles, lotions, hairbrushes and items that normally stay in the bathroom. As you are putting away the bottles, be sure to wipe them off with a damp cloth to get rid of any spills and grime.

Next, take a damp cloth, or a cloth with some all-purpose cleaner, and clean the baseboards, window sills, tops of the mirror and storage cabinets, top of the tile, and top of the door.

Now you can make up your cleaning solution in your sink. I like to use an all-purpose cleaner like a pine cleaner or bleach. A few drops of dish-washing detergent also works well, but it doesn't disinfect. You can add a little bleach to a dish detergent and water solution for a good disinfectant cleaner.

The idea is to clean the cleanest areas first to keep your cloth as germ-free as possible and clean the really germ-y areas last.

Sprinkle abrasive cleaner or all-purpose cleaner in the tub and commode to soak.

Using a clean, soft cloth, wash the counter tops, fronts of the cabinets, walls, tile and front of the tub. Rinse out your cloth frequently.

Clean out the medicine cabinet and throw away all the old and expired medicines. Wipe down the inside of the cabinet.

Clean the bathtub and the sink.

While you are cleaning the bathtub, be sure to clean the faucets and shower head. If the shower head is plugged up with hard water deposits, remove it and use some vinegar to soak the head in and then replace it on the shower.

Clean the floors now (see next page for more information).

Clean the outside of the commode. Raise the lid and clean all around the ring. Lift the tank lid and clean the wall behind it. Be sure to clean the base of the commode and lift off the plastic or ceramic bolt covers to clean them and clean under them. Odor-causing bacteria can form there.

Now clean inside the commode using a scrubbie or scotch-brite that you have set aside for cleaning the bathroom. Wipe down with a cloth.

Finally, clean your mirror and window with some glass cleaner or vinegar. For a final touch, light a candle and put down a nice clean rug. You're all done!

Daily Cleaning Instructions for the Bathroom

1. Towels and laundry

Pick up all the towels and laundry first. Shake out that rug, as well.

2. Potions and lotions

Wipe down all the bottles of lotions, soap, and medicine.

3. Put away countertop clutter

Pick up all the discarded scrunchies and brushes and put them in their assigned drawers.

4. Cleaning the sink

Fill up the sink with hot water and cleaner. Using a clean cloth, wipe down the sink, faucets, countertop, back of the commode, walls around the sink, commode, and tub.

5. The floor

Sweep and scrub the floor.

6. Clean the commode

Inside and out!

7. Empty the trash

And take it away.

8. Replace the rugs

And if they're warm from the dryer, you can wriggle your toes amongst the yarns!

The Coffee Maker

Cleaning your coffee maker is easy! And it makes better coffee when it's clean, too.

1. Clean out any soiled stuff
Remove any used coffee grounds and liners.

2. Wash
Wash the pot with soap and water. Rinse well and replace in coffee maker.

3. Look for mold
Check the inside of the machine. Sometimes mold can grow in the reservoir. A lot of this mold can't be removed with just a vinegar bath and should be cleaned with a soft cloth and baking soda.

4. Give it a vinegar bath
Fill the reservoir with 1/2 cup of white vinegar and the rest of the way with water.

5. Let it do its thing
Allow the cycle to run until all the water has gone through the coffee maker into the pot.

6. Repeat if needed
If the coffee maker is really dirty you might want to repeat step 5.

7. Use clear water
Now run a full pot of clear, clean water through the coffee-making cycle.

8. Scrub
Next, using a soft, clean cloth and the surface cleaner of your choice (I like baking soda), clean the outside of the pot and the machine. Rinse well.

9. The final step
Give the pot a final rinse. Enjoy!



Deep Cleaning the Bathroom Floor

The bathroom floor is often a very dirty place! You can keep it as clean as possible with this method.

First, sweep the floor. Shake out the rugs and move them out of the room. You can also take this opportunity to launder them.

Start around the edges of the walls and in the corners. Pull out all the loose soil that you possibly can using a broom or even a small whisk broom.

Sweep up the dirt into a dust pan and dispose of it.

Now mix up some cleaner and water. Use whatever you prefer. Some like to use only natural cleaners, but in the bathroom, I like to go ahead and use the strong disinfecting things like bleach or pine cleaners. Wear old clothes if you are using bleach.

I don't use a mop in the bathroom. My bathroom is small and by going around on my hands and knees with a cloth and a small scrub brush, I can get my floor cleaner. A mop seems to get just the center of the floor clean and nothing else. I use the scrub brush to clean the corners and the grout. I use the cloth to wipe up what I have scrubbed and to clean the smooth surface of the floor.

A good way to get the floor around the commode clean is to pour a small amount of bleach around the commode and allow it to sit for several minutes before scrubbing. This is a good way to get rid of all those odors in the floor. When you use bleach like that, be careful to ventilate the room by opening windows and turning on the fan. Leave the room while the bleach is soaking.

Clean awhile and then rinse your cloth. Clean some more. Rinse out your cloth often. Don't forget to clean around the commode. Use some bleach and a small scrub brush or scotch-brite that you have set aside for cleaning the bathroom only.

When the floor is clean, allow it to dry before replacing the rug.

A Laundry Primer

Whether you are just starting out as a homekeeper, or if you need a refresher, here it is! This primer will help you get ready for hanging clothes outside to dry—even if you've never done that before. Here are some tips for making Mount Washmore disappear quickly.

Start by sorting through your laundry and putting it in piles according to color and washing instructions. Your piles should consist of:

- Darks: like jeans and other dark colored fabric, dark sheets, shirts
- Brights: like children's clothing and flowered or print fabric
- Lights: like light blue oxford shirts, khaki pants
- Whites: like underclothes and t-shirts
- Towels and washcloths: you may want to wash your white towels and washcloths separately from the colored ones so that you can add bleach to the whites.

How to Wash Clothes

First, prepare...

Laundry that is especially soiled or stained needs special treatment. Treat stains with a commercial stain remover, use a paste made of laundry powder and water, or use a liquid detergent. I prefer to rub a wet bar of Fels Naptha on stains before laundering.

Read labels on commercial stain treatments carefully—some cannot be left on for more than 5 minutes without bleaching the fabric.

Soaking is also a good way to get stains out. Rub a detergent or stain remover onto the stain, then immerse the clothing into a pan of tepid water. If the article of clothing is sturdy and will not fade, you may want to use warm or hot water. Allow the article to sit in the water awhile and then rub the stain gently with your fingers. If the stain has not disappeared yet, just give it a bit longer in the water. When the stain is gone, rinse the article well or add it to the regular wash.

Everything can be washed in cold water, of course, but you may choose to use warm water for most loads. I like to use hot water for towels. Hot water must be at least 130° F in order to kill germs and viruses, so if your water temperature isn't high enough, using hot water is ineffective. Another way to sanitize laundry is to use a germ-killing additive such as Lysol concentrate.

Before adding clothes to the wash, check and empty pockets. Check to see if repairs need to be made. Holes, tears or runs can become worse if left to go through the wash. Make repairs first, then launder.

Now wash...

Start the water in the washer, add the detergent or soap, and then add clothing. This will allow the water better access to the detergent and allow it to begin working faster.

If your washer has a gentle cycle, be sure to utilize it for lightweight fabrics or when indicated by laundering labels.

When adding clothes to the dryer, give each article a sharp shake to help remove wrinkles. Don't overload the dryer. Check the dryer's vent for lint frequently. Clothing doesn't have to be dried completely in the dryer. In fact, most fabric looks better and lasts longer if it is simply tossed in a cool air cycle and then hung up to finish drying.

While one load of laundry is going, you can gather up hangers and clothespins.

Add about 1 cup white vinegar or a commercial fabric softener to the rinse water.

Some clothing needs to be hung to dry. All clothing you normally hang up should be hung as soon as it comes out of the dryer.

Folding clothes as they come out of the dryer is preferred to allowing the clothing to sit and develop wrinkles. If you have children, enlist their help on folding all the clothing. My children have had a hard time learning how to fold clothes but we've persevered and they get better every year. Even if you cannot fold the clothes immediately when they come out of the dryer, you can prevent some wrinkles by shaking out each article and folding it over one time before laying it in a basket.

How to Line Dry

Clothes dried on a line or outside are not as soft as clothes dried in the dryer. Towels are usually rough and a little scratchy when dried outside. Some people really like this but if you had rather your towels be soft, use the dryer. To soften line-dried towels a little bit you can do this:

- Add 1/2 cup vinegar to the rinse after for towels. It won't impart a vinegary odor to the towels but will soften them.
- Give towels a hard shake when they come out of the washer
- Run wet towels through an air dry in the dryer for about 10 minutes before hanging to dry outside.

Here are a few tips I've learned over the years about hanging out clothes:

1. Shake out and partially fold clothes when they come out of the washer. Then place them in a basket to take to the line. These simple actions make it easier and more time-efficient to hang clothes outside.
2. Giving towels a hard snap before hanging them will relax the fibers a bit and make them less rough when they dry. Or, air-dry the towels a little in the dryer before hanging outside.
3. Go ahead and fold up wet sheets as small as you want to before hanging them on the line. The wind will blow through them and dry them and they won't take up so much room on the line.
4. Consider getting a wooden or stainless steel drying rack for small items like socks. These racks can be set outside in the sun to dry, in the tub or somewhere else inside. They fold up and can be put out of the way when you're finished with it.

Drying clothes outside has a lot of benefits. The wonderful aroma of line dried clothes is priceless. The homely beauty of clothes on the line is peaceful and satisfying. And the savings on the electric bill are super!



A Primer On Washing and Drying Sheets

There is nothing like slipping between cool, clean, crisp sheets. Do you know how to wash and dry your sheets to get that wonderful, old-fashioned feel?

Choose a windy, sunny day. It doesn't have to be hot outside, but obviously, you want to choose a day when it isn't going to rain. If you live in a place like I live, choose a day when your neighbors are not likely to be burning a fire in their fire places or stoves. The smoke can permeate your sheets on the line.

Wash your sheets and use either fabric softener or white vinegar in the rinse water.

After they have spun really well, take the sheets out and fold them length-wise while they are still wet. Hang the wet sheet on a clothesline or over a clothes hanger. To keep the sheets from slipping off the line of hanger, clip on a clothespin.

I usually fold my sheets three or four times while they are wet and hang them on the line like that-folded.

Allow the sheets and pillowcases to blow in the wind until they are dry. Even folded, the sheets will dry nicely if it's a windy day. If it isn't particularly windy, it may take all day, but they will dry eventually.

Once they are dry, just a few more folds will get them ready for the linen closet.

Store pillowcases with their sheets. Some people store a set's sheets and pillowcases in a second pillowcase. I just fold mine up and stack them in this order: flat sheet, fitted sheet, pillowcases. If I know I will not be using the sheets for a while, I like to put a lavender flower between the two sheets and bundle the stack gently with a piece of grosgrain ribbon. If I don't have a lavender flower, I use my homemade Lavender Water.

If you or your family suffer from allergies and you don't normally like to hang sheets outside, just fold your sheets as described above, cover them with another single thickness of sheet, and clothespin it all down. That will help keep pollen away.

How to Iron a Shirt

1. Start with a shirt still damp from the dryer or sprinkle some water over a dry shirt.

2. Be sure to press seams a little extra. Use the tip of your iron and the button wells to press around buttons. Turn the button side over and lay buttons face down on a towel. Press the back of the buttons. Press both front sides of the shirt.

3. Next, iron the back of the shirt.

4. Iron the yoke (the part of the shirt that rests on the shoulders).

5. Iron the collar. Press it out flat, away from the shirt, then fold it like it normal and press it again. You may need to dampen and press it again, after covering it with a thin wet cloth to get it to lay flat.

6. Finally, iron the sleeves, keeping the seams together as you press so that the crease at the top of the sleeve will align with the same crease on the other sleeve.

7. Hang on a hanger and fasten the second button.

"Do you know how to wash and dry your sheets to get that wonderful, old-fashioned feel?"





Photo by Marg

Woolen Clothing: Care

Wool is a natural fiber and must be cared for gently and regularly. Wool repels water but absorbs water vapor. Wool can absorb up to 30% of its weight in moisture in the form of vapor. Water in the form of rain is repelled, but water in the form of perspiration is wicked away from the body. This is why wool is a perfect material for clothing.

Commercially purchased woolens usually have a laundry label. Read the label before attempting to clean woolens in any way. Woolens marked "Superwash" may be washed and dried without the garment shrinking or felting. The "Superwash" label is a certification mark of the Wool Bureau, Inc.

If the label indicates that the garment should be dry-cleaned, then it is best not to attempt hand washing.

If the label is marked "Hand Wash," you can follow these instructions.

First, make a paper outline of the garment by laying the dry garment on newsprint or other large paper and drawing the outline of the garment on the paper.

Next, immerse the garment in cold or lukewarm water—depending on what the label indicates—along with some mild detergent or soap. Gently squeeze and press the suds through the garment without twisting or wringing the garment. Rinse the garment twice in water (make sure it's the same temperature as the wash water!).

Squeeze out excess water, but don't wring or twist the garment. Roll the garment in a towel and leave for a short time. Place the garment on a clean, dry towel. Pin the paper outline to the garment and gently smooth the garment to match the paper pattern. Unpin the paper and remove.

Allow the garment to dry out of sunlight and away from direct heat.

If your woolens do not have a care label, it is usually best to have them dry-cleaned.

Give wool garments a 24 hour rest between wearing. Hang woven wool garments on padded hangers. Fold knitted woolens for storage.

Dry wet woolens at room temperature away from sources of heat. Remove all belts, zip up all zippers and brush gently before storing woolens. If the woolen has a nap, brush in the direction of the nap.

When removing woolens from storage, hang up the garment in a steamy bathroom to refresh and remove wrinkles. Allow the garment to air dry completely before hanging in a closet or storing in a dresser.

Always remove stains and soil immediately.

A Basic Household Schedule

Do you need more specific instruction on daily cleaning and chores?

1. Before going to bed in the evening

All dishes should be washed and put away. Pack lunches and refrigerate. Set breakfast table with dishes and vitamins. Set out all pans and utensils needed for breakfast. Give all rooms a quick straightening.

2. 6:00 AM

Make beds (wash sheets on one particular day of the week; blankets during your fall or spring cleaning). Personal grooming. After your shower, clean bathroom mirror, sink, counter top, tub, toilet, straighten bottles and shower curtain, put out fresh towels, bring all laundry out, take out trash, replace trash bag, wipe down the floor with a damp towel. Start a load of laundry. Wake children, make beds, pick up clothes. Children's grooming.

3. Between 7:00 and 11:30

Personal morning devotional and prayer. Breakfast. Wipe down table, counter tops, straighten table. Get children to help! Some families have devotions at the table together. Every day: vacuum, sweep, dust. Have the children do their rooms. As a family: hang out laundry, iron, mend, bake, garden. School: either transport or homeschool. Project time: Canning, quilting, needlework, laundry folding and putting away (if needed).

4. Clean up call at 11:30

All items must be put away at this time. Prepare lunch.

5. 12:00, or noon

Lunch, reading time, outside play. Clean up after lunch, wash dishes.

6. Between 1:00 and 4:30 PM

Quiet time, naps, personal devotional time, diary or journal writing. We draw the curtains and quiet the house down at this time—no interruptions. Sewing time, homework hour, evening chores. Personal time for children, or playtime.

7. The 10 Minute Tidy™ Time – 4:30 PM

All items left out are returned to their proper places, house is tidied, papers and books put away.

8. 6:00 PM

Supper. After supper, clear supper dishes, wipe down the table, vacuum or sweep under table. Put away food, make lunches for those who take a lunch the next day. Dry and put away dishes. Set the table for breakfast. Wipe down dish drainer, counter tops, and stove. Clean sink, sweep and damp mop the floor, set out fresh dish towels.

9. 6:30 until bedtime

Cleanup call for the house, baths, teeth, prayers and story time. Reading for the older children. Family time. Bedtime.

You can find all kinds of useful
printables for free at:

donnayoung.org

Household Habits

Every homekeeper knows that if you do certain things every day, the week goes more smoothly and you don't end up cleaning all weekend. When I started keeping my home 30 years ago, I started forming what I call Household Habits.

Household Habits are things that you do every morning, afternoon and evening to keep your household in smooth running order. After you've done them over and over for a while, they become habits that you just do without thinking. When you start out doing your Household Habits you might need some index cards with the Habits written down.

Here are my personal Household Habits. You can come up with your own or use mine. They really will help you keep your house in order! I will start with the Evening Habits because your day really begins the night before.

Evening

- Clean the kitchen
- Pick up and straighten the living room
- Sweep
- Straighten the bathroom
- Put away all clean clothing
- Put away or straighten all shoes (especially helpful if your family leaves shoes at the door)
- Figure out what tomorrow's breakfast will be and get it all ready
- Lay out clothes for tomorrow

Morning

- Run a sink of hot, soapy water
- Clean sink and faucets while you groom yourself
- Take towels from bathroom to laundry
- Clean the shower and tub after you shower each morning
- Start the washer
- Start the dishwasher if needed
- Get dinner started—lay out frozen food to defrost, start the crockpot, etc.

Afternoon

- Keep the washer going
- Sweep
- As you use dishes and pans, rinse them and place them in the hot, soapy water
- Use the hot, soapy water to wash down kitchen counters and appliances throughout the day
- Keep everything cleaned off counter tops

You can add whatever you need to do to this list. If you personalize it, it will serve you better. This is not an extensive list of what needs to be done during the day. The main idea of a Household Habits list is to do certain things each and every day that will help you keep your home more organized and orderly.



Basic Household Cleaning Schedule

Here is a basic household schedule for cleaning. You can replace some of what I've listed with your own chores. Change it around until it works for you! The New Year is a great time to start a brand new cleaning routine. These instructions are really just a guideline for making your own list of what you want to accomplish each day. For example, if you wanted to make sure you got rid of the dust bunnies under your bed every week, you might add that duty to one of the days under Bedrooms.

Some duties can be added monthly or bi-weekly. However you need it to be is how it should work. This is meant to be a tool that helps you, not that burdens you.

Mondays

Kitchen and Laundry Room

- Run a sink of hot soapy water to use for cleaning during the day or for soaking dirty dishes. I always do this step no matter how much I may change up the rest of my routine.
- Start laundry
- Run the sink full of hot, soapy water
- Wipe down appliances
- Sweep and mop
- Wash dishes

Bathroom

- Deep clean (see deep cleaning instructions)
- Hang a clean towel
- Take out trash, replace liner
- Wash rug

Bedrooms

- Make beds
- Pick up and put away all clothes
- Sweep and mop or vacuum
- Put away clutter
- Dust

Living Room

- Pick up newspapers and stack, store, or throw away
- Arrange sofa and pillows
- Vacuum
- Put away clutter
- Stack all items that don't belong in the living room in a basket and call for everyone to come claim their things

Tuesdays

Kitchen and Laundry Room

- Run a sink of hot soapy water to use for cleaning during the day or for soaking dirty dishes.
- At least one load laundry, washed and folded, put away
- Hand washables in to soak
- Iron three garments
- Clean stove top
- Clean inside microwave
- Wipe down cabinets and countertops with cleaner and disinfectant
- Clean range hood
- Rinse out hand washables and hang to dry
- Wash dishes

Bathroom

- Change towel if needed
- Wipe down sink and faucets
- Wipe down commode
- Shake out rug and sweep

Bedrooms

- Make beds
- Pick up clutter
- Put away clothing and personal items

Living Room

- Pick up and put away everything, including books and magazines
- Straighten sofa and pillows
- Vacuum or sweep

Other:

- Clean and polish at least a few pair of Sunday shoes
- Check coats, mittens, scarves and hats. If they need cleaning, do so, then hang them up in the correct spot.

Wednesday

Kitchen and Laundry Room

- Launder the bed linens today
- Run your sink of hot soapy water
- Deep clean the kitchen

Bathroom

- Take out trash
- Shake out rug, sweep and mop
- Wipe down mirror
- Clean commode
- Clean sink tops
- Clean out shower or tub
- Spray shower curtain with bleach or vinegar

Bedrooms

- Change sheets
- Wipe down door frames, window frames, and all mirrors
- Sweep
- Pick up clutter and personal belongings

Living Room

- Vacuum, sweep, and mop
- Dust all furniture and electronic appliances
- Shake rugs outside
- Water indoor plants

Thursday

Kitchen and Laundry Room

- At least 2 loads laundry, fold and put away
- Iron 3 garments
- Run sink of hot soapy water
- Wipe down countertops and cabinets
- Remove dryer lint
- Clean oven
- Sweep

Bathroom

- Deep clean

Bedrooms

- Make beds
- Hang up, pick up and put away all clothes and personal items

Living Room

- Pick up and put away
- Run vacuum or sweep
- Straighten sofa and pillows
- Straighten up computer area
- Straighten books and magazines, newspapers

Friday

Kitchen and Laundry Room

- At least 2 loads laundry, fold and put away
- Wipe down washer and dryer
- Clean fabric softener compartment if needed
- Sweep and mop
- Wipe down stove top
- Wipe down front and sides of fridge

Bathroom

It seems like at my house, we need to deep clean the bathroom twice a week. Once before and once after the weekend seems to meet our needs with a little cleaning in between time. So after the deep cleaning on Thursday, we usually just need to keep it picked up, trash taken out, sinks wiped out and everyone's things picked up after showers, etc.

Bedrooms

- Straighten closets, arrange shoes
- Hang up and put away all clothes,
- Make beds
- Dust furniture

Living Room

- Straighten sofa, chairs and pillows
- Vacuum or sweep
- Arrange books, magazines and papers,
- Call everyone to come get their personal belongs
- Wipe down window frames and door frames

Other

- Sweep porches
- Wash blankets, curtains, rugs that may need it
- Mending

Saturday

I reserve Saturday for laundry and getting church clothes ready and family time. I also cook for Sunday on Saturday.

Sunday

I try not to do anything that doesn't have to be done on Sunday. If I work diligently through the week, I don't have anything pressing to do on Sunday and that gives me a day of rest.



Caring For Rugs

This week we will begin the preliminary Spring Cleaning activities with cleaning and/or laundering the rugs in our homes. Rugs are made of all kinds of materials—too many for me to list the cleaning instructions for each type. So, if you do not know how to clean the rugs in your home, get busy investigating all the different methods available and start cleaning those rugs! I will give you some rug basics for wool, cotton and polyester rugs.

All rugs do well with a good airing after they have been cleaned. Let your rugs air out while you are cleaning the rest of the room.

Wool Rugs

Wool rugs are usually expensive and need to be cared for precisely and carefully. Many of today's wool rugs can be steam cleaned or cleaned with a home rug cleaning machine with no problems. If you are in doubt, don't.

1. Vacuum the rug.
2. Take the rug outside and hang it over a swing set, fence or other sturdy site. Beat the rug on one side and then the other using something like a tennis racket.
3. Wash the rug according to the manufacturer's instructions or if you know how to clean the rug clean it as you usually do.

Cotton Rugs

Cotton rugs, like rag rugs, can usually be tossed in the washer. If your rug is too big for that, think about taking it to the laundromat, where you can wash it in the oversized machine. Be sure to either vacuum your cotton rugs, shake them, or beat them well before washing.



A Few Household Tips

1. Old socks make good mitts for cleaning difficult places like woodwork and ceilings.
2. Wallpaper can be dusted by pinning a clean cloth to a broom and dusting from the ceiling toward the floor.
3. Art Gum erasers can remove pencil marks and non-greasy marks from wallpaper.
4. If you have textured walls, you can use socks made of nylon or polyester instead of cotton. This will prevent pieces of fabric from hanging on the wall as you clean.
5. Don't mix your cleaning chemicals. Ammonia and bleach mixed is especially dangerous.
6. Before beginning in a room, make sure you have a checklist made for that room. Follow it and check off chores as you complete them.
7. Rust can be removed from stainless steel sinks with lighter fluid. Just rub the rust stains gently with a paper towel saturated with the fluid.
8. For a quick shine on stainless sinks, wipe down with rubbing alcohol.
9. White porcelain sinks can be bleached. Stopper the sink. Run a sink FULL of water. Add 1 cup bleach and allow to sit for several hours. Empty the sink.

"All rugs do well with a good airing after they've been cleaned. Let your rugs air out while you are cleaning the rest of the room."



Homemade French Dressing

For spring greens, drizzled over boiled eggs, or just eaten by the spoonful—it's that good!

2/3 cup ketchup

3/4 cup white sugar

1/2 cup white or red wine vinegar

1/2 cup olive oil

1/2 small onion, quartered

2 teaspoons paprika

2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce

Prepare the dressing by combining the ketchup, sugar, vinegar, oil, onion, paprika, and Worcestershire sauce in a blender or food processor. Blend until the onion is well chopped. Chill and serve.

You can substitute some other sweetener for the white sugar, but I prefer to keep it in. It's just about the only thing I use white sugar for any more!

This keeps in the fridge for about 3 weeks.



Photo by Marg

How to Wash Dishes by Hand

Not sure about how to wash dishes by hand? Here is an easy primer that will get you started.

- Scrape all food from the dishes into the trash or other receptacle.
- Rinse off excess food from the dishes.
- Stack the dishes according to kind: plates, glasses, silverware, cups, etc.
- Make two sinks of water—one with soap at the hottest temperature you can stand on your hands, the other with clear, clean water for rinsing. Add a couple of teaspoons of bleach to the rinse water if desired.
- Make a place on a counter for clean dishes, preferably at the opposite side of the sink from the stacks of dirty dishes.

You will wash the least dirty dishes first and then move on to the most soiled ones. This keeps your dish water cleaner as you go.

If you have burned-on food, you may want to soak those pans or dishes while you are washing the others. Even if you don't have an automatic dishwasher, it's a good idea to keep a bottle of automatic dishwasher liquid on hand. Pour a little of this detergent on burned on foods and allow to soak. The burned food and carbon comes off very easily. Depending on how burned the food is, you may have to soak it for several hours. At any rate, it beats standing and scrubbing for hours!

Begin by washing plasticware. Wash well and rinse. Let it sit to dry or towel it dry (children are very handy for the latter!).

Next wash the glassware. Use a scotch-brite pad or other small cloth to wash the dishes. Rub the outside and then the inside of the glass. Be careful not to put your hand so far down in the glass that it breaks.

Get most of the bubbles off the glass before rinsing. Rinse the glass in the rinse water by immersing it several times.

Place the glass on the prepared area and allow it to air dry if you have used bleach. Air drying allows the bleach's disinfectant properties to kill bacteria.

If you have not used bleach, your dishes can be dried immediately.

You may also rinse dishes in hot running water. It's not possible to disinfect them this way, but it does do a good job of getting rid of streaks and takes away the trouble of refilling the rinse water when it is too soapy.

Next move to the cups, saucers and silverware. Be sure to clean between the tines of the forks well using your scotch-brite or cloth. Rinse as directed above.

Wash the plates and serving platters next. Then move to the pans and cooking pans. Ideally, the pots and pans you have cooked in are washed as you are cooking and moving food from them into serving platters. "Clean as you go" is a great way to manage your kitchen. Having the pots and pans already washed before dinner also gives you a break when it's time to wash the dishes and you are tired.

If you have cast-iron, be sure to dry them completely before storing them. I like to dry them with a clean towel and then place them on a hot burner on the stove for a few minutes. When they are dry and hot, I rub some shortening into the inside and handle of the pan and continue to heat it for a few minutes. This gives the pan a quick seasoning between uses and keeps it non-stick for longer.

If you have air-dried your dishes, you can put them away whenever they are completely dry. Don't allow moisture to remain on the dishes though, mold and bacteria can grow. If you are going to towel dry your dishes, use a clean, absorbent, dry towel. Thoroughly dry the dishes and put them in their storage places.

Now wipe down the counter tops and behind the faucet. Use the dish water to clean the sinks. Wash out the sinks after you let the water out, scrubbing the inside of the sink with your scotch-brite or cloth. Wash out your cloth or scotch-brite with some bleach and water and place it in a small dish or other receptacle to dry. Dry the counter tops with your dish-drying towel and hang it to dry.

"You will wash the least dirty dishes first and then move on to the most soiled ones. This keeps your dish water cleaner as you go."



How to Cook Dry Beans

Cooking dried beans is probably one of the most asked for set of cooking instructions I get here at CHK. It's right up there with frying chicken. So, I thought I'd set down all the methods I'm aware of for cooking and preserving beans, in hopes that you can use them.

Beans can be cooked in a pan over the stove, in the oven, on an open fire, in the microwave, or in a pressure cooker.

All dried bean cooking consists of three components:

1. Water
2. Fat
3. Salt and other flavors

Water

Beans will not cook and soften if cooked in hard water. You can try adding 1/2 teaspoon baking soda to every big pot of beans to soften the water and help the beans soften as they cook. I have lived in areas where the water was so hard that not even baking soda worked. You must cook beans in enough water to cover all the beans throughout the cooking process or some of the beans may dry out.

Fat

Any oil or fat will do. Some people like to cook beans with meat such as smoked pork or sausage. You can use olive oil, however, or even canola oil. The fats give the beans a richer flavor. There is another reason for using oils or fats in beans though—the fats keep the beans from foaming and boiling over.

Salt and Other Flavors

Salt should be added to the beans to bring out the flavor. I add salt at the beginning of the cooking process and have found that it does not keep the beans from softening as they cook and makes for a more flavorful bean. If you have hard water you may want to experiment with adding salt at the end of the cooking process so that the salt will not hinder the softening of the beans. Be careful of adding too much salt if you are going to add salted meats to the beans.

If you are going to add acidic ingredients, like tomatoes, add them after the beans have cooked completely. The acid will keep the beans from cooking and softening.

A phenomenon that occurs sometimes and keeps the beans from getting soft is called Hard Bean Syndrome. This is a genetic abnormality that occurs in some beans and it doesn't affect people who eat them, just keeps the beans from getting soft. Old beans will also have a hard time cooking soft.

The following methods are for cooking pintos, great northern, and navy beans.

Basic Boil and Cook Method

(Also known as the Quick Boil and Soak Method)

Wash beans well. They are an agricultural product and all manner of dirt and plant matter can hang around on them. Strain them through a colander after you've washed them and picked out all the dried up, hard, off color, and damaged beans.

Place the beans in a heavy bottomed pot and cover them by about 2 inches of fresh water. Add 2 tablespoons oil. If you would like to remove some of the gas-forming properties of the beans, add 1/4 teaspoon of baking soda at this point. Bring to a boil. Boil hard for 2 minutes. Remove pot from heat. Cover the pot and allow to sit for 2 hours.

Drain the cooking water and discard. Cover the beans with fresh water, bring to a boil, lower heat, cover pot, season, and cook until tender.

Basic Soak and Cook Method

Wash beans thoroughly. Pick through for rocks or disfigured beans. Cover with water. Place in refrigerator and soak for at least 8 hours or overnight. Discard soaking water. Place beans in a large heavy bottomed pot, cover with water by 2 inches. Add 2 tablespoons oil. Bring to a boil, add seasonings, lower heat, cover pot, cook until tender. If you use this method you won't need to add baking soda.

Most soaked beans, and black eyed peas, take from around 1 hour to 1 1/2 hours to cook. Limas, split green peas, and lentils, however, only take 45-60 minutes. Soybeans can take 3 hours or more.

Often, beans are baked in an oven. I have found this process to be laborious unless you have first cooked the beans a while in water. Don't overcook them, though, or they will be mushy after baking.

Preheat your oven according to the recipe you are using for baked beans. Then combine the drained cooked beans, seasonings, liquids and other ingredients in a casserole dish. Cover the dish and bake for 1 to 1 1/2 hours. You can brown the tops of the beans by removing the lid and baking the beans 15 to 30 minutes longer.



How to Roast a Chicken and Make Stock

Roasted chicken is easy to make and can be used throughout the week, or frozen to use later.

I roast chickens either in my crockpot or, when I have three or four chickens to cook, in the big roaster. I sit the roaster out on the deck and cook the chickens out there in the summer to keep the kitchen cooler and to open up counter space.

First, wash the chickens under clear water, drain them and place them on a large plate or platter. If you are using chicken pieces, wash them too.

I have started looking around and paying more for free-range, hormone-free chickens. Every now and then some are available about twenty miles from me so I buy them and freeze them. The meat tastes better and, of course, is healthier. I could probably go to a nearby big city and buy free-range chickens, frozen, any time I wanted to but they are \$10 a piece and I am not ready to pay that for a chicken!

Go ahead and preheat your cooker to LOW or the roaster to 300 degrees.

You don't have to season your chickens before you roast them. In fact, if you are going to season the meat up in different recipes, you probably don't want to season them as they cook. Also, I have found that stock made from the juices of a spicy chicken can be very strong tasting and not to many people's taste.

When I do season them, this is how I do it: Cut a lemon and a small onion in half. Place half a lemon and the two pieces of onion inside the chicken. Next, squeeze the other lemon half over the chicken and sprinkle the chicken with just a pinch of coarse salt.

If you are roasting just one chicken in order to have roasted chicken for a meal, it's nice to season it this way: Run your fingers gently between the breast portion of the chicken and the skin, loosening the skin from the muscle. Then place pats of butter under the skin before sprinkling it with Italian seasoning herbs.

Place the rinsed chicken in the roaster or crockpot. Add your herbs, salt and other seasonings.

Cover the roaster or crockpot. Cook for 4 to 6 hours on low, or at 300 degrees Fahrenheit on the roaster, depending on how many chickens you are cooking. When the meat falls off the bones, it is ready.

Cool the meat so that you can handle it easily. I usually let it sit at room temperature to cool. Then pull the meat off the bones. I freeze the meat except for a portion that I will use for supper that night. I keep the skin with the meat because in some dishes the skin is desirable.

The meat can be used in any recipe calling for cooked chicken—chicken salad, tacos, casseroles or whatever.

Now to make stock.

Put all the bones back in the cooking liquid and add a tablespoon of vinegar. I learned that vinegar tip from my friend, Wardeh. It helps to pull the minerals out of the bones and into the stock. Add a carrot, a stalk of celery, a peeled onion and some peppercorns. If you don't have peppercorns, just leave them out. Don't sweat it!

Let the bones and liquid cook for another 3 to 4 hours on low. Strain out the bones and vegetables. Allow the liquid to cool. A layer of fat will form on the top of the liquid. Break or spoon off as much of the fat as you want to get rid of. Leave some of it, though, because it tastes good in the stock and it's good for you!

Fill freezer jars just 3/4 full. Allow the stock to cool completely. A gel will form on top of the liquid. That gel is protein and mineral-rich. When the liquid is completely cooled, put a lid on the jars and freeze them. Specially-made plastic freezer jars are available. I prefer to use glass, but that's just me. If you use glass, be very careful with the jars. Don't let them bump together or against other things in the freezer.

Make this delicious stock every time you cook chicken in the crockpot or roaster—then you will have it ready whenever you need it! Another tip: you can always eat the vegetables that cook in the stock for lunch or supper!

Tips for Cleanliness

Follow these steps, 'whistle as you work,' and you're good to go!

1. Clean up as you cook

Instead of filling up the sink and counter tops with dirty pots and pans, cups and utensils, rinse them off and put them in the dishwasher as you go. Or, go ahead and make up a sink full of hot soapy water and wash each pan and item as you go.

2. Wipe up drips and spills as you go

I keep a wet cleaning cloth with me while I cook. If I spill spaghetti sauce or if the beans boil over, I clean the mess up immediately. If you drop anything on the floor, go ahead and wipe it up immediately as well.

3. Get control of clutter

When you leave a room, take something out that needs to be put away elsewhere. Get into the habit of putting things away right away and throwing away trash as soon as possible.

"I roast chickens either in my crockpot, or, when I have three or four to cook, in the big roaster."





How to Boil Eggs and Other Cooking Methods

How to boil eggs is one of the things it took me years to find out how to do. I mean boiling them without getting that green layer of color outside of the yolk. It is important to me to have nice, bright yolks for salads and stuffed eggs. I'm glad I finally learned! Here's how I do it:

Put your eggs in a medium to large saucepan—make sure they're in one layer. Put in enough water to cover the eggs but don't overload the pan. If the water is too close to the top of the pan and you think it might boil over, take some of the water or even some of the eggs out. Or try a bigger pan.

Set the pan on the burner and bring the water and eggs to a rolling boil. Immediately cover the pan and reduce the heat to a low simmer. Allow the eggs to simmer for just 12 minutes for large eggs (11 minutes if you are using medium-sized eggs and 13 minutes if you have extra large eggs).

Remove the eggs from heat and drain off the hot water. Cover the eggs with cold water. Shake the eggs around gently in the pan to break the shells, or break them by hand one at a time. Drain off that water and add more cold water. Allow them to sit in this cold water bath for another 5 minutes before draining and peeling.

It's true that the fresher the egg is the harder it is to peel once boiled. Something about air between the albumin and the shell. Peeled eggs should be used as soon as possible. Boiled eggs with the shell left on can be refrigerated for about 5 days according to the USDA.

How To Prepare Soft Boiled Eggs

I enjoy a soft boiled egg with toast and tea for breakfast. Not many people know how to soft boil an egg these days though. Most people fry the egg to the soft cooked stage. I prefer boiling.

Bring your pan of water to a rolling boil. Add the eggs in the shell and cook for 5 minutes if you want a runny yolk and 7 minutes if you want a firmer, creamy yolk (this is how I prepare them).

Serve in an egg cup or demitasse cup (an espresso cup will do). Crack the shell with a tea spoon and eat the egg directly from the shell.

How To Prepare A Poached Egg

Poached eggs have a thick, cooked but still liquid yolk and cooked, firm white. They are delicious on toast. The vinegar in this recipe doesn't flavor the egg, but keeps the egg white compact and from spreading all over the pan of water.

Bring a pan of water and 1/4 cup vinegar to a rolling boil. Using a large metal spoon, stir the boiling water in a circular motion, creating a small whirlpool in the water. Crack an egg into the whirlpool and allow it to spin. Remove the pan from the heat so that the water doesn't boil so hard that it breaks the egg. Let the egg cook 2-4 minutes depending on the doneness you want. Remove the egg from the water using a slotted spoon and drain well.

Practice makes perfect!

Another way to make poached eggs:

Take a piece of plastic wrap and lay it over a coffee mug, pushing the plastic down into the mug. Spray the plastic lightly with cooking spray. Next, crack an egg into the plastic. Add a drop of water. Tie the plastic up with some kitchen string and make a little pouch, leaving just a little air space. Drop the packet down into boiling water and cook for 2-4 minutes depending on how done you want the yolk. 4 minutes will give you something like a hard boiled egg.

Homemade Whole Wheat Crackers

Homemade Whole Wheat Crackers are really tasty and even my picky eater likes them. Roll them out very, very... very thinly. If you only roll them out to a quarter inch thick, they will be kind of chewy, which is okay, but if you like crisp crackers, go ahead and roll them out to 1/8 inch.

- 1 cup wheat flour
- 1 tbsp wheat bran
- 1 tsp corn meal
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp sugar
- 1 tsp honey
- 2 tbsp butter, chilled
- 1/4 cup water, plus 1-2 tbsp, if needed

Before you bake these crackers, you can sprinkle them with olive oil, sesame seed, salt, black pepper, paprika, or any combination of ingredients you like.

I use a food processor for this recipe because it's easy and fast. If you don't use the food processor, use a hand or stand mixer.

Combine all ingredients except the water in the bowl of your food processor and process until well combined. Add water little by little and continue to process until mixture starts to come together into a dough.

Mash the dough into a flat circle, wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate for 30 minutes.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

I like to use parchment paper for these crackers. I roll out the dough directly on the parchment paper and then lift the paper and dough together to the cookie sheet.

Place the circle of dough on the parchment paper. Cover the dough with another piece of parchment. Roll the dough out to about 1/8 inch thickness. (See picture 1.) Lift the dough and parchment paper and place on the baking sheet. If you have a sock on your roller, you won't need another sheet of parchment to cover the dough. At this point you can put all your seasonings on the dough. I used olive oil, sea salt, crushed black pepper and garlic granules. (See pictures 2 and 3.)

Prick the dough with a fork or toothpick. Use a pizza cutter or small sharp knife to cut the dough into 1 inch squares or diamonds. I re-roll any excess dough.

Place the bottom piece of parchment with the dough on it, onto the baking sheet and into the oven.

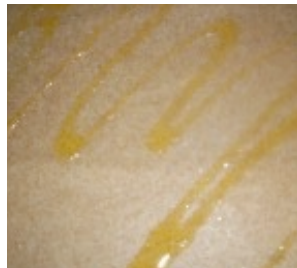
Bake at 375 for 18-20 minutes, until edges are brown. Slide the baked crackers off the cookie sheet and onto a wire rack to cool. (See picture 4.)

Cool completely and store in an airtight container.

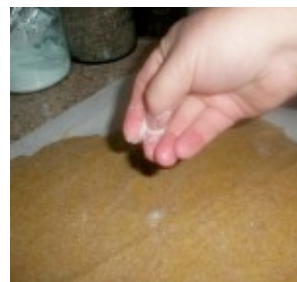
1.



2.



3.



4.



**"Even my picky eater likes these
Homemade Whole Wheat Crackers!"**



Easy and Delicious Cookie Recipe

These little gems are called Cookie Cups. They are truly the easiest "fancy" cookie you can make!

You will need:

- a mini-muffin tin
- vegetable oil spray
- 18 oz. chocolate chip cookie dough (bought or homemade; you will not use all of it)
- 4 oz. cream cheese, softened
- 2 tablespoons butter, softened
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract (I use clear vanilla for this)
- 1 1/4 cups confectioner's sugar

Cut cookie dough in half (save one portion for another use). Spray 12 mini-muffin cups very, very lightly with vegetable spray. With floured hands, press about 1 tablespoon of dough onto the bottom and up the sides of 12 miniature muffin cups. Bake at 350 degrees Fahrenheit for 8 to 10 minutes or until lightly browned.

Remove the baked cups from the oven. Using the end of a wooden spoon handle, gently reshape the puffed cookie cups. Cool for 5 minutes before removing from pan to a wire rack to cool completely.

In a small mixing bowl, beat the cream cheese, butter and vanilla until blended. Gradually beat in confectioners' sugar. Spoon into cookie cups. Store in the refrigerator.

Use your imagination for garnishes. I shaved some dark chocolate and sprinkled it over the tops. I baked the rest of the dough into traditional cookies and sandwiched some extra filling in between them.

1.



2.



3.



4.



5.





How to Make a Bed

You probably learned a little about this in kindergarten, but now that you're all grown up, bed-making can take on a flair for comfort and beauty.

Here's what you need for a properly made bed:

- **Mattress Cover:** A water-proof cover if possible because it will protect the mattress you have invested in from all kinds of accidents.
- **Mattress Pad:** This will provide a layer of softness and comfort between the sheet and the mattress cover or mattress. It really is more comfortable to have a mattress pad on a bed.
- **Fitted Sheet**
- **Flat Sheet:** When you buy sheet sets, you get a flat sheet and fitted sheet that are for the same sized bed. But when you buy sheets separately, you have the option of buying a larger flat sheet if you have a twin, full or queen-sized bed. A larger flat sheet means more room to turn over and move without pulling the covers off your spouse.
- **Blanket or Quilt:** Usually, blankets are reserved for cool weather while cotton quilts are used in the warmer months. Remember that air is trapped between layers of bed covers, so two quilts are often warmer than one blanket.
- **Bedspread or Comforter:** The function of this part of your bed is to protect the rest of the bed and to look nice.
- **Pillow Covers:** Putting a plastic or cloth cover on your pillow before putting the pillow case on it will keep your pillows more comfortable and cleaner, longer.
- **Pillowcases or Shams** - Shams are decorative covers that open in the back.

Tips for Making the Bed

Put the fitted sheet on one opposite corner at a time. It will help keep the sheet from pulling off the mattress.

If you don't like your feet feeling fastening down, then don't tuck the flat sheet in at the bottom of the bed.

Like your sheet tucked and hospital corners? Tuck the sheet under the foot of the mattress. With your left hand, pick up the flat sheet at the side of the bed about 18 inches from the foot of the bed and lift it straight up. With your right hand, tuck the part of the sheet that hangs down below the mattress under the mattress.

When you put the quilts or blankets on your bed, leave plenty of room at the foot and at the head to cover shoulders. That's another reason to buy quilts, blankets and flat sheets at least one size too big for your bed.

Cover your pillows with covers and then use cases or shams.

Fold up another blanket or quilt and lay at the foot of the bed in case it's needed.

"...now that you're all grown up, bed-making can take on a flair for comfort and beauty."



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: **Sylvia Britton** is the owner of the Christian HomeKeeper (CHK) website and ministry. She and her husband Mark live in Tennessee. They are the parents of five children and have homeschooled since 1990. She enjoys reading, mentoring women, writing articles for several magazines, gardening, Bible study and creating a peaceful, holy home. You can read about daily life at Sylvia's home at her blog, The Christian Homekeeper (christianhomekeeper.org).



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