

- **HOW TO “FRESHEN” UP YOUR CARPET**

Carpet is a bit like upholstered furniture: it tends to hold on to dust, stains, and other marks of wear and tear. (Even after a professional cleaning, undesirables tend to resurface.) And those signs of other tenants' lives are something you probably prefer to live without. Following are some tips for refreshing carpet that's seen better days.

**Fluff Dents with an Ice Cube.**

Heavy furniture can leave dents in carpeting, and chances are your furniture won't rest its legs in the same places as the previous inhabitants'. To make dents disappear, all you need is an ice cube — or a few, depending on the size of the impression. Place the ice cube over the dent, wait for them to melt, fluff the area with a fork or toothpick, and then dab up any excess moisture with a rag.

**Tackle Stains.**

Stains are probably the worst offenders of older carpet. They catch the eye and make the entire carpet look dingy. Though there are a myriad of commercial and DIY carpet stain removers out there, I swear by [Folex](#). *It works*. Just spray, let it sit a bit, and scrub with a rag.

**Sprinkle with Baking Soda to Remove Odors and Pet Hair.**

Baking soda sprinkled over the carpet and then vacuumed will help eliminate odors clinging to the carpet. It will also loosen any pet hair that might be stuck to carpet fibers. Sprinkle straight baking soda over carpeting and let it sit for at least 15 minutes or even overnight if you can. For a more intense cleaning, work the baking soda into the pile with a stiff-bristled brush. Then [vacuum](#) up, being sure to empty the bag or bin as it will fill quickly with the baking soda. Repeat as needed.

- **HOW TO CLEAN MILDREW IN YOUR APARMENT**

Mildew thrives in moist environments, so it's of little surprise that there's one part of your home highly susceptible to the scourge: the bathroom. In order to prevent mildew from cropping up, there are a few steps you can take to tackle the area...

**Assess the Situation:** Is there already a mildew problem? Grout mold can sometimes be removed with bathroom cleaner and some elbow grease. Mold found on painted walls or ceilings is a bit more difficult. If you live in a rental we suggest bringing it up with your landlord, as it is possible they'll need to remove parts of the wall to get rid of it for good (and make sure to let the area dry out for at least a day or so before patching).

**Prevent Its Return:** Once you've gotten rid of the existing mildew, work to prevent it from coming back. Two major ways to do so are with proper air circulation and light filtration. If you have a window, keep it open (or at least cracked) as often as possible. Also, keep the blinds up to let light into the room (a natural enemy of mold). If you don't have a window, consider installing an exhaust fan to move the air around and dry things out a bit, and if you have low-energy light bulbs, try leaving them on for 10 to 15 minutes after showering.

**Keep it Clean:** Hang towels, spray tiles with vinegar or store-bought cleaner regularly, and mop up any standing water as quickly as possible.

- **TIPS TO STAY COOL WITHOUT USING A/C**

Here are some tips for this summer, if you're living without an A/C or if yours is temporarily on the brink.

1. **Have at least three fans for an 800 square foot space:** a box fan, a revolving fan and a desk fan. These fans travel with you throughout your home. At night, the box fan goes in a window and blows with the draft into your home. The revolving fan is on the opposite side of the room, feeding that draft, and the desk fan is for your bedroom when you sleep.
2. **Create a cross-draft.** If possible, open windows on opposite sides of your space during the coolest part of the day. Feed the air through your home in order to filter out unwanted heat.
3. **Keep hydrated.** Drink lots of water or cold treats like popsicles and smoothies. Don't forget about your pets! Put ice cubes in their water and make sure they are in the coolest areas with you throughout the day. Never leave them outside without shade and water.
5. **Close windows, blinds and drapes during sunny part of the day, and open them up at night.** This is by far the most important tip of all. Leave all of your windows and open with fans blowing at night, then as soon as the sun is up, shut your windows, blinds and drapes. Reopen around 5pm, or when outside feels cooler than inside.
6. **If you're pregnant, have small children or elderly folks in the house, consider purchasing a small portable air conditioner before it even gets hot.** Be prepared if you're in this risky category. It will be worth it for that one week — trust me!

- **HOW TO SAVE ENERGY WHILE USING YOU'RE A/C UNIT**

We've mentioned ways to [keep cool without turning on your air conditioner](#), but when the summer temperatures start busting the 100 degree mark daily, or the humidity makes it feel like you're swimming through a world full of soup, sometimes it's a must. Stay cool with some of these energy saving tips!

Although many can tough out the high temperatures and wear it like a badge of honor, some might not have the stamina, or have needs that require air conditioning. You might have elderly or small children that would benefit from it or rooms full of computer equipment that need a slight chill to work at their best... and that's ok. To help keep your bills and your energy consumption as low as possible, check out the 10 tips below:

1. **Warmer At Night Is OK:** During the night time hours you don't require the same level of conscious cool. Try turning your AC down (so it is running less) during your sleep hours or an hour or two before bed.
2. **Use Window or Portable Units:** If you aren't into cooling your whole home, try using a portable unit to cool just the area you'll be working in. They use up to 50% less energy than a larger central air unit would to cool off the same space.
3. **Close off Vents:** The basement is traditionally the coolest room in the home, so try closing all the vents in the lower portion of your home. The cool air will slink down there naturally and by closing those vents, you're forcing all the air up top first, cooling as it comes down.
4. **Service Your Unit:** Some basic maintenance might be all your air conditioner needs, but most will greatly benefit from a good hosing out, especially if you're plagued with pesky trees like Cottonwoods that drop seeds which stick to the filters and make the unit work 15% harder!

**5. Check Your Ducts:** Making sure the areas where your ducts run through parts of your home without air conditioning (like the attic) are properly insulated will keep the air coming in as cool as it can be. Paying for half cool air isn't anyone's idea of money well spent!

**6. Rearrange Your Furniture:** Furniture that obstructs air conditioning vents means you could be cooling the back of a chair or the bottom side of your sofa and although it might appreciate the thought, we're pretty sure you'd rather have that chill instead. Although they make plastic pieces for your vents to help force air in the right direction, the easiest way is to just rearrange things for a while!

**7. Try 78 Degrees:** 78 degrees is a good point for an air conditioner to run at its optimal performance level. Think of it as a car on cruise control headed across the flat Midwest prairie. It's not chugging along going uphill, and is just plugging away, steady as she goes. Taking your temperature even 5 degrees lower can make your air conditioner use up to 40% more energy!

**8. Lighting:** Turning lights off can help reduce your heat, but paying attention to how much light you let in from open windows can also play a significant role. Although it might neurotic to open and close your windows everyday with the changing of the sun, it makes a huge difference in how much heat your bought air is competing against.

**9. Is Anyone Home?:** If you can, while you're away turn your AC up to 85 and make sure the windows and drapes are closed. Although it will be hot for a few minutes when you come home, the blinds will help keep out the sun out (allowing existing cool to stay that way for as long as possible) and the heat won't be so substantial that your unit will have to work overtime to cool things back off.

**10. Don't Forget the Fan:** We rely on air conditioners to keep things cool, but having the help of a few supplemental fans doesn't hurt. Using them to circulate the cool air means you don't need quite as much pumped into the room. They use less energy than your air conditioner unit, so having them around as backup is a great idea.

- **TIPS TO HELP MAKE MOVING EASIER**

**Reduce.** This one is a bit obvious, but it's also easier said than done. We regularly go through our home and donate or recycle items we don't need, so I'm surprised by how many things we're still sorting through. The fact is, there are things that we've held on to for years "just in case," as well as things like books and dishes that seem to have multiplied over the past 8 years. I don't want to throw stuff in a box, move it three times, and realize I don't need anything in it, so I've become ruthless about getting rid of stuff.

**Don't Unpack What You Don't Need:** We've packed a few boxes that will go right into storage and won't be unpacked again this year. Its stuff I'll want when we settle down eventually – like my grandmother's teacups – but that I don't really need to unpack this year.

**Organize:** You need to be organized before any move, but I've felt pressure to be even more organized given that I'll do this again in a year. This time next spring, I want to move quickly and efficiently, without weeks of sorting and organizing again. I keep trying to think of shortcuts that will help us in a year, from shredding old paperwork to labeling everything as specifically as possible. In addition to moving, we'll be renting out our current home, which has led to an entirely separate list of things to do. We've created a master to-do list on Google docs to keep track of everything. We can each see what's been finished, what still needs to be done, and the dates for appointments on our current home (window washing, etc.).

- **10 Bonus Benefits to Small Space Living:**

1. it's easier to clean.
2. You're less likely to over shop when space is a priority.
3. Small versions of furniture cost less. A lot less.
4. it's easier to focus on quality over quantity when everything's on display.
5. Your heating and cooling bills tend to be lower.
6. A small art collection makes big impact.
7. A single statement piece or splurge can make the whole room (which in some instances is the whole apartment).
8. it's harder to lose the remote, or anything else for that matter.
9. You're more likely to purge clutter when you can't hide it away.
10. You can afford to have niceties like candles and flowers in every room.

- **TIPS ON KEEPING YOUR APARTMENT CLEAN**

If you live in a small space, you know that it's tough to keep it clean from day to day. Smaller spaces just seem to collect more unwanted clutter, dirt and dust! Why is that? Well if you're a clean freak like me, take a look at some of these tips to keep your small space sparkling every day...

1. **DE clutter.** This is rule number one for a reason! If you don't love or use an item—why do you still have it? Ditch the clutter and free up space. Open spaces appear cleaner, and bonus—you don't have to dust as many things!
2. **Clean as you go.** Have a tiny kitchen? Make sure your dish washer or sink is clear before cooking and drop dishes in the washer and hand wash as you cook. That way, all you have to clean at the end of the meal is the pots and dishes you ate on! Moving from the living room to the bedroom at night? Fluff those pillows, straighten your things and place things back where they go. The next morning, you'll thank yourself for the clean room.
3. **Don't buy things you don't need.** Refer to rule number one—if you don't love it or use it, then why do you have it? Keep clutter to a minimum.
4. **Rely on smaller furniture pieces with ample storage space.** If you just can't get rid of some of your "stuff" find a way to store them away in cabinets, or double-duty furniture. That way, you'll have less to dust when you clean.
5. **Clean five minutes a day.** Straighten the kitchen during the commercial break. declutter your desk by tossing mail and trash the minute you walk in the door. Put your shoes and outdoor items away when you get home. All of these little five minute increments add up to a cleaner home.
7. **The Magic Eraser:** this is your small space cleaning BFF. Generic or name brand, cleaning erasers have the power to get up just about any stain and make surfaces look great. Watch out though—these erasers can even take off paint!

8. **Take early steps toward cleanliness.** Buy good cleaning supplies with pleasant aromas that you like, and grab a good, organizational hamper to make laundry easier and to eliminate those dirty clothes that end up on the floor.

9. **Designate a day each week as your "cleaning day."** This is the day you vacuum the floors, couch, change bed sheets, towels, clean the bathroom, dust and wipe down counters with disinfectant.

10. **Designate a day each month or quarter for your "deep cleaning day."** This is the day you really scrub—grout, drains, the ceiling above your stove, hidden areas under furniture, and the works! I also like to use this day to change toothbrushes, razors, toss old makeup or soaps I'm not using, vacuum the mattresses, change the Brita filter, etc. This way, your weekly clean isn't a true workout because your deep clean took care of the nasty.

- **HOW TO IDENTIFY HOUSEHOLD PESTS AND WHAT TO DO IF YOU FIND ONE**

BEDBUGS. Nope — it was spiders! In an effort to save you the same confusion, I've put together this list of tips for IDing your household pests.

**Bite in the night? Get yourself to a doctor.** After consulting every bedbug website ever created and practically boiling all my sheets and clothes, and after a useless check by a landlord-hired exterminator I finally went to the doctor. He glanced at my bites: "Spider. No question." He then consulted the Big Book of Skin Ailments, and sure enough, my bites had every unique characteristic of spider bites. A bit of ointment and a can of bug spray later, and all of my problems were solved. To make a long story longer, a good doctor can save you tons of worry and discomfort — and worse — so get yourself checked out as soon as possible.

**Lying awake worrying? Console/terrify yourself until your appointment.** [WebMD has a helpful visual glossary](#) of various pests and what their bites look like immediately after the fact, as well as days later. Please note that it is NOT comprehensive. For example, while there were images for Black Widow and Brown Recluse spiders, there were no mentions of less-poisonous varieties.

**Mouse in the house?** [SF Gate has a handy 5-point reference](#) to tell if you're sharing your home with rats &/or mice. Especially horrifying helpful hint: "Rats can chew their way through pipes, chair legs and plastic containers."

**Got moths?** I have battled with pantry moths on and off, and have learned to sense their presence before I actually see one. You can identify their presence by either seeing them up-close (they are very small, white and worm-like) or the silk thread they produce. Spotting the silk threads in my pantry items alerts me to the fact that tiny hard-to-see moths are present, allowing me to make an informed decision on whether to eat that oatmeal anyway or not.

**Shy cockroaches?** I can't imagine a world in which one would have a cockroach infestation and yet be spared the sight of the cockroaches themselves, but if you think that's what's happening, Wise Geek.com has the telltale signs.

**Termites eating your house?** If you don't conveniently fall through the porch like Lorelai Gilmore did in the "Secrets and Loans" episode, [HowStuffWorks lists signs](#) that you might have termites, as well as how to distinguish them from ants.

- **HOW TO HANDLE BEDBUGS**

If you think you might be playing host to these dreaded critters, here's what you need to do.

**EXTERMINATE:** Call your manager immediately to identify and confirm the bedbug diagnosis. Once you know what you're dealing with, you can figure out your individual treatment plan. It is a good idea to start treating the bedbugs right away. We prefer to use a heat treatment as that seems to be the most effective.

**LAUNDER:** Launder every piece of fabric in your home. This is the most daunting task, but start with the epicenter and work your way outwards. Generally the epicenter is the bed, hence the name, as these bugs like to come out at night and feed on human blood. Despite the early diagnosis, even the upholstered furniture in my living room and dishtowels in my kitchen were laundered, just to be safe. **Guidelines for Laundry:** There are many conflicting reports out there about what temperature the wash needs to be at, and my exterminator made a good point by saying that bedbugs can't swim, so they will drown in any water temperature. However, extreme temperatures are necessary to kill the eggs, which cycle and hatch every 2 weeks. You must either place the fabric in a hot dryer for 15 minutes, or freeze the item for 72 hours.

**ORGANIZE:** Just doing laundry isn't enough — there needs to be careful organization and separation between what has been laundered and what could be infested. I set up a triage center on our dining room table with plastic bins, and once an item was removed from the dryer it immediately went into a plastic Ziploc bag and was sealed off. It is best to start living only out of the clothes that are sealed, so that you know you aren't carrying bedbug eggs around with you.

**VACUUM:** As the bugs are killed off by the poison over time, you will find carcasses that resemble dry lentils. Vacuuming is key, and when you empty the vacuum make sure to get rid of the trash immediately in case any eggs are vacuumed up that you don't want them in your house any longer.