



Simply Green

Live well, tread gently

May 2009—Handy Household Tips

Many of us are already aware of the many handy household uses for baking soda and vinegar, but have you ever thought about using aspirin or Alka-Seltzer tablets, mayonnaise or milk, or even a banana peel? Learn how to use everyday products to make any number of household chores safer, easier, and cheaper. Here are a few handy tips compiled from various sites by the SCA's Planet Manhasset Committee:*

Aspirin—

- *Remove perspiration stains* from white fabric by dissolving two aspirin in half a cup of warm water and applying to stained fabric. Leave for a couple of hours before washing.
- *Recharge a car battery*—by dropping two tablets into the battery itself. The aspirin's acetylsalicylic acid will combine with the battery's sulfuric acid to produce one last charge so you can drive to the service station.

Milk—

- *Clean patent leather shoes* to a shine by rubbing them with a little milk on a soft cloth. Leave to dry and buff.
- *Remove ink stains* on clothing by soaking the area in milk. This can take from half an hour to overnight to remove the stain completely.
- *Repair fine cracks in china* by boiling it in milk. The milk reacts with the kaolin in china and closes the crack. Place the plate in a pan, cover it with milk, (fresh or reconstituted powdered milk), and bring to a boil. When it starts to boil, lower the heat and simmer for about 45 minutes.

Banana Peel—

- *Polish leather shoes* using a de-stringed banana peel. Finish by buffing with a soft cloth or paper towel.
- *Repel aphids* by burying dried or cut-up banana peels a few inches deep around the base of rosebushes.

Wine bottle—

Put in boots to prevent crease line.

Mayonnaise—

Remove bumper stickers by rubbing mayonnaise over the entire sticker. Let it sit for several minutes and wipe it off. It also will remove tar and pine sap.

Lemon—

Remove sticky foods such as soft cheese from a grater. Rub both sides of the grater with the pulp of a cut lemon.

Olive Oil—

- *Polish wood furniture* with a teaspoonful of oil and a soft rag.
- *Free a stuck zipper.* Use a cotton swab to apply olive oil to the teeth of a zipper; then, gently ease the tab down.
- *Remove paint* from your skin.

Alka Seltzer—

- *Clean a toilet.* Drop in two Alka-Seltzer tablets, wait 20 minutes, brush and flush.
- *Remove burned on food* from cookware. Fill your cookware with warm water; dissolve six tablets and let sit for an hour or so.

Cotton Balls—

Fight mildew in hard-to-reach spots in the bathroom. Soak cotton balls in *Hydrogen peroxide*, an alternative to bleach, available in supermarkets and drugstores. *Sodium perborate*, another alternative to bleach, is available from chemical supply companies. Leave them for a few hours, then rinse with warm water.

Borax—

Disinfect without harsh chemicals by using borax according to instructions or dissolve 1/2 cup of borax in one gallon of water. A 50/50 solution of Isopropyl alcohol and water also makes for a good disinfectant in the bathroom and kitchen.

Baking Soda—

- *Extinguish a grease or electrical fire—*Scatter by the handful to safely put it out.
- *Soak shower curtains* in water and baking soda to clean them.
- *Eliminate water rings on finished wood* with a paste of baking soda and toothpaste. Dip a cloth in the paste and rub the spots away.
- *Get rid of ants in your house.* Mix equal parts of baking soda and salt, and sprinkle wherever you see the intruders coming in.
- *Break up clogged drains.* Mix 1/2 cup of baking soda with 1/2 cup of salt. Pour down the drain, and then follow with 2 cups of boiling water. Let it sit overnight.
- *To clean ovens--* Mix 1/2 cup of baking soda with 1/4 cup of salt; add enough water to make a paste.
- *Eliminate odors.* Sprinkle dry baking soda on carpets and upholstered furniture; let it sit for at least 15 minutes, then vacuum.
- *Sprinkle the dog* with baking soda, rub vigorously; then, brush it out for a fresh clean smell.
- *Get rid of stale, musty, and mildew smells;* sprinkle baking soda in sneakers and sleeping bags.
- *Clean countertops, sinks and other food preparation spaces* without harsh chemicals.
- *Wash waxes and pesticides off fruits and vegetables.*
- *Clean everyday baby stuff,* from the high chair and crib railings to changing table and well-loved toys.
- *To clean bathtubs-* Mix 1/2 cup of baking soda with enough white vinegar to make a paste.
Speaking of vinegar. . . .

Vinegar—

- *Remove stubborn price tags or stickers.* Paint them with several coats of vinegar, let it soak in for five minutes, then wipe away the residue.
- *Make wool sweaters fluffier.* Add a couple of capfuls of vinegar during the rinse cycle for an extra-soft feel.

- *Clean and disinfect* wood cutting boards.
- *Deodorize the kitchen drain* (let sit for 30 minutes before flushing with water).
- *Remove perspiration and deodorant stains* from clothing before laundering.
- *Avoid ant invasions* (wipe down your counters, cabinets and floors).
- *Make your glasses and dishes spot-free* (add a cup of vinegar to the bottom of your dishwasher).
- *Wipe an old DVD or CD clean* (pour vinegar on a lint-free cloth).
- *Soften an old paintbrush* (soak it in hot vinegar, then wash with warm, sudsy water).
- *Kill grass in sidewalks or driveways*.
- *Clean shower doors and toilet bowls*.
- *Check [versatilevinegar.org](http://www.versatilevinegar.org) for more ideas.*

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References—

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