

GUIDE

The Sydney cleaning guide

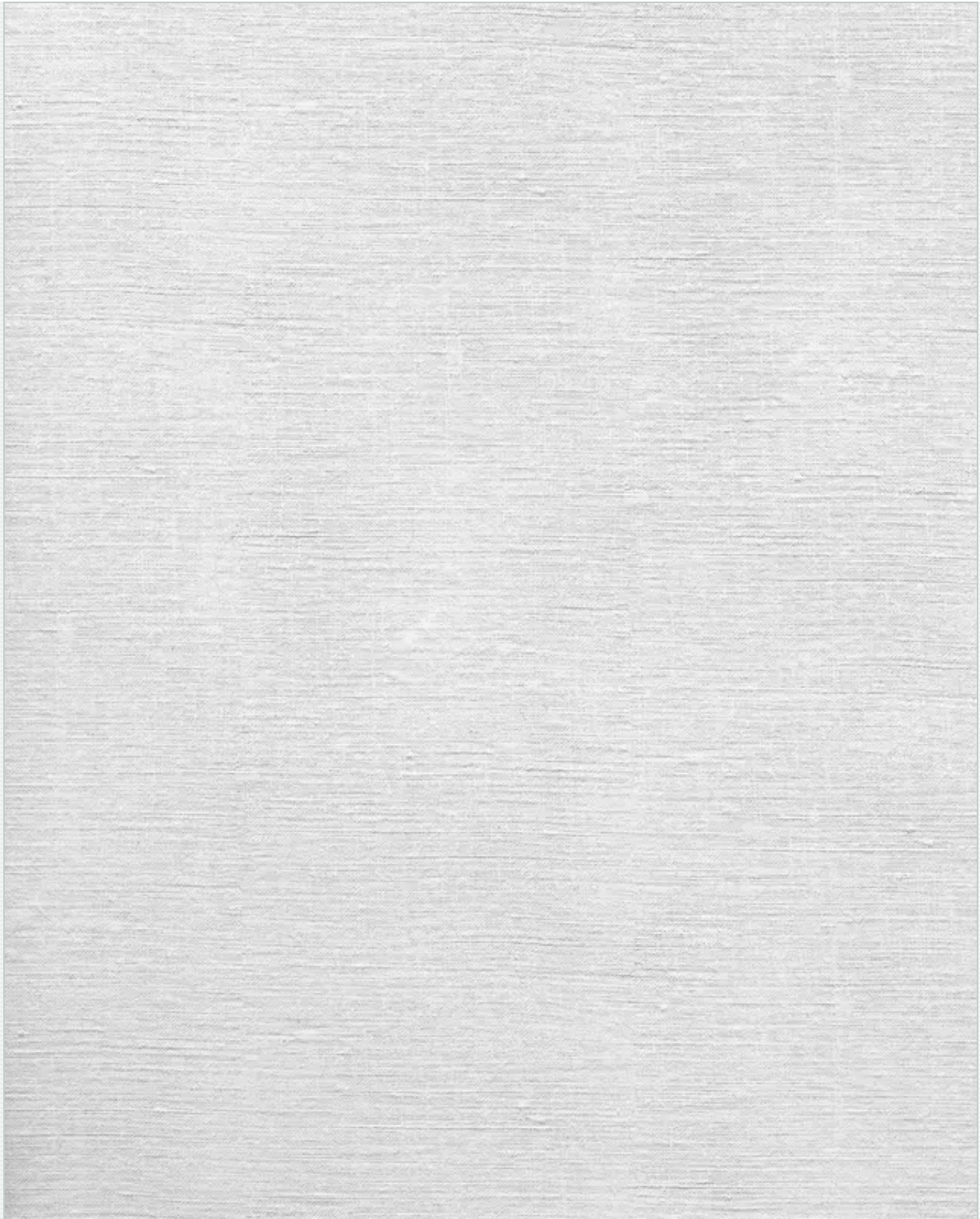
Everything worth knowing about cleaning a good house, written by someone who does it for a living. Free, no email required, nothing held back.

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ABOUT 20 MINUTES · UPDATED JULY 2026

There is no form in front of this and no follow-up sequence behind it. If it saves you a benchtop, that is the whole return. [How the same problems get handled professionally.](#)

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GD-PLATE

MATERIAL STUDY – PLAIN-WEAVE LINEN



Chapter four explains how to read the label sewn into your own furniture – the single most useful thirty seconds in this guide.

01

pH is the whole game

Almost every expensive cleaning mistake is a pH mistake. Understand this one page and you will never ruin a benchtop.

The pH scale runs 0 to 14. Below 7 is acidic, 7 is neutral, above 7 is alkaline. That number decides what a product can dissolve – and what it destroys.

THE RULE

Acids dissolve minerals. Alkalines dissolve organics. Match the pH to the soil, not to the brand on the bottle.

Soap scum is calcium plus soap – a mineral, so an acid removes it. Cooking grease is organic, so an alkaline removes it. Use the wrong one and you scrub for an hour with nothing to show. Use an acid on the wrong surface and the damage is permanent.

SURFACE	USE	NEVER USE
Marble, limestone, travertine	pH-neutral stone cleaner only	Vinegar, lemon, CLR, bleach, bicarb paste
Granite and engineered stone	pH-neutral, then reseal periodically	Strong acids, strong alkalines, abrasives
Glass and mirrors	Mild acid, or alcohol and water	Abrasives
Grout	Alkaline, dwell time, soft brush, then seal	Bleach as a routine – it strips the seal
Ovens and range hoods	Strong alkaline degreaser	Acids – they do nothing to grease
Upholstery and carpet	Mildly alkaline pre-spray, then extract	Anything you cannot rinse back out
Sealed timber	pH-neutral, barely damp	Standing water, steam mops, vinegar
Brass and unlacquered metal	Neutral cleaner, buff dry	Bleach

NEVER

Never mix bleach with anything containing ammonia – most glass sprays do. The reaction releases chloramine gas. People are hospitalised by this every year.

The kit, for about \$150

You do not need the forty bottles under your sink. You need five chemistries and four tools.

CHEMISTRY

pH-neutral stone cleaner – the one product worth buying properly. Everything with stone in the house depends on it.

White vinegar, 5% – about \$3 for 2L. Glass, kettles, showerheads. Never on stone.

Citric acid powder – about \$8 for 500g. Heavier limescale, dilute one tablespoon per cup of hot water.

An alkaline degreaser – kitchen, range hood, oven. Biodegradable is fine and usually smells less.

Hydrogen peroxide, 3% – mild disinfectant, and the safe option on fabric where bleach is not. Patch-test it.

TOOLS

Microfibre cloths, colour-coded by room. Separate kitchen from bathroom or you are moving bacteria around.

A vacuum with a HEPA filter and an upholstery head. The single highest-value purchase in the list.

A squeegee. Thirty seconds on the shower screen after every shower prevents the soap scum you would otherwise pay someone to remove.

Soft brushes in three sizes, including an old toothbrush for grout lines.

SKIP

Skip the domestic steam mop on timber and on any stone with a seal. Skip 'all-purpose' sprays – an all-purpose pH is the wrong pH for almost everything.

03

The mistakes that cost real money

These are the four that come up again and again, with what putting them right typically costs at Sydney trade rates.

MISTAKE	WHAT HAPPENS	INDICATIVE REPAIR
Acid on marble or limestone	The acid reacts with the calcium and etches a dull ring into the polish. It is not a stain and it will not buff out.	\$1,500–\$3,000 to hone and reseal a benchtop
Bleach on grout, routinely	Whitens for a fortnight, degrades the sealant, then water gets behind the tiles.	\$3,000–\$20,000 if it reaches the substrate
Undiluted descaler on tapware	Strips the protective coating; the finish pits and blackens.	\$400–\$1,200 per mixer to replace
DIY 'cleaning' a fabric sofa	Water and detergent go in, most of it stays in. The soil wicks back to the surface as it dries, leaving shadows, and the residue attracts more.	\$620+ to correct – often more than doing it right first

The pattern in all four is the same: the damage is not caused by dirt, it is caused by the intervention. Doing nothing is frequently better than doing the wrong thing quickly.

04

Material by material

What each surface actually needs, in order.

NATURAL STONE

pH-neutral cleaner, soft cloth, dry immediately. Water left standing will mark it.

Blot spills; never wipe an acidic spill across a wider area.

Reseal every one to three years depending on traffic. Test by dripping water on it – if it darkens, the seal is gone.

GROUT AND TILE

Alkaline cleaner, then leave it to dwell for ten minutes. Dwell time does the work that scrubbing cannot.

Soft brush along the line, not across it.

Seal after cleaning, not before. Sealing dirty grout locks the dirt in.

GLASS

Two cloths: one damp, one dry. Streaks are almost always residue, not technique.

Squeegee top to bottom, wiping the blade each pass.

On harbour-facing glass the haze is salt. A mild acid removes it; plain water spreads it.

UPHOLSTERY AND CARPET

Vacuum thoroughly first – anything wet turns loose soil into mud.

Identify the fibre before anything else. Check the label under the cushion: a circle with a W means professional wet cleaning, and a crossed circle means water is not an option.

Blot spills from the outside inwards. Rubbing pushes the stain into the padding, where nothing domestic will reach it.

Never soak. Whatever you cannot extract back out stays in the foam.

TIMBER

Barely damp, then dry. Water in a seam swells the board.

pH-neutral only. Vinegar dulls a polyurethane finish over time.

05

Sydney, specifically

Two local conditions do most of the damage here, and neither is dirt.

Salt. Anywhere within a few kilometres of the water, airborne salt settles on glass, tapware, balustrades, outdoor furniture and stone. It attracts moisture, which is what turns a haze into corrosion. Rinsing exterior glass and metal with fresh water every few weeks does more than any product.

Humidity. Sydney sits high enough, long enough, for mould to establish on anything that stays damp – grout, silicone, the underside of outdoor cushions, the back of a sofa against an external wall. Airflow is the fix, not bleach. Bleach removes the colour of the mould and leaves the growth.

FIVE MINUTES A DAY, IN THE RIGHT PLACES

Squeegee the shower screen. This is the highest-return thirty seconds in the house.

Leave the bathroom fan running fifteen minutes after a shower, not five.

Pull furniture two centimetres off external walls so air can move behind it.

Wipe tapware dry after use in a coastal suburb.

Open the house up for ten minutes on a dry morning.

06

The professional order of operations

Why a trained cleaner is faster is almost entirely sequence, not speed.

THE ORDER

Top to bottom, always. Anything you dislodge falls onto something you have not done yet.

Dry work before wet work. Dust, then vacuum, then wipe. Wiping a dusty surface makes paste.

Apply, then leave. Spray the bathroom and the oven, then go and do another room. Dwell time is free labour.

One room to completion before moving on. Wandering is what turns three hours into six.

Textiles last. They catch everything the earlier stages release, and they need the room quiet afterwards to dry.

THE HONEST BIT

A four-bedroom house done properly is four to six hours of work. Anyone quoting two hours is quoting a tidy, and that is a legitimate product — just not the same one.

07

When to stop and make a call

The situations where a domestic attempt usually costs more than the job would have.

CALL SOMEONE

The piece is worth more than about two thousand dollars and you do not know the fibre.

It is natural linen, viscose, silk or aged wool. These have a heat threshold below what a domestic steam unit runs at.

There is mould in the silicone or behind a fixture rather than on the surface.

The stone is etched, not stained — a dull patch rather than a dark one. That needs honing, not cleaning.

It is a bond inspection and the disputed items are carpet, upholstery or grout.

Something is water damaged. What is salvageable is decided in the first forty-eight hours.

Everything else in this guide is well within reach with the kit in chapter two. Where a professional earns the fee is the list above — the pieces where the cost of getting it wrong runs into thousands, and where knowing the material beforehand is the entire job.

ENQUIRE

Or hand it over.

If you got to chapter seven and recognised your own situation on the list, send a photograph of the piece or the address of the site. WhatsApp reaches the owner directly.

ENQUIRE ON WHATSAPP →

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DISCLAIMER

This guide is educational. Cleaning involves chemicals and tools that can be hazardous if misused. Follow product labels, test on a concealed area first, ventilate, wear gloves, and never mix products unless the manufacturer says to. Repair figures are indicative Sydney trade ranges, not quotations.