the all-star arsenal

Four industry pros name the housework helpers they can’t live without and share tips to make your cleaning routine faster and easier.
# The Cleaning Dream Team

**Melissa Maker**, the founder of the Toronto-based cleaning company Clean My Space and a how-to YouTube channel and blog by the same name | **Tom McNulty**, a Minneapolis-based housekeeping expert and the author of *Clean Like a Man* (cleanlikeaman.com) | **Jennifer Sass**, a senior scientist at the Natural Resources Defense Council, in Washington, D.C. | **Donna Smallin Kuper**, an organizing pro based in Mesa, Arizona, and the author of *The One-Minute Cleaner*

## Power Player | Why It's a Winner | Usage Tip
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**Dr. Bronner’s pure Castile liquid soap**

“**Dry dusting** just pushes particles around. I use this soap for wet dusting. It works on everything from countertops to baseboards,” says Jennifer Sass. “I love that it’s made with organic ingredients and doesn’t leave streaks. I even use it to clean wood and tile floors.” $11, drbronner.com.

- Mix about a tablespoon in a half-gallon bucket of warm water. Dip in a chamois cloth, then wipe surfaces. For floors, dampen a mop in the solution. No rinsing required.

**Windex glass cleaner**

“It’s an old standby for glass and mirrors, of course, but people don’t know that Windex also makes porcelain sinks and enamel stovetops shine,” says Tom McNulty.

- For fingerprints on chrome appliances (like the toaster), there’s nothing like it.

**Mrs. Meyer’s dish soap**

“**Dishes feel cleanest** to me if there are lots of bubbles when I wash. This Sudsy formula is on the pricey side, but you need only a squirt or two, so the bottle lasts a long time,” says Sass. “It comes in almost a dozen scents. I like rotating through them. Right now I’m into Geranium.” $4, mrsmeysers.com.

- You can even wash your car with Mrs. Meyer’s soap. Just add a few drops to a bucket of warm water.

**rubbing alcohol**

“**Instead of using** commercial all-purpose cleaner, I mix up a homemade formula of ¼ cup rubbing alcohol, a teaspoon of dish soap, and about 3 cups of water in a spray bottle,” says Melissa Maker. “It works really well—the alcohol functions as a disinfectant—and it’s inexpensive.”

- Add a few drops of an essential oil if you prefer a scented solution.

**Brillo soap pads**

“**Like most people,** I keep a box of Brillo in my kitchen for cleaning pots and pans. But I also love it in the bathroom for soap scum on the shower door. The fibers cut right through that residue without scratching the glass,” says Donna Smallin Kuper.

- Snip a pad in half (that’s all you need, so your supply will last longer), wet to activate the lather, then scrub and rinse.

**Rain-X Original glass treatment**

“**It’s meant for car windows,** but I use this spray to prevent buildup on glass shower doors. Apply it every three months and it repels water spots, so you never need a major scrubbing session,” says Smallin Kuper. $8, Target.

- Use only on smooth glass, not shower doors that are etched or frosted or those made of Plexiglas or fiberglass.
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<td><strong>The Skrapr</strong></td>
<td>“Glass cooktops can be such a pain to clean, but this spatula-like scraper makes it a breeze. It lifts the grime right up without marring the glass,” says Maker. $10, theskrapr.com for stores.</td>
<td>▶ Moisten the stovetop with water (no cleanser needed), then press the Skrapr into trouble spots.</td>
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<td><strong>Virtex XL grout sponge</strong></td>
<td>“During a tile-renovation project, I discovered that grout sponges are extra absorbent. So I started using them on large surfaces, like countertops and bathtubs,” says McNulty. “They’re big—six by eight inches, and two inches thick—so cleaning is quicker. Since they have small pores, they leave fewer streaks.” $3.30, acehardware.com.</td>
<td>▶ These are dense. Be sure to wring out well after each use and air-dry thoroughly, to minimize bacteria growth.</td>
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<td><strong>E-cloth microfiber-cloth set</strong></td>
<td>“Just like people use different cutting boards to avoid cross contamination, I like microfiber cloths color-coded for use,” says Smallin Kuper. “The eight in this set have varied textures, like a flat weave for mirrors (these won’t cause streaks) and a more absorbent terry style for stainless (this distributes cleanser better).” $40, e-cloth.com.</td>
<td>▶ You can clean microfiber cloths in the washing machine. But skip the softener in the dryer, which makes the fabric lose some of its pull.</td>
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<td><strong>The Absorber synthetic drying chamois</strong></td>
<td>“These chamois cloths can hold more moisture than cotton cloths. They’re like a hybrid—part sponge, part microfiber—so you don’t need to wring them out nearly as often. I keep a few in my caddy to clean shelves and countertops,” says Sass. $11, amazon.com.</td>
<td>▶ After each use, rinse with clean water and air-dry. Every other week, throw in the wash. Dry in the sun when you can. UV rays are an excellent disinfectant.</td>
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<td><strong>toothbrushes</strong></td>
<td>“I never throw out a toothbrush. They’re ideal for cleaning tight spaces that people often give up on, like around faucets and stove knobs. Just dip in white vinegar and scrub. The bristles dislodge ground-in debris,” says McNulty.</td>
<td>▶ Run old toothbrushes through the dishwasher in the utensil basket to sanitize them for cleaning.</td>
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<td><strong>Pledge furniture spray</strong></td>
<td>“Pledge was always my go-to for wood furniture and surfaces,” says McNulty. “Then I discovered that you can also use it to refresh leather. I apply it once a month or so.”</td>
<td>▶ Spray onto a cotton cloth (not directly on leather); wipe the piece. In a pinch, Pledge works for a speedy shoe shine.</td>
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<td><strong>Scotch-Brite scrub sponge</strong></td>
<td>“These kitchen sponges, with a scouring pad on one side, are heavy-duty and won’t scratch surfaces. I use them on the tile and tub in my bathroom,” says Maker. “They’re as effective as a scrub brush. Because they’re inexpensive enough to replace frequently, they’re also more hygienic.</td>
<td>▶ To disinfect a sponge used to clean the bathroom, soak it in rubbing alcohol afterward for 10 minutes.</td>
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<td><strong>Oxo Good Grips dustpan-and-brush set</strong></td>
<td>“I hate having to lug out a handheld vacuum for crumbs on dining chairs and dirt on wood stairs. Instead, I have a few of these small whisk-broom sets stashed throughout the house. I even use them on upholstered furniture,” says McNulty. $10, oxo.com.</td>
<td>▶ Keep one in the dining-room console, one in the pantry, and one by the litter box.</td>
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corn broom
Tom McNulty uses an old-school corn broom on his wood and tile floors. The big, natural bristles sweep more area per pass than synthetic brooms and grab more than a vacuum. He skips the dustpan, instead sweeping everything right over the threshold into an adjacent carpeted room. "Then I vacuum the carpets," he says. "This eliminates the inevitable powdery debris that dustpans just can't catch." Mr. Clean deluxe corn broom, $23, amazon.com.

Dyson DC59 Animal cordless vacuum
This is Melissa Maker's must-have for small vacuuming jobs—high or low. An extension pole makes it versatile. She says, "Beyond floors, I'll use it for stairs and upholstery. It has strong suction and a charge that lasts 20 minutes, so you don't have to stop midway through." Donna Smallin Kuper is also a fan: "The floor attachment has a swivel head that's amazing for tight spaces, like those in the bathroom." $500, dyson.com.

Reliable Steamboy PRO T3
Here's Smallin Kuper's go-to device for disinfecting hard floors and freshening carpets. The steam (which reaches 248 degrees Fahrenheit) lifts dirt and grime, while the microfiber pad wipes it all up. A bonus: "Steam cleaners sanitize with water alone," she says. "So you don't have to worry about traces of cleaning chemicals if you have small children crawling around on your floors." $109, crateandbarrel.com.

O-Cedar microfiber-cloth mop and Quick-Wring bucket
With a machine-washable microfiber head, this mop reduces streaks and drying time for hardwood floors, says Maker. "And the bucket's slotted wringer means that you don't have to get your hands dirty," she says. $9 each, Walmart.

in a hurry?
Get tips for making messes disappear in minutes at realsimple.com/easyclean.