

Break Those Mess-making Habits!

By Don Aslett

Taken from Don Aslett's book, "No Time to Clean: How to Reduce & Prevent Cleaning the Professional Way"

What you don't mess up, you don't have to clean!

Every single one of us does dumb things that create unnecessary work for ourselves — things that don't just cause, but multiply housework. When mess-making manners and habits disappear, so does the mess. Simple behavior change can outperform the greatest tools and techniques or any other cleaning magic. Just breaking a few mess-making habits will ease our housework routine more than anything else around:

* **Latch the hatch:** We can save a big chunk of cleaning and household care time if we just put lids back on and close drawers, doors and windows when we should. Close it now and there's nothing to it — leave it open and it spills. Rain, flies, moths or mice get in. The prize animal gets out, heads get bumped, etc.

* **Kill the spills:** The less spills, the less stains and the less cleanup! Leave nothing around that can spill or be spilled if you aren't there watching it every minute. Never set things where they're sure to get knocked over. Overfilling anything (tub, bucket, sink, or bowl) is sure to mean drips and spills, whether you're pouring or carrying.

* **Pours we deplore:** For less spills when pouring, don't pour too fast, and stop well before you reach the top of the glass or container. Hold things over the sink or place them in the sink, if necessary, before pouring. If you have pitchers or carafes that seem to always pour crooked, replace them!

* **Dam those drips!** Don't carry dripping things across the floor or carpet — if it's wet and you must move it somewhere, put it in a tub or bucket. Don't throw things with liquid in them (such as partly drunk cups of takeout beverages) into the garbage can. There's many a drip between the pot or punchbowl and the ladle! So ladle things out on an easily washable surface (not over the tablecloth).

* **Sawdust savvy:** Construction, craft projects, repairs and workbench activities should take place in a clearly designated area where surfaces can't be damaged and fallout can be contained. Designate special "craft shirts" for yourself and the kids to cover your good clothes when crafting, and keep the Spray and Wash handy!

* **Stop dropping!** The clothes you dropped right where you changed — you still have to spend the minute it would have taken to hang them up then — plus now, the time to de-wrinkle and de-lint them. Picking up after yourself is the single most timesaving thing you can do.

* Don't forget the wet! Don't leave wet things around ... anywhere! Leaving wet towels or wet clothes lying somewhere, or draped over things, will cause mildew, rust, musty smells, stains, discoloration and peeling of finishes and worse.

* Stash the trash: It may take an extra five minutes now to put the garbage where the coons or the neighbor's ten-pound tomcat can't get to it. But that's much faster and more pleasant than collecting broken eggshells, chicken bones, stained papers, sticky boxes, oily cans, soggy Kleenex and coffee-ground-filled orange halves from all over the lawn and driveway. And then having to re-bag and re-haul all this.

* For a cleaner home on the range: Don't put pots and pans on to cook at too high a heat — this will splatter the whole surrounding area, cause the contents to boil over or burn and blacken if not ruin the pot, too. (If it doesn't start a fire!)

* Untargeted tooth care: Flossing teeth — although important — will never be an Olympic event. Hold your head down when you floss or brush your teeth and any spatters will end up in the sink instead of on the mirror.

We can save ourselves a world of work by simply becoming more conscious of what we do and helping other family members to do the same. Remember, cleaning can be reduced more by behavior change than anything else — what doesn't get dirtied or abused doesn't require care!

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