

CLEAN THIS

## ROUGH TOWELS! STINKY DRAINS!

We asked readers to tell us about their biggest housekeeping struggles. Then we found solutions to the problems that came up again and again...and again.

BY LESLIE CORONA



Checkerboard Towel, from \$75 for 2; [brooklinen.com](http://brooklinen.com)  
Stripe Towels, from \$28; [dusendusen.com](http://dusendusen.com)



**“My towels lose their softness and fluffiness over time!”**

JANIE, NEW YORK CITY

Blame these culprits: detergent, bleach, and fabric softener. You shouldn't be using fabric softener at all with towels, says Patric Richardson, author of *Laundry Love*. It tends to leave behind a coating that can mess with texture and limit absorption. Bleach can also degrade the quality of your towels. “It's so rough on fabric. It's basically sandpaper!” Richardson says. And if you're using too much detergent—you only need one to two tablespoons for a full load—it won't rinse out and can start to build up.

To remedy your seemingly ruined towels, Richardson suggests just washing them with that prescribed amount of detergent. After three or four cycles, any buildup will naturally slough off, allowing for the return of the fluff. You could also pour about a half cup of white vinegar (or however much will fit) into your fabric softener dispenser. The acid can help break down excess detergent in one or two cycles.



**“My shower grout refuses to be white anymore!”**

STACYVETRO

This is a job for hydrogen peroxide. Lori Williamson, the expert behind the popular Instagram account @nowitsclean, suggests mixing a half cup of HP, as we affectionately call it, with one cup of baking soda in a bowl to create a paste. Then add about a tablespoon of Dawn Ultra Dish Soap (\$5 for 28 oz.; target.com) to the mixture. Apply it to your grout lines and scrub with an old toothbrush. If you have super-stubborn stains, a steamer, like the Steam Shot Handheld Steam Cleaner & Sanitizer (\$42; bissell.com), can help melt away mold and mildew. If neither of these does the trick, level up to a heavy-duty product, like Zep Grout Cleaner & Brightener (\$8 for 32 oz.; walmart.com). Once you've thoroughly cleaned your grout, Williamson says to seal it with something like Aqua-X Grout Sealer (\$26 for 16 oz.; amazon.com), which can keep icky things from penetrating it for at least a year.



**“I can't get the glass top of my electric stove clean!”**

QUEENBUBBYINLOVE

Remove grease spatters with Dawn Platinum Powerwash Dish Spray (\$6 for 16 oz.; target.com) and a nonscratch sponge, says Brandon Pleshek, creator of the viral TikTok account @cleanthatup. Rinse the sponge, and wipe again to pick up any soap residue. Next, try a soft cleanser, like Bar Keepers Friend Multipurpose Cooktop Cleaner (\$7.50 for 13 oz.; at grocery stores), which is mildly abrasive and acidic. Still got charred cheese? Pleshek says to grab a razor scraper (like the Stanley High Visibility Mini-Razor Blade Scraper, \$3; homedepot.com) and carefully chip off the crud. (Wet the surface first to prevent scratches.) Finally, buff with a micro-fiber cloth. You should see your reflection smiling back at you.



**“The drain in my kitchen sink gets so stinky!”**

STEPHANIE, TAMPA, FLORIDA

The easiest way to defunk it, says Paul Abrams, who works with the plumbing service Roto-Rooter, is to add a cup of baking soda to your drain, then a cup of vinegar. (Both are great deodorizers.) Let that sit for about 15 minutes, then flush the drain with extra-hot water from the tap. If you've got a garbage disposal, pour in a cup of salt or drop in a few lemon peels, followed by two or three handfuls of ice. Turn on the blade and run hot tap water down the drain to nix that stink.



**“The cabinet doors near my stove always look grimy!”**

CINDY.DUDA

When you cook, grease particles float around and settle on the doors. Pleshek suggests using a nonscratch sponge dunked into a few cups of water and a teaspoon of, you guessed it, Dawn dish soap to scrub them down. Then do a once-over with a wet towel, and follow up with a dry towel to remove moisture (extra important if you've got wood cabinets!). If the gunk is really bad, reach for some Goo Gone Goo & Adhesive Remover (\$4.50 for 8 oz.; homedepot.com). Wash the doors with that soap-and-water combo afterward to erase residue.