

FREE CHAPTER • CHAPTER 1

THE OLD INDIAN WAY



The whole house the way an Indian mother ran it, written for an American home with what the supermarket sells

ROOM BY ROOM

HONEST VERDICTS

SUPERMARKET SWAPS



ASHA SHARMA

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The Honest Verdict and the Never Mix Rules

How to read every trick in this book, and the few rules that keep a cleaning day from turning into a bad day

Beta, before we clean one counter, we sit down for a minute. In the house I grew up in, nobody wrote rules on paper. You learned by standing next to your mother. She did not have forty bottles under the sink. She had a bucket, a few cloths, soap, and a strong opinion about what went with what. That opinion is the first thing I want to give you.

In an American house the trouble is not too little cleaner. It is too much. Every bottle promises something, and when one does not work fast enough, people pour in a second one on top. That is how a bathroom fills with fumes on a Saturday morning. The safest house is the one with fewer bottles and a clear head about which ones never meet.

This chapter also explains the four verdicts you will see on every page. I tested my own habits against what the official safety pages say. Some old tricks work very well. Some help a little. Some are only custom, and I keep them because they are ours, not because they do anything. And a few are things I am asking you to stop. I will always tell you which is which. That is the Indian way: honest in the kitchen, honest about the kitchen.

THE TRICKS IN THIS CHAPTER

IT WORKS The four verdicts and how to read them

IT WORKS Bleach and vinegar never in the same bucket

IT WORKS Bleach and ammonia cleaners never together

IT WORKS Peroxide and vinegar never in one bottle

IT WORKS Label every spray bottle the day you fill it

IT WORKS Gloves and an open door before any bleach job

IT WORKS Keep 3 percent peroxide in its dark bottle

IT WORKS Test every mix on a hidden spot first

The four verdicts and how to read them

IT WORKS

One look at the label tells you whether a trick is worth your evening

Why

Every trick in this book carries one of four labels. It works means it does what people expect, every time you follow the steps. Helps a little means it does something real, but less than the internet promises, and you may need a stronger method after it. Only tradition means it is a custom from our homes, kept for memory and habit, without the effect people claim. Do not do this means it wastes your money or can hurt you, your surfaces or your lungs, and the page tells you what to do instead.

The verdicts matter because a household budget is spent on hope. A trick that only helps a little is still useful when you know to stop after one try. A tradition is still lovely when you know not to wait for a miracle from it. And a do not do this saves you from repeating a mistake every Saturday for ten years.

WHAT YOU NEED

1 pencil · *Swap: any pen*

1 pack small sticky notes · *Swap: torn strips of paper and tape*

HOW

1. Read the verdict line and the one short reason before you read the method.
2. If the verdict is works or helps a little, gather the exact amounts in the list before you start, so you never guess with a capful.

3. If the verdict is only tradition, do it for pleasure or habit, and do not count on it to solve the problem.
4. If the verdict is do not do this, skip straight to the line that says what to do instead.
5. Put a sticky note on the pages you use most, such as the never mix rules and the mold limit, so they open fast.

| IF IT DID NOT WORK

If a trick marked works did not work for you, check the amounts and the waiting time first; most failures are rushed soaking. Then use the stronger method in its if not line, and stop there rather than adding a second cleaner.

| WATCH OUT

A verdict is about the method on that page with those amounts. Changing the product, doubling the strength or adding another cleaner changes the result and can change the safety.

Bleach and vinegar never in the same bucket

IT WORKS

Keeping these two apart is the single most important rule under your sink

Why

Vinegar is an acid. Chlorine bleach reacts with acids and gives off chlorine gas. Poison Control says it plainly: mixing bleach with an acid makes chlorine gas, and many household cleaners contain acids, including vinegar and some toilet bowl cleaners. You do not need a full bucket for this to happen. A splash of vinegar spray on a bleach-wet tile is enough to sting your eyes and throat.

The CDC asks you never to mix household bleach with any other cleaner or disinfectant, because the vapors can be very dangerous to breathe. That rule is simple to keep when you plan your day: bleach jobs and vinegar jobs happen on different days, or with a full rinse of clean water in between.

| WHAT YOU NEED

2 buckets in two colors · *Swap: one bucket plus a large mixing bowl kept only for bleach*

1 roll masking tape and a marker · *Swap: painter's tape*

1 gallon plain water for the rinse · *Swap: tap water*

| HOW

1. Write BLEACH ONLY on one bucket with tape and marker. Never let vinegar touch it.
2. Before a bleach job, read the back of every spray you plan to use that day. Toilet bowl cleaners, limescale removers and some bathroom

sprays are acids.

3. If you used vinegar on a surface earlier, rinse it with 1 gallon of plain water and wipe dry before any bleach goes on.
4. If you used bleach, rinse the surface with plain water and let it dry fully, at least one hour, before vinegar touches it.
5. Rinse the bleach bucket with water outside or in the tub after use, then store it upside down.

| IF IT DID NOT WORK

If you already mixed them and smell a sharp, swimming pool smell, leave the room at once and get fresh air, as Poison Control advises. Open windows from outside if you can. If anyone coughs, struggles to breathe or has burning eyes, call Poison Control at 1-800-222-1222.

| WATCH OUT

Do not pour bleach into a toilet that still has blue cleaner or limescale remover in the bowl. Flush twice first.

Bleach and ammonia cleaners never together

IT WORKS

Many glass and multi-surface sprays carry ammonia, and with bleach it makes a harmful gas

Why

Ammonia hides in ordinary bottles. Poison Control notes that some formulations of a well known blue glass cleaner contain ammonia and should never be combined with bleach. When ammonia meets bleach, Poison Control says it makes chloramine gas. The EPA gives the same warning: never mix chlorine bleach with cleaning solutions or detergents that contain ammonia.

The danger is quiet. A mirror wiped with glass cleaner and a sink wiped with a bleach spray in the same small bathroom, with the door shut, can fill the air without anyone mixing anything in a bucket. Urine also contains ammonia compounds, which is why pouring bleach into a toilet or a litter area that has not been flushed or rinsed is a poor idea.

WHAT YOU NEED

1 plain glass cleaner labeled ammonia-free · *Swap: 1 cup white vinegar and 1 cup water in a spray bottle*

1 marker · *Swap: any pen that writes on plastic*

HOW

1. Turn every spray bottle under the sink around and read the ingredients. Look for ammonia, ammonium hydroxide or quaternary ammonium.

2. Mark an X on the cap of each bottle that has any ammonia word, so you can see it in a second.
3. Keep bleach and the X bottles on different shelves.
4. On a bathroom day, choose one: either bleach for the tub, or the glass cleaner for the mirror. Do the other job on another day, or rinse every bleached surface with plain water and air the room for 15 minutes first.
5. Flush the toilet twice before any bleach goes into the bowl.

| IF IT DID NOT WORK

If you smell something sharp or your eyes water after using both, stop, leave the room and breathe fresh air. Call Poison Control at 1-800-222-1222 for advice, even if it seems small.

| WATCH OUT

Ammonia-free on the front does not mean the store brand next to it is the same. Read each bottle you buy, every time.