How to Clean Baseboards and Walls

Fresh, mark-free walls and crisp white baseboards — without soaking the paint or damaging the finish.

Quick facts: Time per room 10–15 minutes dusting, plus washing | Air-dry walls about 30 minutes | Difficulty Easy | Cost Pantry basics

What You Will Need

- Soft microfibre cloths and a duster or dry mop
- Bucket of warm water
- Mild dish soap — 1 teaspoon per 4 litres of warm water
- Soft sponge (non-scratch)
- Baking soda — for a 3:1 paste on stubborn marks (painted boards only)
- White vinegar — 60 ml per 4 litres, for greasy kitchen walls (satin/semi-gloss only)
- Clean dry towels
- Stable step stool or ladder for high spots

Before You Start

1. Identify the wall type first. Painted plaster, washable paint, wallpaper, and wood panelling all need different care. What is safe on one can ruin another.
2. Test a hidden spot. Try your cleaning solution on a small area behind furniture or a door. Wait 10 minutes and check for colour change, softening, or shine loss before you clean the whole wall.
3. Dust first, top to bottom. Dust ceilings, wall tops, and baseboards before any wet cleaning — about 10–15 minutes per room. Wetting dust just turns it to mud and streaks.

Step-by-Step

1. Clean the Baseboards

1. Mix 1 teaspoon of dish soap in 4 litres of warm water.
2. Dampen a soft sponge — wring it well so it is damp, not dripping.
3. Work in sections of about 1 metre at a time, wiping along the baseboard.
4. Rinse the sponge often in clean water so you are not spreading dirt.
5. Dry each section immediately with a clean towel — never leave baseboards wet.
6. For stubborn marks on painted baseboards only, apply a baking soda paste (3 parts baking soda to 1 part water), rub gently, then wipe clean and dry.

2. Wash the Walls

1. Use the same solution: 1 teaspoon of dish soap per 4 litres of warm water.
2. Wash bottom-up in sections of about 60 cm. (Washing top-down lets dirty drips run over clean areas and leave streaks.)
3. Wipe each section with a well-wrung damp sponge, then rinse with a clean damp cloth.

4. Dry each section straight away, then let the wall air-dry for about 30 minutes.

5. For greasy kitchen walls, add 60 ml of white vinegar per 4 litres of solution — satin and semi-gloss paint only. Never use vinegar on flat/matte paint or unsealed surfaces.

3. Special Surfaces

- Non-washable wallpaper, grasscloth, and fabric wallpaper: dry-clean only — dust with a dry cloth or vacuum with a brush attachment. Never wet these.
- High spots: use a stable step stool or ladder. Never stand on chairs, and never overreach — move the ladder instead.

Warning — Never do this:
Never soak a wall with water — it can bubble paint, soften plaster, and feed mould behind the surface. Never spray cleaner directly onto walls — spray it onto your cloth instead, so it cannot run, drip, or soak in.

Tick-Off Checklist

Work room by room and tick each step as you finish it.

Prepare

- [ ] Wall type identified for this room
- [ ] Cleaning solution tested on a hidden spot — waited 10 minutes, no damage
- [ ] Room dusted top to bottom (10–15 minutes)
- [ ] Bucket, sponge, cloths, and towels ready

Baseboards

- [ ] Solution mixed: 1 teaspoon dish soap per 4 litres warm water
- [ ] Baseboards wiped in sections of about 1 metre
- [ ] Sponge rinsed often; each section dried immediately
- [ ] Stubborn marks on painted boards treated with 3:1 baking soda paste

Walls

- [ ] Walls washed bottom-up in sections of about 60 cm
- [ ] Each section rinsed and dried straight away
- [ ] Walls left to air-dry for about 30 minutes
- [ ] Greasy kitchen walls (satin/semi-gloss only) cleaned with +60 ml vinegar per 4 litres
- [ ] Non-washable / grasscloth / fabric wallpaper dry-cleaned only — never wetted

Finish and Safety

- [ ] Wall never soaked; cleaner never sprayed directly on walls
- [ ] Ladder or step stool used safely for high spots — no standing on chairs
- [ ] Bucket water emptied; cloths rinsed and hung to dry
- [ ] Room checked: no drips, streaks, or damp patches left behind

Notes

Room / wall type / paint finish notes: