# How to Clean Your House Fast Before Guests Arrive

*A 30-minute blitz and a 60-minute version for a guest-ready home — no deep clean required.*

Guests are coming in an hour — or maybe in thirty minutes — and the house looks lived in. Take a breath. You do not need a deep clean. You need a guest-ready home: the places your guests will see, smell, and touch should feel fresh, tidy, and welcoming. Everything else can wait until after they leave.

The secret is simple: clean in guest order, not house order. Start where guests will walk, sit, and wash their hands, and work outward only if time allows. A tidy entryway, a fresh-smelling living room, a clean guest bathroom, and a clear kitchen counter will make the whole house feel clean — even if the spare bedroom is still a mystery.

## Before You Start

**Set a timer and stick to it.** If guests arrive in 30 minutes, you have 30 minutes — not 45. A timer keeps you moving and stops you from getting pulled into one drawer, one cupboard, or one stain that nobody will ever see.

**Grab your kit first.** Carry everything with you so you are not running back and forth: a laundry basket or large bag, a bin bag, a damp microfibre cloth, a dry microfibre cloth, all-purpose cleaner, bathroom cleaner or disinfectant, glass cleaner (or a 1:1 mix of white vinegar and water for mirrors and glass), a broom or vacuum, and a mop or damp cloth for hard floors. If you have a cleaning caddy, grab it — this is exactly what it is for.

**Hide, don't organise.** This is not the day to sort the junk drawer. Anything that does not belong in a guest-visible room goes into the laundry basket: stray shoes, mail, chargers, toys, laundry, random clutter. Put the basket in a bedroom and shut the door. You can sort it tomorrow. Guests will never know, and you will not waste precious minutes deciding where things belong.

**Prioritise in this order:**

- **Entryway** — the first thing guests see and smell.
- **Living room** — where guests will sit.
- **Guest bathroom** — the room guests judge most.
- **Kitchen** — guests often end up here, even if you did not plan it.
- **Everything else** — only if you still have time. Close the doors on the rest.

**One rule for the whole clean:** work top to bottom and dirtiest last in each room, but keep moving. Done beats perfect today.

## The 30-Minute Blitz

This is the plan for when guests arrive in half an hour. Set a timer for each block and move on when it rings, even if a room is not perfect.

### Minutes 0–5 — Entryway and First Impressions

- Shake out or vacuum the doormat, and sweep or vacuum the entry floor.
- Hang up coats, put shoes on a rack or in a basket, and clear the console table or hallway surface.

- Put keys, mail, and bags out of sight — in the basket, behind a closed door.
- Wipe the front door handle and light switch with a damp cloth.
- Take out any rubbish or recycling bags sitting by the door.

### Minutes 5–15 — Living Room

- Walk the room once with the basket and collect everything that does not belong: cups, plates, toys, magazines, chargers, laundry.
- Fluff and straighten cushions, fold throws neatly, and straighten the rug.
- Dust the coffee table and any obvious surfaces with a damp cloth — skip the high shelves.
- Wipe any visible marks off the coffee table with all-purpose cleaner.
- Vacuum or sweep the main walkways and the area around the seating. If you have a robot vacuum, start it now and move on.
- Open a window for 5 minutes for fresh air, or light a candle or use a room spray if you have one.

### Minutes 15–23 — Guest Bathroom

- Clear the counter completely: put personal items in a basket under the sink or behind a closed cabinet door.
- Spray the sink, tap, and toilet seat with bathroom cleaner or disinfectant. Let it sit while you do the rest, then wipe.
- Wipe the mirror with glass cleaner or a cloth dampened with 1 part white vinegar to 2 parts water, then buff dry with a second cloth.
- Scrub the toilet bowl quickly with the toilet brush, including under the rim, and flush.
- Hang fresh hand towels and put out a fresh bar of soap or a full soap dispenser.
- Empty the small bin if it is full, and put in a fresh liner.
- Wipe the floor around the toilet and sink with a damp cloth if there are visible marks.

### Minutes 23–30 — Kitchen

- Clear the counters: put dishes in the dishwasher or stack them neatly in the sink out of sight, and wipe the counters with warm soapy water, then rinse with a plain-water cloth.
- Wipe the stove top quickly if there are visible splashes (only once cool).
- Empty the bin if it smells or is overflowing, and put in a fresh bag.
- Sweep the floor, focusing on visible crumbs near the table and stove.
- Put out a clean tea towel, and if you have time, run the tap for a moment so the sink smells fresh.

*If the timer rings and you are not finished, stop. Put the basket away, wash your hands, and open the door. Guests care far more about a warm welcome than a perfect skirting board.*

## The 60-Minute Version

If you have a full hour, follow the 30-minute blitz above, then add these extras — still in guest order:

### Minutes 30–40 — Living Room Deep Touches

- Vacuum the whole living room slowly, including under the coffee table and along the edges.
- Dust the TV stand, shelves at eye level, and lamp bases with a slightly damp microfibre cloth.

- Clean the inside of the front windows or patio door glass if they are visibly smudged (glass cleaner or 1:1 vinegar-water on a cloth, buffed dry).
- Straighten books, remotes, and decorative items.

### Minutes 40–50 — Bathroom and Kitchen Extras

- Bathroom: wipe the shower or bath edge, clean the shower glass with a squeegee or damp cloth, and mop the floor with warm water and 1 teaspoon of dish soap per 4 litres of water, wrung well.
- Kitchen: wipe the fridge door handles and the outside of the microwave, empty the toaster crumb tray, and wipe the dining table. If the sink is stained, sprinkle 2–3 tablespoons of baking soda into the basin, scrub with a damp cloth, and rinse.

### Minutes 50–60 — Final Touches

- Vacuum or sweep the hallway and any other guest walkways.
- Fluff the living room cushions one more time, straighten throws, and check the entryway.
- Put fresh flowers, a bowl of fruit, or a lit candle in the living room if you have them.
- Do a smell check: open a window briefly, take out any remaining rubbish, and run the extractor fan in the kitchen for a few minutes.
- Wash your hands, change into something fresh, and put a clean hand towel in the guest bathroom.

## Quick Wins That Make the Biggest Difference

**Smell first.** Guests notice smell before they notice dust. Open windows for 10 minutes, take out all rubbish, empty the kitchen bin if it smells, and run the extractor fan. A simmer pot works wonders if you have 15 minutes: a small saucepan of water with a few lemon slices and a sprig of rosemary or a cinnamon stick, simmered gently on low. Otherwise, a lit candle or a quick spray of room freshener in the living room and hallway is enough.

**Lighting hides a multitude of sins.** Turn on lamps instead of harsh overhead lights, open curtains for daylight, and dim anything too bright. A warmly lit room feels clean and welcoming even if the skirting boards are not perfect.

**Fresh towels and a clear sink.** In the bathroom, fresh hand towels are the single most effective signal of a clean home. In the kitchen, an empty or neatly stacked sink and a clean tea towel do the same job.

**Trash out, always.** An overflowing bin is the one thing guests always notice. Even if you do nothing else, empty the kitchen bin and the guest bathroom bin.

**Shoes off at the door.** If your home has a shoes-off habit, put a small mat and a basket by the door so guests know what to do — and so muddy shoes do not undo your clean floors.

## What NOT to Do

- **Do not start a deep clean.** Do not descale the showerhead, clean the oven, or sort a cupboard. Those jobs take longer than you think and leave things half-finished when the doorbell rings.
- **Do not clean rooms guests will not enter.** Close the doors on bedrooms, the office, and the laundry room. Nobody will check them, and every minute spent there is a minute stolen from the living room or bathroom.

- **Do not mix cleaners.** Never mix bleach with vinegar, ammonia, or any other cleaner — the fumes are dangerous. Use one product at a time, and rinse cloths between products.
- **Do not use vinegar, lemon, or acidic cleaners on natural stone.** If your counters are granite, marble, or travertine, use a pH-neutral cleaner or a cloth dampened with warm water and a few drops of dish soap. Acid etches stone permanently.
- **Do not spray cleaner directly onto electronics, mirrors, or wood.** Spray onto the cloth instead, so liquid does not seep into screens, mirror backing, or wooden joints.
- **Do not mop a wooden or laminate floor with a soaking-wet mop.** Wring it out well and dry each section straight away.
- **Do not leave cleaning products out.** Put sprays and cloths away before guests arrive — a bottle of bathroom cleaner on the counter undoes the clean look.
- **Do not panic-clean in front of guests.** If they arrive early, smile, welcome them in, and finish discreetly later. Nobody remembers a dusty shelf; everyone remembers feeling welcome.

## Safety Notes

- Wear rubber gloves if you are using bleach, oven cleaner, or drain products, and ventilate the room while you work.
- Keep cleaners away from children and pets, and never transfer them into food or drink bottles.
- Let the stove, oven, and cooktop cool completely before wiping them. Never spray cold water onto a hot glass cooktop — it can crack.
- Use a stable step stool, never a chair, if you need to reach a high shelf or light fitting.

## Tick-Off Checklist

*Tick each box as you finish. Work in guest order: entryway, living room, guest bathroom, kitchen.*

### Before You Start

- [ ] Timer set (30 or 60 minutes)
- [ ] Cleaning kit gathered (basket/bag, bin bag, damp and dry cloths, all-purpose cleaner, bathroom cleaner, glass cleaner, broom/vacuum)
- [ ] Clutter hidden in a basket behind a closed door — not organised
- [ ] Priority order set: entryway, living room, guest bathroom, kitchen

### Entryway (0–5 minutes)

- [ ] Doormat shaken out or vacuumed; entry floor swept or vacuumed
- [ ] Coats hung, shoes on a rack or in a basket, console table cleared
- [ ] Keys, mail, and bags out of sight
- [ ] Front door handle and light switch wiped
- [ ] Rubbish or recycling by the door taken out

### Living Room (5–15 minutes)

- [ ] Room walked once with the basket; everything out of place collected

- [ ] Cushions fluffed and straightened; throws folded; rug straightened
- [ ] Coffee table and obvious surfaces dusted and wiped
- [ ] Main walkways and seating area vacuumed or swept
- [ ] Window opened for fresh air, or candle lit / room spray used

### Guest Bathroom (15–23 minutes)

- [ ] Counter cleared; personal items hidden under the sink or in a cabinet
- [ ] Sink, tap, and toilet seat sprayed, left to dwell, then wiped
- [ ] Mirror wiped and buffed streak-free (spray on cloth, not on glass)
- [ ] Toilet bowl scrubbed under the rim and flushed
- [ ] Fresh hand towels hung; soap topped up or replaced
- [ ] Bin emptied and relined if full
- [ ] Floor around toilet and sink wiped if marked

### Kitchen (23–30 minutes)

- [ ] Counters cleared; dishes in dishwasher or stacked neatly out of sight
- [ ] Counters wiped with warm soapy water, then rinsed with a plain-water cloth
- [ ] Stove top wiped once cool (visible splashes only)
- [ ] Bin emptied if smelly or overflowing; fresh bag in
- [ ] Floor swept (visible crumbs near table and stove)
- [ ] Clean tea towel put out

### 60-Minute Extras (30–60 minutes)

- [ ] Living room fully vacuumed, including under the coffee table and edges
- [ ] TV stand, eye-level shelves, and lamp bases dusted
- [ ] Front window or patio door glass cleaned if smudged
- [ ] Bathroom shower/bath edge wiped; shower glass squeegeed; floor mopped (1 tsp dish soap per 4 litres, wrung well)
- [ ] Fridge handles and microwave exterior wiped; toaster crumb tray emptied; dining table wiped
- [ ] Sink scrubbed with 2–3 tablespoons baking soda if stained, then rinsed
- [ ] Hallway and guest walkways vacuumed or swept
- [ ] Cushions fluffed again; entryway checked
- [ ] Fresh flowers, fruit bowl, or lit candle placed in the living room
- [ ] Smell check done: windows opened briefly, rubbish out, extractor fan run

### Quick Wins

- [ ] Smell: windows opened, rubbish out, bin emptied, extractor fan run

- [ ] Lighting: lamps on, curtains open, harsh overhead lights dimmed
- [ ] Fresh towels in the bathroom; clean tea towel in the kitchen
- [ ] All bins emptied (kitchen and guest bathroom)
- [ ] Shoes-off mat and basket by the door, if applicable

### Safety and What NOT to Do

- [ ] No deep clean started (no oven, showerhead, or cupboard sorting)
- [ ] No rooms cleaned that guests will not enter; their doors closed
- [ ] No cleaners mixed (never bleach with vinegar or ammonia)
- [ ] No vinegar, lemon, or acid cleaners used on natural stone
- [ ] No cleaner sprayed directly onto electronics, mirrors, or wood
- [ ] No soaking-wet mop used on wood or laminate floors
- [ ] No cleaning products left out before guests arrive
- [ ] Gloves worn for bleach, oven, or drain products; room ventilated

## Notes