

tip talk

organizing, cleaning, recycling & more



5 things to do with... Alka-Seltzer

- 1 DEEP-CLEAN VASES** Fill with warm water and drop in two of these baking soda-rich tablets. Let soak for an hour to remove the stains you can't reach.
- 2 SPEED-SCRUB THE TOILET** Twice a week, drop two tablets into the bowl; 15 minutes later, do a once-around with the toilet brush.
- 3 MAKE AN ALL-PURPOSE CLEANER** Drop three tablets into 8 oz warm water. Once the fizzing stops, wipe down counters, tiles and tubs.
- 4 SAFELY UNCLOG A DRAIN** Drop three tablets into the drain and run hot water for a few seconds (the hotter the water, the more fizzing). Let sit for 15 minutes.
- 5 BUILD ROCKETS** Entertain little ones by heading outside with an empty film canister, filling it halfway with warm water and dropping in a half-tablet. Snap on the lid and place the canister lid down. Take a step back and watch it launch into the air.

ARE DISHWASHERS GREEN?

I get asked a lot about the eco-friendliness of dishwashers. The most efficient way to wash dishes, hands down, is the bucket method (one sink of warm soapy water, one sink of clean water, very few dishes). But if you're like me—piles of dishes, scrubbing for 15 minutes at full-faucet capacity—the dishwasher is the way to go. Cut down on your dishwasher energy use with these tips:

- Only run the washer when it's fully loaded.
- Place cups *between* the prongs, not on top of them.
- Set dishwasher to the "light" wash cycle.
- Load smart by placing the soiled side of dishes toward the center of the machine for better exposure to the spray.
- Skip the heat-dry cycle, which wastes electricity. Just open the door and let the dishes air-dry.

gotta have it!

My kitchen sink used to be cluttered with sponges, brushes and steel wool pads. Then a single Scotch-Brite Ultra NailSaver Absorbent Scrub Sponge replaced them all. One side is coarse for scrubbing, one side soft for dishes, and in the middle is super-absorbent foam with a little groove to keep your fingernails dry (and long! and painted!). \$2.29 at Walmart and Target.





brilliant solution!

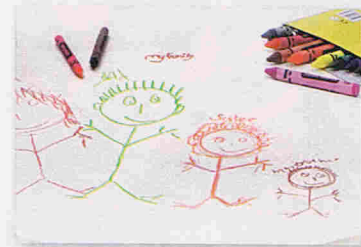
My bathroom has a window shade that I used to close every time I took a shower. (*Errrr*, let's be honest...sometimes I'd forget and, as my mother would say, "put on a show for the neighborhood.") But now I shower with the shade up all the time, since I discovered Gila Frosted Privacy Window Film. You simply measure and cut a piece to fit the windowpane, spray on a sticky solution, then press the sticky side of the film onto the glass, creating a frosted window that still lets in sunlight. And if you change your mind, you don't have to keep it on your window forever—the sheets are easily removable. \$20 for a 4 x 6.5-foot sheet at Lowe's and The Home Depot.

stain-less bliss

Ketchup on your shirt? *Arrgh!* No one is ever quite sure what to do first, but a good rule of thumb is: As soon as the culprit hits fabric, flush it with cold water, then apply a portable stain stick. Once you're home, here's a cheat sheet for the most common confusers.

STAIN	SOLUTION
coffee or tea	Douse with water; apply white vinegar. Any remaining blotch is likely milk or sugar; apply a stain stick and let sit. Wash as usual.
gum, wax, crayon	Hold an ice cube onto the offender and crack off what you can. Apply a stain remover like Carbona, let sit, then rinse in cold water. Wash as usual.
mustard	Soak in a 1:1 vinegar/water mix, then spritz with diluted liquid dishwashing soap. Scrub and rinse.
deodorant	Apply stain stick and let sit for 30 minutes. Hand-wash in cold water, then machine-wash.
ketchup	Douse in cool water to remove as much of the stain as possible. Apply stain stick, let sit, then wash.
ballpoint ink	Apply glycerin (available at drugstores), then rinse in cold water. Apply liquid dishwashing detergent and rinse. Repeat until the offender is gone.

THE BEST WAY TO recycle it



CRAYONS

In my house, the most unpopular crayon colors are gray and pale yellow. I never thought twice about tossing the duds in the trash, but it turns out that crayon wax spends eternity in a landfill. Instead, put them in a small box and send them to the recycling program run by Crazy Crayons, where your castoffs will be melted down and turned into a new generation of crayons. For details, go to crazycrayons.com **wd**