

SCOURING POWDER

THE DIRTY SCENARIO

Each powder handled everyday tasks (sinks, tubs, tile floors) in a snap, so we put up a harder target: a porcelain sink with a leaky faucet and a serious rust stain.



TWO-TIME WINNER!

Bar Keepers Friend cleanser, 2 oz.; at mass retailers.

WHY IT WON

Yet again, this classic—introduced in 1882—clinched the title, banishing that dark rust stain with little scrubbing. Of all the products we tested, it was also the only one that removed embedded dirt in the anti-slip coating on a bathtub.

AROUND THE HOUSE

CARPET CLEANER

THE DIRTY SCENARIO

To see which formulas could combat old and recent stains, we devised a two-prong challenge: a piece of carpet with long-standing spots and a new, light-colored carpet sample splashed with red wine and coffee.



Weiman carpet cleaner, \$6 for 22 oz.; amazon.com.

WHY IT WON

This cleaner made short work of the stubborn mystery stains. Wine and coffee spills also disappeared after just one application.

WOOD FLOOR CLEANER

THE DIRTY SCENARIO

We cleaned vintage polyurethane-coated wood floors and newer oak flooring, both in the same home. Then, the tiebreaker: a heavily trafficked school entry hall with 1800s wide-plank wood.



Murphy Squirt and Mop, \$4 for 32 oz.; at Target.

WHY IT WON

This new formula has all the tried-and-true benefits of the original Murphy oil soap, but without requiring any diluting, mixing or rinsing. You simply squirt a ribbon of product on the floor and use a damp mop to clean. In our side-by-side test, Murphy's picked up the most dirt on the mop head and left the best finish. Plus, the scent is pleasantly fresh and herbal—not the least bit cloying.

WOOD FURNITURE POLISH

THE DIRTY SCENARIO

To see how well each product cleaned and polished wooden surfaces, we wiped a section of a painted wood table and a natural wood dresser with each. After comparing side-by-side to examine which products lifted dust the best, we took a few more swipes to compare overall shine.

Bona wood furniture polish, \$5 for 10 oz.; at Target.

WHY IT WON

All four products cleaned, loose dust well, but this spray also removed waxy buildup and polished in one easy wipe. The bottle spritzes just enough, with no waste. For detail work such as corners and crevices, the runner-up Weiman furniture wipes (\$6 for 30; amazon.com) were ideal.



MULTI-SURFACE SPRAY

THE DIRTY SCENARIO

Caramel sauce, oil, sweet pickle juice and yellow mustard were left to dry on a Formica countertop for 24 hours. Most of the products held their own here, so we went to a commercial kitchen and headed straight for its dusty, greasy stainless-steel hood.



Clean Day honeysuckle multi-surface everyday cleanser, \$4 for 16 oz.; mrsmeyers.com.

WHY IT WON

Mrs. Meyer's versatile spray handled the at-home jobs easily, and after a few applications, it left the commercial hood shiny and grease-free. It also worked well on bathroom surfaces including chrome and tile.

WOMEN SPEND NEARLY 1½ YEARS CLEANING HOUSE IN A LIFETIME

MEN SPEND LESS THAN HALF THAT AMOUNT

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



GETTY IMAGES (WOMAN)