

time to clean

spring isn't the only time to "dig in" to your digs

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I've never been much for spring cleaning. To me, spring is the time to be outside working in the yard. Fall, though, is a different story. The kids go back to school, the rainy season begins and we're getting ready for the holidays. This is the perfect time to begin cleaning and preparing your house for winter. After all, you're going to be inside a lot in the coming months.

Here are some tips on preparing your bedding, table linens and window treatments for the upcoming months:

Bedding:

If you have a down comforter, take it out of the duvet cover and hang it on an outside clothesline on a dry, windy day. This will air it out, fluff up the down and give it a nice sunshine bleaching. Never wash a down comforter in a washing machine. The down won't dry correctly in the dryer and the comforter will lose its shape.

For your duvet cover, comforters, pillow shams and dust ruffle, spot clean with mild soap and water, check for rips or tears and make any necessary repairs. You can even run the vacuum over the dust ruffle to pick up any extra pet hair and dust. And since the bed is stripped, now is an excellent time to flip your mattress and give it a good vacuuming. When you remake the bed, consider sewing a ribbon onto each of the four corners of your duvet and the inside corners of the cover. These can then be tied together to keep the duvet from shifting.

Linens:

With holiday dinners approaching, this is a good time to look over your table linens. Make sure you have enough properly-sized tablecloths to get you through the season. Replace any which are worn. Rather than getting rid of those with large stains, buy a washable coordinating fabric, and sew a decorative band onto the tablecloth where the stain was. If it's in the middle, make one large band. If the stain is on either end, make matching bands on either side.

Thoroughly wash your summer linens to ready them for storage. All linens should be stored with acid-free materials to prevent discoloration, including tissue paper and labels. Large linens are best stored on rolls to prevent fold creases from becoming permanent.

Window treatments:

The summer dirt and dust may have settled in the folds of your window treatments and now is a good time to clean it out. Some commercially bought treatments can be machine washed, but doing so will fade them and break down the fabric fibers. If they can be easily taken down, shake out the dust and spot clean with mild soap and water. Custom window treatments should never be washed and only need a good vacuuming. Spot clean if necessary, but make sure the fabric will not develop water marks. Few, if any dry cleaners will guarantee that your treatments will not shrink or become distorted due to the dry cleaning chemicals. If your treatments need a really good cleaning, consider bringing in a drapery cleaner who can clean on-site.

To increase the insulation in your windows and decrease sound and light, add a separate blackout lining behind your drapery. A removable blackout lining can be custom made for your treatments by a window treatment specialist. ✕