

Things to Do With 51 Common Household Items

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Many common household items have multiple uses. They can be re-used in different places, unusual ways, or even made into craft projects. Try some of the alternate uses for the following items. I've included a variety of ideas for both children and adults.

ADDRESS STICKERS - use as identification labels on eyeglass cases, lunch boxes, books, and school supplies.

ALUMINUM FOIL - make shiny placemats and wrapping paper; crumple up to scrub pots, grill, or chrome bumpers; cut through several layers of foil to sharpen scissors.

BABY FOOD JARS - use them to store small items such as nails, screws, etc.; or as take-along containers to fill with raisins, Cheerios, etc.

BABY WIPE BOXES - store small items; stack and use as building blocks.

BABY WIPES - use for wiping appliances and countertops, dusting shelves, polishing shoes, scrubbing sticky spots on the floor, getting smudges off walls, etc.

BERRY BASKETS - use next to sink for holding soaps and sponges; turn upside down to make cages for toy animals; place in drawers for storing small items; line with colored plastic wrap and fill with homemade cookies or candies.

BROWN PAPER BAGS - use to ripen fruit in; make into book covers and masks.

BUTTONS - make eyes for puppets and rag dolls; use as board game pieces and math manipulatives for counting and sorting games.

CARPET SCRAPS - use as doormats; attach around an upright board to make a cat's scratching post; place underneath noisy appliances or equipment to muffle the sounds.

CDs/DVDs - cut out a thin piece of cork or felt and glue it to one side of each disk to use as drink coasters; use as candle coasters to reflect light and collect dripping wax; hang from trees as outdoor ornaments; hang in gardens to scare birds away; use the shiny sides of the disks as reflectors for bicycles, mailboxes, driveway markers, fence posts, etc.

CLOTHESPINS - hold vine stems to trellises; attach labels to potted plants; make a quick child's bib by clipping a dishcloth to their shirt; use to hold coupons when shopping by clipping them onto the cart; use as a note holder; hold curtains back; hold song books open; keep bags of chips closed.

COAT HANGERS - straighten out wire hangers to use as barbeque skewers; or bend the wire into a circle shape and dip into a tub of soapy water for making giant bubbles.

COLANDERS - use old metal ones in the sandbox; colorful plastic ones are fun tub toys.

COTTON SWABS - use to clean jewelry; dust tiny crevices in VCRs, DVD players, keyboards, and other electronics; dab paint or glue into spots that are hard to reach; apply disinfectant or first aid ointment to cuts and scrapes.

DENTAL FLOSS - use as a substitute for heavy thread; string beads or re-string necklaces; hang mobiles or sun catchers.

EGG CARTONS - use to store Christmas ornaments, Easter eggs, or small rock samples; use as lightweight, crush-resistant packaging for small breakables; remove the top, number the holes, and make into a tossing or sorting game.

FABRIC SOFTENER SHEETS - rub on surfaces to reduce static cling and keep dust from settling; put in car to give a fresh scent; lay a long sheet across a clothes closet bar to eliminate musty smells; place in shoes overnight to get rid of odors; use to polish chrome faucets; put across air registers to act as filters and room fresheners; place between stored blankets or inside packed-away luggage.

LIQUID FABRIC SOFTENER - clean burned-on foods and baked-on grime from casserole dishes by soaking in liquid fabric softener for an hour, or until residue wipes easily away without scrubbing; remove hard water stains from glass by soaking in full-strength liquid fabric softener for ten minutes, then wipe with a damp cloth and rinse.

FILM CANISTERS - put one in the car to hold quarters for parking meters; use to hold coins, buttons, pins, etc.

HEFTY TRASH BAGS - cut slits in it for head and arms, and keep in the car as an emergency raincoat; cut a slit at the top and use as a dustcover for clothes.

HOSES - punch some holes in an old leaky garden hose to make a lawn/garden soaker.

ICE CUBE TRAY - molded plastic ones are good containers for small jewelry and trinkets; freeze pureed baby food and then store the frozen cubes in a plastic bag until needed; have fresh lemon juice all year long by freezing the juice in ice cube trays and storing in plastic bags.

KITTY LITTER - spread on bottom of rabbit, hamster or gerbil cages; absorb oil and transmission fluid leaks in garage or driveway; put a layer in the bottom of garbage pails; fill a nylon stocking foot with cat litter, tie it up, and place in stinky sneakers.

KLEENEX BOXES - stuff with plastic grocery bags to pull out as needed; use as stackable storage boxes for small items.

LAUNDRY BASKET - use for collecting and storing toys and/or stuffed animals.

MAGNETS - use for holding pins, needles, tweezers, nail files, etc. in sewing kit or bathroom; tack recipe cards or notes to refrigerator, metal doors, exhaust fan hoods.

MESH BAGS - hang in showers to hold soaps, shampoo, sponges, etc.; hang over bathtubs for drip-drying toys; use to carry collected rocks and shells; crumple up and make into pot scrubbers.

OVEN MITTS - use old ones as pruning gloves; use for gripping pineapple when cutting it; wear them when rummaging through the freezer, changing hot light bulbs, or ironing.

PAINT BRUSHES - use for dusting delicate knick-knacks, wicker baskets, rattan furniture, louvered doors, computer keyboards, ornate carvings, and silk plants.

PAPER CLIPS - hold pleats in place when ironing; replace zipper pulls; attach a pretty ribbon to a paper clip to make a bookmark.

PAPER TOWEL TUBES - store kids' drawings, diplomas, documents, and other papers inside tubes to keep from getting wrinkled (write what's in it on the outside); re-roll wrapping paper inside a cardboard tube once you've opened it.

PILLOWCASES - use to store and carry sleeping bags; use for putting delicate items in the wash; use king size ones as bassinet sheets; use for small children's sack races.

PLASTIC GROCERY BAGS - hang over doorknob of utility cabinet or broom closet to hold cans for recycling; use as garbage pail or wastebasket liners; use as shoe covers for walking in the mud; keep some in the car for trash or motion sickness bags; crumple up and use as padding around objects when packing boxes; use for carrying wet items.

PLASTIC LIDS - cut in half and use as scrapers; use as coasters, spoon rests, saucers under small potted plants, drip catchers under paint cans, mini Frisbees, etc.

PLASTIC WATER BOTTLES - refill with water and freeze as a substitute for ice packs in coolers; or wash and fill with about ¼ water and freeze beforehand so you will have built-in ice to keep your beverage cold on field trips and hikes; use empty bottles as toy bowling pins.

RUBBER BANDS - make into bracelets; stretch a large rubber band around the completed part of a book for a bookmark that won't fall out.

SALT - pour salt water on stubborn weeds to keep them from growing back.

SHEETS - use colorful designer sheets as picnic or party tablecloths; make into curtains; stitch two sheets together on three sides to make a blanket or comforter cover; use old sheets to cover plants in winter.

SOAP - use a bar of soap as a pin cushion; place an unwrapped bar of soap in a drawer or linen closet for a pleasant smell; tie leftover soap bits into a nylon stocking (or a wash cloth sewn together on three sides) for use in the bathtub; rub onto sticking drawers, windows, and zippers to make them slide more easily.

SOCKS - use over ladder ends to avoid marring walls; wear on hands for polishing brass and silver; use old cotton socks as dusting or cleaning cloths; wipe dust off clotheslines before hanging clothes; pack shoes in old socks when traveling; cut and make into wrist sweat bands or knee pads; make into sock puppets.

SPONGES - use to line soap dishes; for texturing paint; make into cookie cutter shapes for bath time play.

STRAWS - make into magic wands, or stems for homemade flowers.

T-SHIRTS - use as rags for dusting, polishing, or checking your oil.

TENNIS BALLS - tie a tennis ball in an old sock for a dog toy; sit in a chair and step on a tennis ball while rolling your foot around on it for a foot massage; put 3 or 4 tennis balls in the dryer with your down coat, sleeping bag, or comforter to help fluff the down.

TOOTHBRUSHES - use old toothbrushes to clean artificial flowers and plants, jewelry, combs, shower door tracks, window screens, mini blinds, bicycle chains, shoes, crevices between tiles, around faucets and telephones.

TOOTHPASTE - use to polish faucets and sinks; scrub crayon marks off walls; remove stubborn smells from hands; fill little holes in walls; rub on ink spots and stains; remove scratches on CDs and DVDs; hang posters with a dab of toothpaste in each corner instead of nails or thumbtacks.

TOOTHPICKS - make mini Popsicle sticks or skewers; dab glue or paint on small areas.

TOWELS - use colorful beach towels as seat covers or crib blankets; use old towels to wash and dry floors by letting the kids "skate" around with them; use as crumb catchers under high chairs.

TWIST TIES - hang Christmas ornaments; shorten long cords by wrapping up the extra length; color code keys; tie up plant stems.

VINYL TABLECLOTHS - use as waterproof mattress pads; cut to make shelf liners; cover grills and patio furniture.

WASH CLOTHS - use as napkins, bibs, cleaning and dusting cloths; moisten a washcloth with one teaspoon liquid softener and toss it into the dryer with your next load.