



# Housekeeping

by William D. Frye, Ph.D., CHE

## Ten steps to guest-room deep cleaning will maintain your hotel investment

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Deep cleaning is the process of taking a room out of a hotel's salable inventory and thoroughly cleaning it to more exacting standards than is normally performed during the daily housekeeping maintenance. Most guestrooms are deep cleaned between two and four times a year depending on the occupancy level of the hotel. Because higher occupancy results in more wear and tear on the furniture, fixtures, equipment and infrastructure of guestrooms, a hotel that experiences higher occupancy will need to deep clean its guestrooms on a more frequent basis than a lodging facility with lower overall occupancy.

### Preventative maintenance

In a sense, deep cleaning is really the combined process of repair and preventative maintenance. The deep cleaning process permits hotel personnel to spend longer (typically a total of 4-6 hours) than the usual 30 minutes inside a vacant guestroom in order to thoroughly clean all surfaces from top to bottom, repair or replace any worn or damaged items, and sanitize the guestroom to a much higher degree than is obtained through daily housekeeping maintenance. By doing this, the service life of the carpeting, wall coverings, draperies, furniture and fixtures will be extended significantly.

Consider it the equivalent of an oil change and a tune-up for an automobile. If you don't change the oil frequently and properly maintain the car through preventative maintenance, the vehicle is destined for a shorter life than if it were maintained at proper intervals. Hotel renovations and retrofits are extremely costly; therefore, it is the duty of every manager to extract the highest rate of return from the hotel's investment in its furnishings, fixtures and equipment in guestrooms. A higher rate of return results in higher profitability to the hotel and a better return on the hotel owners' investment.

### Guest's expect clean accommodations

Equally significant, is the issue of hygiene. Today's hotel guests demand guestrooms that are sanitary, well-maintained, and free of obvious defects. Multiple studies have discovered that perceived cleanliness is the number one factor for men and the number two factor for women in determining which hotel they will stay at. Recent exposés on guestroom cleanliness by newspapers, television magazines, and investigative journalists as well as lawsuits pertaining to bedbug injuries have brought the cleanliness issue to the forefront of travelers' minds. And, the multitude of online travel blogs makes it easier for guests to share their dissatisfaction with others who may read their highly critical and sometime disparaging postings.



## Frequency

Except during the highest occupancy periods, most hotels will deep clean 0.5% - 1.5% of their guestroom inventory on a daily basis. This means a 300-room hotel will deep clean an average of 2-3 guestrooms daily. In order to avoid disturbing guests, deep cleaning is normally scheduled to be performed on weekdays between the hours of 9am – 5pm.

Generally, it is advisable to clean a small section of guestrooms in the same day as opposed to three or four rooms scattered throughout the hotel. This will minimize the need to move deep cleaning equipment and tools long distances and will concentrate any noise generated to a single guest floor or area of the property. Similarly, furniture and mattresses may be moved from one guestroom into an adjacent guestroom in order to shampoo carpets and perform wallpaper and paint touchups.

## Ten deep cleaning tasks

Deep cleaning usually entails completing ten task areas. The actual number of tasks may vary depending upon your brand's standards or your property's needs.

The first issue that must be determined is whether the guestroom carpet will be shampooed or merely spot treated. If the entire carpet will be shampooed, this must be the last task performed and it will necessitate removing all the furniture from the guestroom. The furniture should only be returned to the guestroom once the carpet dries thoroughly. Otherwise, begin with Task 1.

### Task 1. High dusting.

Use a dust wand with long handle to reach all the high areas of the guestroom. A step ladder will also help to reach high corners and intricate areas. Make sure to reposition the ladder frequently rather than overreaching. Don't forget to dust smoke detectors and sprinklers, but use caution so as not to break the heat vial on the sprinkler heads that will engage the sprinkler system. Dust light diffusers, air vent grates, the top of entertainment hutches or armoires and above door jams. If necessary, clean these areas with a damp rag. It may also be necessary to temporarily remove vent grates to thoroughly clean the dust buildup from them.

### Task 2. Clean lights.

Remove glass or plastic globes from wall-mounted sconces and ceiling-mounted lights. Wipe dust, dead insects, and other contaminants from the globes with a rag and glass cleaner. Remove shades from floor and table lamps. Vacuum fabric shades with a crevice tool. Wipe clean plastic shades with a damp rag. Use a dry rag or dust wand to dust the light bulbs. Never spray cleaner directly on a light bulb, shade or lamp that is plugged into an electrical outlet. Don't forget to clean the lights in the bathroom. This may require lifting the plastic light diffuser from the fixture.

### Task 3. Clean window areas.

Always use a stepladder to remove draperies and sheers from their curtain rods or tracks. Dry-clean fabric draperies; wipe clean vinyl draperies with an all-purpose cleaner and clean rag. Launder window sheers in a mild detergent. Inspect drapery hook and tracks for damage or dirt. Clean or repair as necessary. Using glass cleaner, wash the inside of the guestroom windows; clean the window frame and track. Ensure window locking mechanism engages properly. Vacuum the PTAC unit grates. While this is being done, Engineering personnel should replace or clean the PTAC filter and run a diagnostic check on the unit. Hang replacement or dry-cleaned draperies and laundered sheers.



### Task 4. Service bed(s).

Strip the bed of its duvet cover or bedspread, all linens and blankets, and mattress pad. Inspect the top and all ends of the mattress for rips, stains, protruding springs, and sagging. Stand the mattress on its side against the wall. Remove dust ruffles from box spring, if applicable. Inspect the box spring in a similar manner. Stand it on end against the mattress. Vacuum the carpet under the bed. Inspect the bed frame or platform for sturdiness. Wipe down the bedrails or platform. Remove the headboard from the wall and inspect both sides for contamination. Clean as needed. Ensure that it is securely put back in place. Rotate and replace the box spring onto the bed frame and reinstall dust ruffles. Following manufacturer's recommendations, rotate and/or flip the mattress. Vacuum the cording of the mattress with a crevice tool. Inspect pillows for stains and rips, replace if needed. Remake bed using laundered mattress pad, linens, blankets, and duvet cover/bedspread.

### Task 5. Wash walls, baseboards and doors.

Use all-purpose cleaner. Wear goggles and protective gloves. Spray all-purpose cleaner on sponge; do not spray directly on surfaces. Do not use excessive moisture. Work from the bottom up to avoid streaks. Dry with a clean rag. Don't forget to clean doorknobs, pictures, luggage racks, and closet racks. To clean light switch and electrical outlet covers unscrew them from the wall to avoid risk of electrical shock.

Replace after cleaning. Don't forget to check the security of mirrors and pictures that are mounted on the walls. Check the door's viewfinder to make sure it is clean and operational. Ensure that the fire escape route map is properly posted on the backside of the guest door as well as the State's Innkeeper Statutes/Liability Notice.

#### **Task 6. Clean furniture.**

Vacuum furniture with upholstery tool. Be sure to turn cushions if they are upholstered on both sides. Use the vacuum crevice tool in nooks to pick up loose debris in recessed areas. Inspect upholstery for stains and rips. Repair as needed. Use spot cleaner on upholstery as needed. Ideally, shampoo/extract upholstery if possible. Use oil-base cleaner or furniture polish on wood furniture. Use all-purpose cleaner on laminated furniture. Don't forget to clean the backs of furniture. Clean the television remote control and telephone handsets with disinfectant; wipe other parts clean with all-purpose cleaner. Use all-purpose cleaner to clean lamp bases. Clean the inside of credenza and nightstand drawers. Check drawer slides for smooth operation. Examine Bible and telephone directories for staining and ripped or missing pages. Replace as needed.

#### **Task 7. Repair surfaces, furnishings, and equipment.**

This is a job performed by Engineering or maintenance personnel. Concurrently, while the room is being deep cleaned by housekeeping personnel, an engineer will spot repair any guestroom items such as wall coverings, painted surfaces, scratched or stained wooden furniture, etc. Items that cannot be repaired on-site will be removed from the guestroom and taken to the Engineering shop for repair. It is important to note that after deep cleaning has concluded, a guestroom should not be placed back into salable inventory until all the guestroom items have been repaired or replaced.

#### **Task 8. Replace shower curtain.**

Remove bathroom shower curtain by standing on a stepladder or stepstool if you can't reach it. Do not stand on the toilet or edge of the bathtub. Remove the curtain hooks from the rod. Clean the curtain hooks by soaking them in a pail of white vinegar or all-purpose cleaner to eliminate built up soap scum. Replace broken shower curtain hooks. Inspect curtain rod for rust and clean with all-purpose cleaner. Launder or replace shower curtain and re-hang.

#### **Task 9. Scrub floor tile and grout.**

Again, employees should always wear goggles and protective gloves. Do not use steel wool, abrasives, or harsh chemicals on tile or grout. Instead, use a nylon bristle brush and general cleaner to clean floor tiles. Rinse with fresh water and dry with clean rags. Use a nylon bristle brush that is a little larger than a toothbrush and disinfectant to clean around the edge of the sink and toilet fixtures. Wipe dry.

#### **Task 10. Carpets.**

Vacuum carpets thoroughly including cleaning edges with a crevice tool. Move furniture out of the way to do this. Work clockwise around the room. Shampoo/extract carpet and dry thoroughly. If the carpet will not be shampooed, use spot treatment cleaner to remove stains. Blot with clean white rags. Allow to dry.

#### **Some final words**

As conveyed in this article, the purpose of deep cleaning is to prolong the life of the hotel's investment in its guestrooms. It is a labor intensive process that works best when two housekeeping employees work together simultaneously. Always use two employees when moving furniture and rotating mattresses. Train employees in proper lifting techniques and require that those who will lift heavy items wear back brace supports that will force them to bend at the knees and not at the waist. Finally, an experienced housekeeping manager will plan out their hotel's deep cleaning schedule well in advance in consultation with the Front Office Manager, Director of Sales and Chief Engineer to avoid these preventative maintenance efforts from occurring when the hotel will need every guestroom or might be committed to other manpower-intensive endeavors. ✧

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