



14 DUST, YES, DUST

OKAY, MAYBE not your entire home, but at least the places where dust most visibly settles—side tables, nightstands, the tops of picture frames, and any other horizontal surface, no matter how slight. This undertaking is not as arduous as it sounds. Here's what you do: Get a bunch of microfiber dusting cloths—the kind with a thick nap. The advantage of microfiber cloths over regular rags is that they not only pick up dust but trap it as well, and they work without the need for cleansers or water. Each cloth holds a shocking amount of dust—which means you can use the same cloth for a week or two without having to clean it. Now the crucial next step: Hide these cloths within arm's reach of any surface that may need to be cleaned. For example, keep them inside the drawer of a dresser or a desk, or tuck a cloth under a sofa cushion for dusting coffee and side tables. By making dusting a no-brainer, it becomes less a chore and more an afterthought. Then, once every week or two, just wash the cloths with the laundry. Your girlfriend will be impressed. Everyone will breathe easier.



12 DECORATE WITH LIFE

FLOWERS AND PLANTS are living beings, and so they contribute something to a space that inanimate objects, no matter how inspired, cannot. Loose, monochromatic flower arrangements are the easiest to pull off. A handful of mini calla lilies (shown on the opening page), peonies, or tulips casually placed in a slender vase will do. (Wide vases require a shocking number of stems to fill; avoid them.) With plants, just be sure to get those that are within your ability to keep alive and healthy. If you have a history of killing plants, consider keeping them in Eva Solo's self-watering pots, which have a wick system that draws water from a glass vase underneath (www.evasolo.com). They'll buy you an extra week between waterings.

13 ELIMINATE THE SERVING DISH

COOKING IS MORE fun when there's less to clean. For informal occasions, try serving directly from a beautiful cooking vessel. Some solid options: enameled cast-iron cookware like the kind from Le Creuset (www.lecreuset.com), which pops with color; iittala's Tools series (www.iittala.com), which offers a refined, machined look; and our favorite, Alessi's Pasta Pot (www.alessi.com). Although it was designed specifically for preparing pasta using an age-old technique espoused by Alain Ducasse, its tri-ply construction makes it suitable for cooking other foods as well. Its matching trivet and gleaming finish are nice touches, but its most brilliant design flourish is its integrated serving spoon, which fits neatly into the handle of the pot.

15 RETHINK YOUR SOUND SYSTEM

CONSUMER ELECTRONICS often confound as much as they simplify, but the Sonos Digital Music System is in a class by itself (www.sonos.com). Paired with a subscription to the Rhapsody music service, it's one of the few products that will completely untether your music collection from your personal computer. Ripping your entire CD collection to MP3s and continually keeping your MP3 player synced will seem quaint once you use Sonos to stream any of the 5 million songs available through Rhapsody (unlimited streaming costs \$13 per month). A Sonos system may not be cheap, but it will eliminate an ungodly number of wires from your life—a design coup in itself.

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