

Spring Cleaning Science

Eco-friendly house cleaners vs. commercial cleaners: Which is more effective? With a little research and experimentation, your child can turn spring cleaning into an educational science experiment. The structure of this activity helps him gain insight into some important parts of the scientific method: guessing, observing, and reporting results. As a bonus, he'll familiarize himself with the advantages and dangers of different types of cleaning products—a useful lesson for his chores!

What You Need:

- Distilled white vinegar
- Water
- 1 commercial counter top cleaner
- 1 commercial floor cleaner
- Clean rags
- A mop
- 2 buckets
- Pencil
- Paper
- Rubber gloves



What You Do:

1. Before he begins, make sure the cleaners he is using are not harmful to the surface they are being used on. For example, vinegar is too harsh to use on a marble surface. If you are working on surfaces that don't agree with white distilled vinegar, try using an eco-friendly household cleaner such as Office Depot Green All-Purpose Cleaner or Simply Green Naturals Multi-Surface Care.
2. Ask him to make a hypothesis (prediction) about what he thinks will happen with each cleaner, and what the results of the experiment will be.
3. Have him put on his rubber gloves before doing anything with the chemicals.
4. To clean the floor, help him mix 1 cup of white distilled vinegar with 1 gallon of water and put it in one bucket.
5. Invite him to prepare the commercial floor cleaner according to the directions on the bottle, and put it in the other bucket. Make sure to keep the cleaners separate. It is important to never mix chemicals.
6. Have him use the mop to wipe down part of the floor with the vinegar solution. He should rinse the mop, and clean a separate area with the commercial cleaner.
7. Ask him to compare and record the similarities and differences between the two cleaners and their results.
8. Repeat the experiment, but clean counter tops this time. Have him use a clean rag dampened in distilled white vinegar to clean part of the counter top and a commercial counter top cleaner to clean a separate part. He should record the results, as above.
9. After he's finished, have him write the conclusion. It's important to remember that determining the "better" cleaner might involve more than just how it cleans. For example, he should think about the fumes coming from the product, as well as the dangers on the warning label.