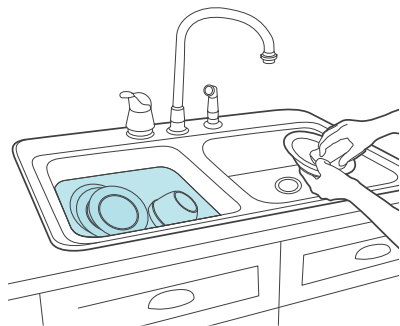


Hand Washing Dishes

Washing dishes is a familiar daily task, and probably the first bit of housekeeping we learned to do. It's also one of the easiest to make more environmentally friendly and more efficient. Using a nontoxic, biodegradable dishwashing liquid, such as those from Ecover or Naturally Yours, is a simple first step. Avoid products labeled “detergent”; this indicates they are chemically derived. Making your own dish soap is another option — see Recipes, page 138. Pick up a natural sponge, like a cellulose sponge, a sea sponge, or a loofah, and you've detoxified your entire dishwashing process in two steps.

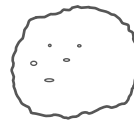


Try to wash dishes as soon as possible after meals. If you absolutely can't get to them right away, soak hard-to-clean items in hot water with a little baking soda. You can also sprinkle baking soda on pots

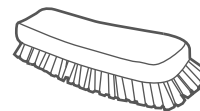
or pans with burnt-on food and let them sit while you do the other items. But don't use baking soda on aluminum cookware — it can discolor the metal.

It's best to have two basins, one for washing and one for rinsing. If your sink has only one, use a dishpan for the rinse. Fill the first basin with hot soapy water, and the second (or dishpan) with very hot clean water. You only need about two tablespoons of dishwashing liquid. One to three tablespoons of distilled white vinegar in the rinsewater can help prevent spots if your home has

Sponge Options



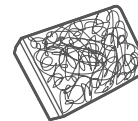
Sea



Wood Brush



Cut Up Loofah



Cellulose

There are biodegradable alternatives to standard plastic sponges. The best choices are sea sponges (found at most natural food stores) and biodegradable cellulose sponges. A large, unused bath loofah cut into smaller pieces makes a good scouring pad; you can also use a wood scrub brush with stiff, natural bristles. To disinfect sponges and scrub brushes, wash them in soapy water, then place them in boiling water for three to five minutes.

hard water; a tablespoon also helps cut any grease in the rinsewater.



Whichever dish-cleaning product you use, always store it out of reach of kids. Dishwashing liquid is a leading cause of accidental poisoning in small children.

Put the silverware in the bottom of the soapy water. Scrape any remaining food off the dishes into the trash or your compost bin and put the dishes on top of the silverware. Use a rag to wipe out greasy pots and pans and put them on the counter.

Wash glassware first, rinsing in the hot water, then china, and then silverware. Replace rinsewater when it cools or gets dirty. Pots and pans are next. Use a scouring pad or scrub brush and more dishwashing liquid if needed. It's best to let everything air-dry, with the exception of some glassware and crystal. If you can't wait, use a soft linen dish towel and dry items in the same order you washed them.

Dish racks get dirty, too — it's good to get in the habit of washing yours occasionally, just before or just after doing the dishes. Wash as you would a regular dish and make sure to let it dry thoroughly.