

Around the House

Independent living tips to assist with housecleaning and storage

Choosing the right tool for the job and adapting the tools you have can make working in and taking care of your home a lot easier. This brochure offers some suggestions on how to do just that. As a consumer, you have the right to try things out in the store. Ask for a demonstration, and thoroughly try out the item yourself.

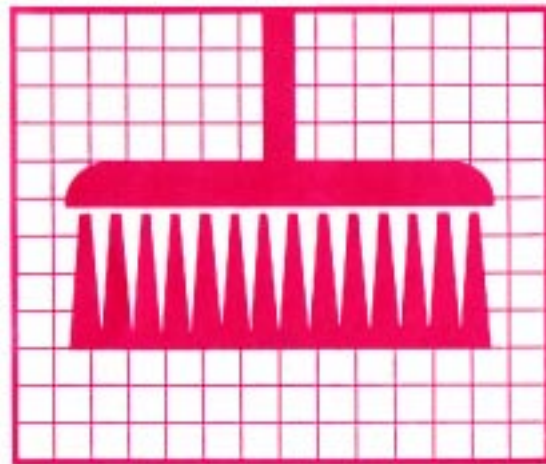
Cleaning

■ **FLOORS:** When purchasing a vacuum cleaner, think carefully about your upper body strength and don't buy a model that will be too heavy for you. As a rule, canister types are lighter than uprights; attachments to clean upholstery, drapes, blinds and corners also make them more versatile. On the other hand uprights help with balance and support. A rotating brush on the power head, though more expensive, gets down into a carpet and picks up ground-in dirt. A drawback is that the heads move independently and can get away from you.

Electric brooms may be as useful as full-size vacuum cleaners. They are lighter, less expensive, can be adapted for carpets or bare floors, and do not require vacuum cleaner bags. Practice emptying the dust compartment to make sure it is not more difficult than replacing a bag.

When buying a broom, look for one with a slant edge and feathered bristles. Wide push-brooms can provide support while sweeping. Long-handled dustpans can be bought at some stores, or insert a broom handle in the hollow handle of a regular dust pan and then angle the pan so that it lies flat to the floor. You can also purchase attachable extra handles to give better leverage and reduce bending over when using long-handled tools.

Dust mops handily clean under beds and furniture and down steps. They also offer some help with balance and support. If you use a wheelchair, the handles of mops or brooms may be too long. Cut them off; you can then attach a bicycle-grip or D-grip handle to give yourself a better grip.



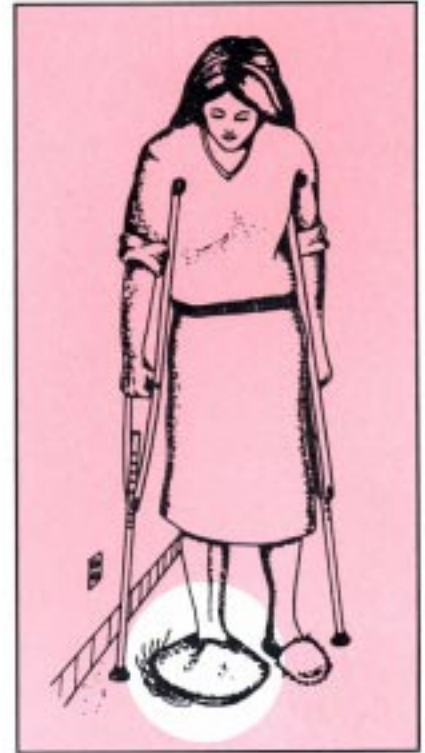


■ **DUSTING:** Dust frequently ; dust combines with airborne cooking grease to make a sticky film that requires scrubbing to remove. A reaching aid holding a soft cloth can reach awkward surfaces. A dusting mitt can be modified to fit over a foot, allowing you to dust along mop boards and under cabinet edges without bending over.

To save time and energy, make or buy an apron with plenty of large pockets to carry cleaning supplies, or attach a pocketed pouch to your walker or wheelchair. A small cart on casters

can also be used to move cleaning supplies from place to place; sturdier models will offer some support when walking.

■ **WINDOWS:** A lightweight, car-sized squeegee can be mounted on a broom handle. Use the sponge side with a warm water/vinegar solution to scrub windows and mirrors; then wipe clean and dry with the rubber blade.



Storage

Organization is the key to efficient, accessible storage. Most of the products referred to in this section are widely available at hardware and department stores. Be sure to take along accurate measurements and comparison shop to find the product that solves a storage problem the most effectively for the least money.

Accessible storage defined:

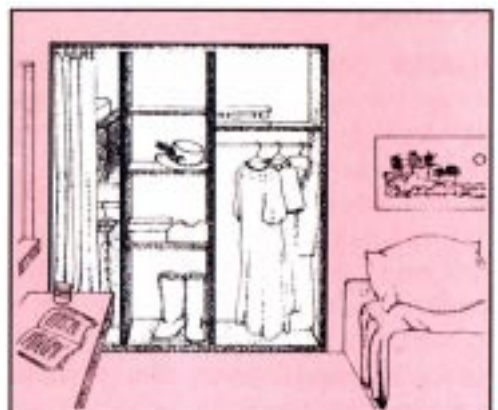
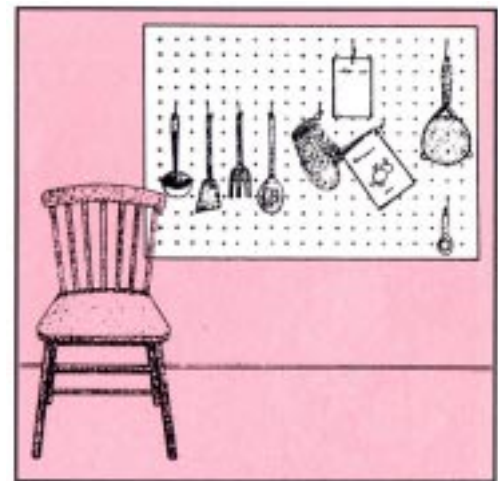
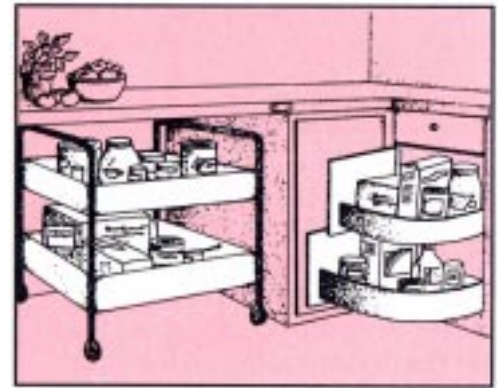
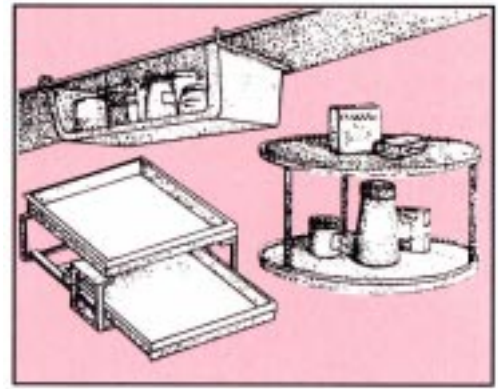
- ✓ From waist height to just above eye level is most accessible;
- ✓ "Within reach" means 6" less than your arm's length, seated or standing; or within reach of your reaching aid;
- ✓ Store heavy objects within easy reach so you can handle them safely;
- ✓ Store items close to when they will be used, to save motion;
- ✓ Some storage can be made movable for easier use, such as roll-out shelves, hanging organizers on cupboard or closet doors, or storage carts on casters.

■ **KITCHENS:** Make the most of already accessible space, as most kitchens have a lot of awkward or unusable space. Stacking shelves or bins come in plastic or metal in many sizes, designs, and prices. Roll-out shelves can make the back of a shelf as accessible as the front. Under-shelf containers utilize wasted space; a lazy susan gives ready access to the back of a shelf. A blank wall becomes storage with a sheet of peg board and wire hooks.

- ✓ Pull-out shelving allows access from both sides of an island counter.
- ✓ Corner cupboards can be better used by installing revolving or swinging shelves.

■ **BATHROOMS:** Vertical towel bars, with rings to hang towels through, take up little space and are easily reached. Hanging racks, available in many bed and bath shops, can be very useful in the tub and shower. They can be attached to a wall, the side of the tub, or the shower fixture, and can hold shampoo, soap, brushes, etc. If you take baths instead of showers, a shelf across the tub can hold bathing items.

■ **CLOSETS:** Stacking bins can create accessible storage at waist height on the floor of a closet; shelving units attached to the door can store cleaning, laundry, or kitchen supplies within easy reach. Full closet organizer “systems” are also available for \$50 and up; look for a sturdy modular unit that allows you to set shelves at heights that you can reach easily. Lower the clothes bar if you use a wheelchair. Bi-fold doors will give easier access to the entire closet.



Further Information

For more information on the adaptations discussed here, or for additional suggestions, please contact:

Iowa COMPASS
 Center for Disabilities and Development
 100 Hawkins Drive S295
 Iowa City, Iowa 52242-1011

800-779-2001 (voice)
877-686-0032 (TTY)

These brochures were developed by the Iowa Program for Assistive Technology. You can view these brochures online at www.uiowa.edu/infotech/publications. They are offered in both text and PDF formats to download extra copies.

Text and illustrations are adapted, with permission, from an independent Living brochure series produced by the Health and Welfare Department of Canada.