

A Cheapskate's Castle



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The Cheapskates Club

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At a meeting one day, someone asked me how I knew that adding bicarb to washing powder would improve its performance. And I had to confess that I didn't know how I knew, I just did! Over the years I've picked up hints, tips and ideas from my mother and her friends, relatives, neighbours, my own friends - even complete strangers. I've scribbled notes from TV and radio segments, pulled bits out of newspapers, magazines and newsletters. And stashed them all in folders. Some I've even discovered for myself.

So, to everyone, known and unknown, who has ever shared with me a way to save money, time or energy, I dedicate A Cheapskate's Castle. Because without you being willing to share, I would never have used your ideas to know that they work. And if I'd never tried them, I wouldn't be able to share them here.

To my six magic Marketing Mayhem millionaires, thank you for the encouragement to go ahead and fulfil a dream.

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Welcome to A Cheapskate's Castle, where every room saves you money, time and energy. They say 'a man's home is his castle'. What they don't say is just how much it costs to live in that castle!

Imagine you are visiting us for the first time –you don't know your way around, so we will guide through our castle. We'll start with the kitchen, laundry and bathroom because these are the most important rooms in the castle. They are also the rooms where it is easiest to save money, time and energy.

As you wander through A Cheapskate's Castle, you'll come across hints, tips and ideas that you can easily use in your own home. In fact, you'll be surprised at just how much money, time and energy you can save in your castle.

Keep an eye out for the \$ symbol - these ideas are real money savers.

There are ways to save money and time in the kitchen, energy in the laundry and time in the bathroom. You'll find recipes for cheap cleaning products and even cheaper beauty products.

And at the very back you will find a lot of very useful information. Our aim is to show you how to cut the cost of everyday living, save money, time and energy and still have fun!

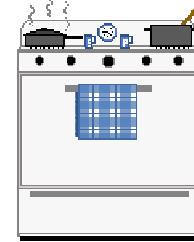
Happy Cheapskating,

Cath

Saving in the Kitchen

We'll start our tour in the kitchen because the kitchen is the heart of any castle.

It's where we spend most of our time when we are at home, eating and socializing. It's also the easiest room in the castle to save money, time and energy in. Finding ways to save money, time and energy in the kitchen should be simple.



Often it's the simple and most obvious things that we overlook. Here in the kitchen at Cheapskate Castle, you'll find simple hints and ideas, and you can be sure that they will all save you money, time and energy.

Kitchen Basics

There are a few items that are essential in every kitchen, and some that are essential in a Cheapskate's kitchen.

\$ Fridge

It doesn't have to be new. We bought a second-hand fridge for \$50 fourteen years ago, thinking that if we had two years use from it we had a bonus. A good clean and it came up sparkling. And we are still using it, fourteen years and three children later.

\$ Freezer

No Cheapskate kitchen would be complete without a freezer. Again, it doesn't have to be new. Upright is a better choice – they are easier to get into and take up less space. If you choose a model with doors on the shelves and fronts on the drawers it will be a more cost effective appliance to run. The size is up to you – I have two and they are both always full.

Dishwasher

I know it's not an essential, but it sure makes life easy! And a dishwasher can save you water, electricity, gas and heaps of time so in this Cheapskate's castle, a dishwasher is an "essential".

Cooking Utensils

Good quality saucepans with tight fitting lids. A set of quality pots and pans may cost a lot initially but look after them and they will last you for a lifetime.

You'll save a fortune if you can bake your own birthday and Christmas cakes. And to do this you need cake tins of various sizes. Get these from garage sales or the op shops for just a few cents each.

Food Processor

Used almost every day in the kitchen at Cheapskate Castle. They make preparing meals so much easier. And preparing food for the freezer and bulk cooking is a breeze with a food processor.

\$ Pressure Cooker

A great time saver! You can have a complete meal on the table in less than 30 minutes, use them to steam puddings and even to bottle fruit and vegetables.

Storage containers

These can be plastic, glass, pottery – whatever you like. They can all be bought second-hand very, very cheaply. If you don't like the thought of second-hand containers, ask for new ones for your birthday, Christmas, anniversary, Easter, Mother's Day – whenever you expect a gift.

Kitchen Hints & Tips



Prevent water from cooling as it travels to your plumbing by wrapping hot water pipes with insulating material. This is especially effective if you live in cooler climates, where winters are severe (by Australian standards, anyway!).



Always bring liquids to the boil in a covered pan. You'll save time, energy and money with this one. And if it's water you're boiling, you'll lose less to evaporation via steam.



When you are boiling eggs, this principle also applies. Bring the eggs to the boil in a covered saucepan, and then turn them off. Leave them for a few minutes if you want them soft boiled, or let them sit for about 25 – 30 minutes for hard boiled eggs.



Use the water the eggs have been boiled in to water your indoor plants. They love it and will thrive with a drink of this water every week. And you won't be wasting water, either.



Use saucepans made of glass or ceramic rather than metal to reduce cooking temperatures.

\$ Turn your oven off about 15 minutes before the roast is done. There will be enough residual heat left to finish the cooking process, saving you energy costs.

\$ Cook with a timer. Don't waste precious energy by cooking something for longer than you need to. And you won't have as many disasters with burnt food, either.

\$ If you love Tupperware and insist on having it in your pantry, look for it at garage and yard sales. You can pick up some real bargains, with a lot of items being almost brand new. Give them a quick clean with a wash in warm, soapy water and dry them with a soft tea towel. For any stains or sticky spots, make a paste of bicarbonate soda and a few drops of water and rub over the mark. Leave it for a few minutes and then wash it in warm, clean water. You'll have plenty of Tupperware for food storage at a fraction of the cost of new!



Take-away containers make great fridge containers. Use them to store leftovers, the contents of opened cans and small meals. Wash and dry them between uses and they last quite a while.



Use take-away containers as lunch boxes. When you are preparing dinner, make an extra portion and store it in a take-away container. It can then go into the fridge for the next day, or into the freezer for future use. Label and date it with a marking pen.

\$ If you can, buy in bulk. For example, if you bake a lot, buying a 20kg bag of flour is practical –you know you'll use it within a reasonable period of time.



Set up an old fashioned pantry for your bulk items. This doesn't necessarily have to be in the kitchen. It can be in the laundry, a bedroom, the linen cupboard or even the garage.



Store food correctly. Use the appropriate bins and drawers in your fridge for meats, cheeses, vegetable and fruits. Correct storage will ensure you get to use them before they go off!

\$ Don't throw out sour milk. Use it to make soft cheese. The bacteria that sours milk is the same bacteria you need to make soft cheese with your sour milk. If it is only a small amount soured, add some fresh milk to make up to a litre. Leave it covered on the kitchen bench to set – usually only a few hours, not as long during warm weather. Line a colander with a piece of clean sheeting or cheesecloth and pile in the curdled milk. Gather the edges and tie them together, making a bundle and leaving a length to act as a handle. Use a wooden spoon or similar to hang your cheesecloth over the sink and leave overnight. Or hang it over a bowl in the fridge until it stops dripping. Open the bundle and scrape the cheese into a bowl.

Flavour it to taste with one of these ideas:

Mix in chopped, fresh or dried herbs and a pinch of pepper, chilli, garlic salt, and celery salt and/or dried onions to taste.

Add chopped dried apricots, apples, mixed peel and sultanas with a tablespoon of liqueur, rum or brandy, a sprinkle of nutmeg and honey to taste. Delicious!

\$ Make your own cleaning products using every day, common and inexpensive ingredients. You'll save money, your castle will be clean and you won't be adding chemicals to your living environment.



Hold a scouring pad underneath a sponge when scrubbing. This will give you a better grip and protect your hands.



Make a hard- to-clean blender or food processor sparkle without taking it apart: fill it halfway with soapy water, cover and turn on for 10 seconds. Pour out dirty water and repeat, then let dry.



Always forgetting stuff when you leave the house? Hang a basket near the front door to hold keys, outgoing mail or library books that need to be returned. You'll never forget again.

Saving in the Laundry

An important feature in most Australian backyard is the Hills Hoist. These days this icon of Australian life comes in many different guises – fold – a -lines, clothes hoists, big, small and in between. They have been used to dry the washing, as a whirly (every kid has been around the clothesline at least once), even as barbecue shade.

💰 One of the best and easiest ways to saving money in the laundry is to use your clothesline. The heat from the sun and strength of the wind are free and together they combine to be the most efficient clothes dryers in the world.



But before you hang your washing on the line, you have to actually wash it. Always use cold water – you'll save on heating costs and your clothes won't fade as quickly.



Only ever use the washing machine if you can be sure of a full load.



Keep your water level at high. Clothes need water as well as detergent to come out of the machine clean.



Don't overload your washing machine – your clothes won't clean as efficiently and you are adding years of wear and tear to the life of your washing machine.



One of the best tips I've ever come across is really simple, very cheap and anyone can do it. Add a packet of bicarbonate soda to your washing powder. I store my washing powder in an old ice-cream bucket that has a lid. I simply pour in half a packet of detergent and the bicarb and then the rest of the detergent. Give it a mix - up and it's ready to go. Add about 1/3 cup of this detergent mix to your load of washing and wait for the results. Your wash will be cleaner than ever, whites and colours will be clear and crisp, stains will come out and as a bonus, and your washing machine will be really clean too!



To get stains out of coloured polyester clothes, pre-soak in a quarter cup of automatic dishwashing detergent in a bucket of hot water for a few hours. Then wash as usual.



Hang drip dry garments on clothes hangers, peg the hook to the clothesline and when they are dry, just put them in the cupboard.



If actually getting the dirty clothes into the laundry is a problem in your castle, try giving everyone a laundry hamper and a washing day. If their hamper is empty, don't wash on that day. Trust me, they'll only miss one or two wash days – most of us don't own enough clothes to go longer than ten days or so without running out.



Never leave the washer or dryer running when you are not home. A machine leak or short circuit can cause damage or even worse, start a fire.



Always wash your bathmats and throw rugs in cool water as hot water causes the rubber backing to perish and peel off. Line dry instead of in the dryer. If you think it needs fluffing after it's dry, put it in the dryer on 'cold' for five minutes.



Use cheap, common shampoo on dirty cuffs and collars. Works like a charm and at 99 cents a litre, is very cheap and lasts forever (almost!).



Make the shampoo go even further by pouring a small amount into a plastic cup and using a paintbrush to paint it onto the stain. This avoids waste and you get the shampoo exactly where you want it.



If the sock fairy lives in your washing machine, keep a packet of safety pins in the laundry. As you sort the socks, pin them in pairs. Saves heaps of time when it comes to sorting the washing.



Go one step further and put a packet of safety pins on everyone's dressing table. Now they are responsible for pinning the socks before they go into the wash. Simply give them back the pinned socks when they are dry. They can then unpin them when they are going to be worn, and pinned together again before going into the laundry basket. And the cycle begins again!

💰 Instead of using expensive fabric softeners, pour a quarter cup of white vinegar into the final rinse cycle. This will help to eliminate static cling, remove wrinkles, clean the inside of the washing machine and drains and will give your clothes a clean, fresh smell by removing all traces of soap from the fabric.



If you wear pantyhose, make them last longer. When they are new, take them out of the package, thoroughly wet them and put them in the freezer in a plastic bag for 24 hours before wearing them. Apparently you will save money as they will last longer.

I'm not sure of the science behind this, so did a little investigating and couldn't come up with any kind of plausible explanation. I did come across this explanation:

"When you get something real cold, the molecules stop moving, then you bring it back to room temp and as the molecules warm up they rearrange and release much of the internal stress between them. This makes the material very uniform on a molecular level. Thus, internal stress is reduced as things warm back up. This reduces the weak spots in the nylon material and allows the panty hose to stand more abuse prior to tearing or 'running'." Democraticunderground.com

\$ If you use a clothes dryer, always clean the lint filter after every load. And don't forget the filter in the door of some older dryers. This is hard to clean, but a quick go over with the vacuum every couple of weeks will keep it clean.



Place two layers of aluminium foil between your ironing board cover and pad. The foil reflects the heat and makes ironing quicker.



Here's a little trick to make ironing easier: save those candle ends in an old sock and every so often, wipe the sole of your iron with it when you are ironing. The wax makes the iron glide more smoothly and helps to cut your ironing time.



White vinegar will remove permanent creases when re-hemming pants or skirts. Simply dampen with vinegar and press with a warm iron. Repeat if necessary.



Don't waste money on fabric sprays if you must iron. Simply buy a spray bottle from the \$2 shop and fill with warm water. Spray your basket of ironing two or three hours before ironing to give the washing time to absorb the moisture. They iron much better this way.



Cut your ironing time by hanging your washing carefully. It may take you a few minutes longer, but you won't be standing at the ironing board, slaving over a hot iron for hours on end.



A cloth dipped in two percent peroxide and used as a pressing cloth will remove most scorch marks that are the result of those annoying ironing "accidents".



Iron dark cottons, rayons and woollens on the back of the fabric to avoid shine marks from the iron. Alternatively, use a pressing cloth.

Bleaching Basics

For White Fabrics:

Mix one tablespoon chlorine bleach with 2.5 litres water, soak for 15 minutes.

For Coloured Fabrics, Silk and Wool:

Mix two tablespoons hydrogen peroxide in 4.5 litres water, soak 30 minutes.

Wear rubber gloves when hand washing with bleach.

Read fabric and bleach labels.

Thoroughly rinse out bleach.

Keep bleach away from children.

Don't use more than the amount of bleach recommended on the label.

Saving in the Bathroom

The bathroom can be one of the most expensive rooms in the castle. You are literally pouring money down the drain if you are not vigilant in your habits. But don't be put off – it is the third easiest room to save money in and there are lots and lots of ways to save money in the bathroom, without changing your habits.

\$ When you brush your teeth, turn the tap off. Have a tumbler handy to hold some water for rinsing your mouth and toothbrush.



Always put toothpaste on across the brush, not down the length of the bristles the way they do it in the ads. Your toothpaste will last at least twice as long by doing this, and your teeth will still be clean and healthy.

\$ If you really want to save money, give up toothpaste altogether. Use a toothbrush dipped in bicarb soda. It takes a bit of getting used to, but your teeth and mouth will be really, really clean.



Take your soap out of the wrapper when you get it home, and leave it in a basket until you are ready to use it. Exposure to the air hardens the cake of soap, extending its life. By keeping it wrapped, you are keeping the moisture content high, causing it to dissolve quickly when it comes into contact with water.



To save on shampoo, really wet your hair. Make sure it is soaking, right through. Then you only need to use enough to cover a ten cent piece, even for long hair. Wash and rinse thoroughly and shampoo again if you feel your hair needs it.



Lather your hair twice only if it's very oily or very dirty.



If you ever need a dry shampoo (camping in the outback perhaps?), try bran, rolled oats, baby powder or cornflour. Use a large holed shaker to apply to your hair. 'Wash' through with your fingers, wait five minutes and then brush out thoroughly.



When you shower or bathe shampoo and condition your hair first, so that the conditioner has a chance to do some good before being rinsed out. And rinse your hair thoroughly – it should be 'squeaky' clean.



An old fashioned, but effective rinse for your hair is lemon juice. This gives lovely highlights, especially to blonde hair.



Change your shampoo and conditioner regularly. Your hair can become tired and lank if you use the same products constantly.



To revitalise your hair and give it a gorgeous lustre, beat three eggs, add two tablespoons olive or safflower oil and one teaspoon of vinegar. Apply this mixture to your hair and cover with plastic wrap (or an old shower cap). Wait half an hour and then shampoo and rinse well. This is much cheaper than a treatment at the hairdressers.



To extend the life of your face washers, crochet a small border around the edges. They not only look pretty, but won't unravel and fray. Crochet is easy to master. You don't have to create fancy lace edging, a row of double crochet around the edge is sufficient.



If the hem on a towel or hand towel comes undone, run it through the overlocker or zig zag before re-hemming. You'll get years more use out of them.

\$ Once your towels are past drying human bodies, cut them into smaller face - washer size squares and hem. Use them to mop up spills, as spare face washers, as nappy wipes, to take off make-up etc.



Old face washers make great dusters and polishing cloths. Keep a supply in the laundry and kitchen, in the car to use as rags when checking the oil, in the garden to kneel on etc.

\$ Don't spend a small fortune on cleaners for the shower recess. Make sure that the last person to use the shower every day dries the walls and floor before they get out. It only takes a minute. To remind them, keep an old face washer or a squeegee in the shower for just this purpose. By drying off the tiles, you are removing any soap residue and preventing mildew from forming.



Clean shower screens with a dry nylon scourer and vinegar. Rub over the glass with the scourer to remove soap scum and then wipe over with a cloth dipped in white vinegar. A spotless shower screen is yours!



Buy an egg timer and keep it in the bathroom. Make it a habit to set the timer for five minutes. Then see if you can shower before the bell rings. Five minute showers save an enormous amount of water over a year for an individual. Imagine what they can save for a family.



Only bathe very small children. Filling the bath costs money, takes time and uses energy to heat the water. If you must bathe, only put 15cm water in the bath. And consider bulk bathing. If you have tiny tots, bath them together. You'll save time, water and energy.



Consider buying your bathroom supplies in bulk. Often bulk toilet paper, shampoo, conditioner, toothpaste etc. can be very inexpensive and these are all items that have an extended shelf life.



Check your hairdryer for lint and hair build - up on the air inlet screen. This build - up will cause the motor to overheat and burn out. Use an old toothbrush to clean the mesh over the fan. Make sure the hairdryer is unplugged before you attempt any maintenance.



Find a low maintenance hair style that you can manage yourself. If you get a good cut, your hair will stay in style for at least four weeks, possibly six before you will need a trim.



If you like to colour your hair, but find the hairdresser is getting expensive, ask what colour they use and do the touch-ups between colours yourself.



Today's products are easy and safe to use at home as long as you follow the directions.



Use old panty hose to make hair scrunchies. Cut the feet off the stockings, and then cut the legs into rings. These are soft and won't damage your hair, are generally a neutral colour so they won't stand out and best of all are free!



To take a stuck lid off a bottle of nail polish, place in the microwave on high for five to ten seconds. The top will come off easily.



Cornflour is a great talcum powder substitute. It is a great nappy rash soother for bub's bottom, and made into a paste with water relieves itchy rashes quickly.



You can make very strong rubber bands from old rubber gloves. Simply cut the arm/wrist length into rings once you can't use the whole glove.

Saving on Cleaning Products

By keeping a store of very basic and inexpensive ingredients in your cleaning cupboard, you can save hundreds of dollars a year and as a bonus you control the chemicals that you and your family come into contact with. Using these old fashioned cleaners won't take you any more time than the off the supermarket shelf type, and you may even become a bit healthier if you need to put a little more elbow grease into the cleaning. Your hip pocket, your family and the environment will thank you. Bicarbonate Soda (bicarb or baking soda) – is a powerful cleaning agent on its own, even more powerful when combined with other materials.

Vinegar

Is made from fermented apples, grapes, sugar cane, malt or wine. It is an acid and a mild disinfectant.

Washing Soda

Buy it in the supermarket under the brand name Lectric Soda. It is a good water softener.

Eucalyptus Oil

Can be bought at supermarkets, chemists, health food and hardware stores. Use eucalyptus oil to remove sticky residue, as an inhalant and a disinfectant or a cleaner. It is toxic, so keep it away from children and pets. It will also damage plants, so beware when using it in the garden.

Cloudy Ammonia

Is readily available in the cleaning aisle of your supermarket. Caution needs to be exercised when using it as the fumes are an irritant, so wear a mask when using it – especially in confined spaces such as the oven. If you have a respiratory problem, avoid using it altogether.

Methylated Spirits

Great for cleaning glass and ceramic tile.

Homemade Cleaning Products

Making your own cleaning products takes only a few minutes. All the ingredients in these recipes are readily available at your local supermarket, health food shop or hardware store. And they are all very inexpensive.

Together they combine to make effective and safe household cleaners. If you were to cost out the time it takes to make up a bottle of cleaner and price of the ingredients, then compare that costing with how much you spend on commercial cleaning products, you'd be amazed. The difference can be hundreds of dollars a year – for only a few minutes of your time!

Wool Mix

4 cups Lux flakes
1 cup methylated spirits
1 cup eucalyptus oil

Mix together and bottle. To use dissolve mixture in hot water, cool before gently kneading woollens to wash. Rinse well and dry carefully in the shade, preferably flat to retain shape.

Cheapskates Washing Powder

1 bar soap, grated
1 cup washing soda (Lectric Soda)
1/2 cup borax

Mix together and store in a sealed container.

Use 3 scant teaspoons per load for a top-loader and 1 scant teaspoon per load for a front loader.

You can use up the small slivers of toilet soap you collect if you like, ordinary bath soap or laundry soap. This recipe is ideal for using up all the leftovers you collect in the family bathroom.

This detergent won't produce masses of suds, but it will get your clothes clean.

Laundry Detergent

1 cake pure soap
1 large cup washing soda
3 x 10 litre buckets

Grate the soap into an old, large, heavy based saucepan and bring to the boil with the washing soda in 2 litres water. Mix it well, or mash it, until the soap is dissolved. Dissolve the washing soda in 2 litres of hot water in a bucket. Don't let it cool before adding soap mixture. Strain the soap mixture into the washing soda mixture using a large strainer. It must be done in this order. Now, divide the solution equally between the three buckets. Slowly add cold water to each bucket and stir well with a wooden spoon. You can use your hand if you like the squishy feel, but I don't!

This mixture sets into a soft jelly which can be used in your washing machine. It can be used in both front and top loaders, in hot or cold water. Dissolve it in hot water before adding to a cold water wash. Use 2 – 3 cups of soap mixture per load – depending on the size of your machine and load.

Pre-Wash Spray

Mix equal parts of:
Cloudy Ammonia
Water
Shampoo

Add a teaspoon of eucalyptus oil and store in a spray bottle. Shake well before spraying collars and cuffs.

Miracle Spray

1.5 litre water (1 cup boiled)
300ml vinegar
60ml dishwashing liquid
25ml eucalyptus
3 dessertspoons "Lectric" soda

Method:

Mix Lectric Soda with about 1 cup boiling water to melt, add remainder of ingredients, pour into 2 ltr bottle (I use the vinegar ones). That's it folks!!!

To Use:

This nearly fills the 2 litre bottle, then I decant (don't you just love that word) into spray bottles for benches and laundry, and refill old toilet cleaner bottles to squirt under the rim in the loo etc. It's also good to spray on the floor on tough stains; you know the stuff you dropped when cooking that dried. I originally got the recipe from another site and just tweaked it a bit. I love it, as I try to minimise the use of chemicals around the house. With the collars and cuffs, try to spray and leave to soak for a few minutes works best I've found, so I spray as I sort, then do the whites second rather than first load to give the spray a chance to work.

Contributed by Joyofquilting

Conversion Chart

To Convert:	Multiply By:
Gallons to Litres	4.5460
Litres to Gallons	0.2200
Ounces to Grams	28.3500
Grams to Ounces	0.0352
Pounds to Grams	453.6000
Pounds to Kilograms	0.4536
Kilograms to Pounds	0.2050
Tons to Kilograms	1016.0000
Kilograms to Tons	0.0009
Centimetres to Inches	0.3937
Feet to Metres	0.3048
Metres to Feet	3.2810
Yards to Metres	0.9144
Metres to Yards	1.0940