

# Anatomy of a Restroom

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Whether you call them restrooms, bathrooms, loos, dunnies, or other endearments, one thing's for sure, these personal spaces are the most germ-ridden of all places. (Oh look, I'm a poet and didn't know it.)

Here's an axiom: cleaning professionals that do a great job of sanitizing restrooms not only ensure future repeat business, but perform sheer poetry when it comes to facility cleanliness. Nothing dampens a first impression faster in a home or business than an unpleasant aroma drifting from the W.C. Remember, cleanliness is next to Godliness, and disagreeable odors must be eliminated to ensure a sense of wholesomeness. Goodness gracious, I'm waxing philosophical too.

If you are a cleaning professional assigned the task of making a restroom sparkle, then you are the key to your company's future business from that client. Of all the maintenance chores, this is the most dreaded and hated. Why? Well, not only is it in many cases a nasty job, but it takes a special person to ignore the stigma associated with cleaning commodes and other restroom fixtures. It takes an attitude adjustment, that's what!

To quote actor Will Smith from *Men in Black*, "First off, you chose me...so you recognize the skills." Will's character was pointing out that he deserved respect for his talents. Anyone who performs a superior job in the wonderful world of restroom maintenance should be venerated, praised, admired, and rewarded.

A cleaning firm that can consistently perform superior work in this key area ensures a customer's gratitude. Of course, there are always those folks that can never be satisfied. In the grand scheme of continued business, that client type should probably be let go in favor of doing a better job for others who

recognize the skills.

That's where the profit will be. Therefore, it is imperative to instruct cleaning staff on the proper methods of cleaning restrooms. Don't allow shoddy cleaning procedures to take a bite out of your profitability.

Before we talk about these procedures, let's identify surfaces that harbor germs in all restrooms and bathrooms. Here is a list including various material types to be expected, whether in a home or commercial facility:

- **Doors:** doorknobs, door panels
- **Walls:** splash areas around sinks, commodes, and urinals
- **Floors:** vinyl, ceramic tile, stone, concrete, composite, and wood
- **Ceilings:** ductwork and vents
- **Sinks:** porcelain, chrome, brass, copper, fiberglass, plastic
- **Dispensers:** towels, toilet tissue, hand soap, hygiene units, seat covers
- **Mirrors:** includes all glass
- **Trash Cans:** inside, outside, lids, and sanitary napkin disposal units
- **Fixtures:** commodes, urinals, and bidets
- **Showers:** ceramic tile, vinyl, porcelain, stone, plastic, fiberglass
- **Tubs:** ceramic tile, porcelain, plastic, fiberglass
- **Matting:** carpet, vinyl, polyester
- **Baby Changing Stations:** plastic
- **Deodorant systems and dispensers:** solid, liquid, gel, and aerosol
- **Grout:** found in various places in a restroom, wherever a water seal is needed

While not every facility has all of the above components, it is a sure bet that a cleaning company must go prepared for all of these situations. Thankfully, the materials required will

work in nearly all cases. If a cleaning company has the proper equipment and chemicals for handling the restroom, at least that means they have nearly everything they need for the rest of the facility too. The bathroom requires the most intense use of cleaning products and labor; thus, efficient procedures reduce overall costs.

When dealing with a bathroom, no matter the size or location, the following procedure will obtain a high level of cleanliness – with a conscientious person behind the elbow grease. Train your restroom people well.

### CLEANERS REQUIRED:

**1. All Purpose Disinfectant:** A professional quality neutral cleaner, deodorizer, and disinfectant all-in-one. These come in a variety of deodorants, but contain basically the same active disinfectant. The active ingredient is quaternary ammonium chloride, commonly called quat.

**2. Non-Acid, Mild Acid, Acid Porcelain Cleaner:** Porcelain should always be cleaned with a non-acid product, which has not always been the case in the past. Porcelain can stain and be the devil to clean. Once an acid is used, it becomes likely that from that point, acid will always have to be used on that fixture to get it clean. Rule of thumb: use the weakest product that will get the job done to avoid further damage to the porcelain.

**3. Pumice Sticks:** These handy little tools will not scratch porcelain. They are perfect for removing the toughest stains, even rust, from old or new porcelain fixtures.

**4. Foaming Germicidal Cleaner Aerosol:** Although

aerosols are more expensive for the same basic chemicals as liquids, sometimes the speed factor outweighs the extra expense. Labor hours are more costly than cleaners.

**5. Hospital Disinfectant Spray:** Using the same reasons as above, these products are fast drying, quick to permeate, and eliminate

odors in hard-to-reach places.

**6. Glass and Plexi-glass Cleaner:** There is a choice between liquid and aerosol here. My personal preference is liquid glass cleaner in restrooms because liquids are less expensive. Avoid ammonia based cleaners here mainly because ammonia can cause damage to Plexi-glass and plastic surfaces along the nature of permanent fogging.

**7. Enzyme-based Deodorant-Digestant:** These products usually contain a pleasant deodorant, but that's not why we need them – it's the enzymes. Organic matter, from feces, to urine, to bacteria, cause odors in restrooms. These enzymes break down the odor-causing bacteria just as they do in a septic system.

**8. Graffiti Remover:** This is an indispensable aerosol product for the removal of inks, dyes, lipstick, markers, glues, and other damaging materials from restroom stalls and fixtures.

**9. Household Bleach:** CAUTION. AVOID USING BLEACH AND BLEACH-BASED CLEANERS EXCEPT WHEN ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY. Bleach damages many surfaces, tracks easily where it doesn't belong, is unhealthy to breathe, and isn't very compatible around other chemicals, especially



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ammonia. However, sometimes it is needed to remove stains in latex grout where the grout has been damaged by mildew.

**10. Household Ammonia:** DON'T USE, PERIOD.

**11. Solid, Liquid or Aerosol Deodorizer:** These are optional; however, nothing pleases a customer more than a pleasant experience when visiting the restroom. I highly recommend a deodorant system (more on this later).

### EQUIPMENT REQUIRED:

**1. Microfiber Flat Mop System:** While not necessarily efficient in large areas, flat mops are great for most restrooms. The exceptions might run to football stadiums or airports where fifty-stall restrooms are not uncommon. Flat mops offer a simple solution to a thorny problem. Mops contaminate chemicals and harbor germs themselves. Flat mops are easily changed, never dipped in cleaning solution after initially saturated, outlast regular mops, and are easily laundered. Put simply, they perform well for disinfection processes where

cross-contamination of materials is a problem.

**2. Microfiber Cloths or Disposable Wipers:** I am a proponent of microfiber. The material outlasts standard terry towel rags and other forms of cellulose wipers. Microfiber cloths are launder-able innumerable times. This means in the long run they are less expensive to use.



**3. Toilet Bowl and Urinal Brushes:** Wrapped-wire bowl and urinal brushes with extensions, commercial grade, offer the strength of bristle needed to actually clean most commodes, urinals, and bidets, without having to use harsh acid-based cleaners.



**4. Trigger Sprayer or Small Pump Sprayers:** Disinfectant and other liquid cleaners should be pre-diluted in these handy little devices. Sprayers offer exceptional control over the amount of chemicals and liquids applied to a restroom. These are major cost-saving tools.

**5. Stick Broom and Lobby Dust Pan:** This equipment is the fastest way to remove heavier debris like wadded paper and dust bunnies from a restroom floor. They may not always be necessary



**6. Janitor Cart or Dolly (OPTIONAL):** Depending on the size of the facility, a cart may be necessary in order to carry all of the accoutrements needed to clean a restroom. Never allow the cleaning staff to do the Janitor's Shuffle, from car to job and back again. This takes too much time away from the cleaning effort. Time is money. Determine the best way to get



all of the required cleaners, tools, tissues, towels, etc. to the location as efficiently as possible.

**7. Supply Refillables (Add-On Sales):** Don't lose the opportunity to add on to the

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cleaning contract by offering, at an extra charge of course, to refill all restroom dispensers. Hand soap, towels, toilet tissue, trash bags, deodorant refills, urinal floor mats – these and other common usage items offer extra profit points.

**8. Gloves and Goggles:** Every cleaning chemical used has some form of safety gear requirement. Refer to your Material Safety Data Sheets for further information. In general, always wear protective gloves! I like latex commercial grade disposable gloves that can easily be removed and thrown away between jobs. This reduces contamination risks to people, places, and things.

**9. Stepladder:** A handy tool in case overhead work such as vent cleaning must be done.

**10. Acrylic Extension Duster:** This tool makes short work of spider webs, dust on vents, ceiling lights, and other restroom furnishings that may not like to be cleaned with water-based chemicals. Always clean the duster after use by swishing out in pre-diluted leftover disinfectant and hanging to dry.



**11. Large Cellulose Sponge:** Invaluable for swiping areas that cannot withstand lots of water.

**12. Hand-held Scrub Brush:** Useful around fixtures where soap scum and other buildup may be an issue.

**13. Scrubbing Machine (Optional):** Depending on the size of your job, assistive machinery may speed up your process. A good example is when it becomes necessary to detail the grout lines on a ceramic tile floor.

**14. Deck Scrub Brush on a Handle:** This tool is usually needed in tile restrooms where grout lines can be a problem. If the job is too small for a scrubbing machine, then a deck brush can still take care of the situation.



## THE RESTROOM CLEANING PROCEDURE

Throughout the entire procedure listed here it is assumed that the cleaning person will be using these basic products for most tasks:

a sprayer of pre-diluted cleaner-deodorizer-disinfectant and a microfiber system including cloths, mops, and bucket unless otherwise noted.

### Prerequisites

- Follow instructions on cleaning chemicals and make sure they are prepared for use in sprayers or other containers.
- Make sure all necessary cleaning equipment is handy (loaded caddies, carts, etc.).
- Remove all trash cans and any other furnishings (if possible) from the area to be disinfected.
- Empty all soiled materials from mounted trash cans, sanitary napkin disposal units, and floor model receptacles. (If the area is large, it is more efficient to empty refuse into a nearby janitor cart hopper or rolling trash receptacle.)
- Dispose of all expended urinal and toilet floor mats, urinal screens, deodorant canisters, hanging commode blocks, etc.
- Sweep any heavy debris from the floor with a stick broom and lobby dust pan.
- Remove dispenser towels, toilet tissue, facial wipes, deodorants, seat covers, etc., to prevent them from becoming wet and unusable. They will be replaced once disinfection is near completion.

### STEP ONE – ABOVE THE WAIST OR THEREABOUT

- If any ceiling work is needed, such as removing dust and mildew from vent fan covers, swishing away spider webs, cleaning light fixtures or other high objects, do this now. TIP: Spider webs are easily removed with an inexpensive extension acrylic duster.
- If fingerprints or smudges need to be cleaned from walls or doors, now is the time. However, we will disinfect the door knobs as we leave.
- If graffiti is present, use the aerosol graffiti remover now.
- Depending on the wall surface type, lightly apply disinfectant to counters, sinks, urinals and commodes inside and out, and wall splash areas around those fixtures. Allow disinfectant to soak a minimum of five minutes in order to

kill germs. If walls are made of sheetrock or another permeable material, wipe splash areas to remove excess moisture. Alternatively, use a sponge or wiper to gently scrub the walls in the splash zones. **DO NOT SKIP THIS STEP** because of inconvenience, as walls are easily damaged by acidic urine. Walls also become odor sources.

- After the required “dwell” or “soak” time listed on the disinfectant label has passed, wipe away the excess. This is the time to scrub problem areas such as around the hand soap dispensers, swish out the toilets and urinals.

- Finish cleaning all surfaces above the knee, paying particular attention to the facings of dispensers.

## **STEP TWO – MOVING ON DOWN**

- Using the sprayer, apply disinfecting solution to the floor. If the microfiber flat mop goes dry during mopping, simply spray down more solution. (Please note that we are not restoring tile and grout here, only cleaning thoroughly. Restoration will be for another article.)

- After the required dwell time has been reached, use the pre-moistened microfiber pads according to manufacturer instructions to mop the floor. These systems are designed to be “touch-free” if used properly, which is safer for the user and reduces the chance of cross-contamination of chemicals, equipment, and

# MICROFIBER FLAT MOP SYSTEM SAVINGS

Microfiber flat mops are the most durable mopping products on the market. So what’s the big deal? It’s a touch-less system. That means you don’t have to mess with the contaminated mop with your hands. It also means that your clean mops are never mixed with your dirty ones. When it comes to sanitization, a regular string mop or dust mop won’t come anywhere close to matching the ease of use and versatility of a microfiber flat mop. There’s only one drawback: flat mop systems are only efficient in moderate to small areas. Clean rooms, hospital rooms, doctor’s offices, and multi-stall restrooms are great examples of spots to use microfiber flat mop systems.

Microfiber, the material used to create quality flat mops, is made from polyester fibers which are split during production to produce voids in each strand. This makes the fiber soft, tough for scrubbing, and porous so it will hold dust, dirt, and liquids without releasing until the mop is washed under running water or in a laundry. Microfiber mops leave no lint either, nor do they fall apart, even after uncounted washes. The components of a flat mop system are:

- Microfiber flat mop heads
- Frame
- Handle, either extension-style or straight

- Dual bucket with strainer (cleaning solution, dirty mop disposal)

## **BENEFITS OF MICROFIBER FLAT MOP SYSTEMS:**

1. Handles with the ease of a dust mop.
2. Works great in tight places.
3. Prevents cross-contamination.
4. Hands don’t touch used mop heads: touch-less.
5. Extremely portable.
6. Economizes on expensive chemicals.
7. Fast cleaning without back strain.
8. No need to lug gallons of water.
9. Fits on a janitor cart for mobility.
10. More thorough than either dust mop or wet mop.
11. Indefinitely washable.
12. Can be used on walls, floors, and ceilings.
13. Low water use means floors dry faster.
14. Quick changeover to fresh mop head.
15. Most systems can double as a super floor finish application method.

Using Ben Franklin’s favorite decision-making process, the pros outweigh cons; therefore, don’t hesitate to get a set of these babies to immediately save money in cleaning chemicals and labor costs. They’re fast and reliable.

even rooms. (See sidebar tip on how these systems are designed to work.)

- Remember to change out dirty flat mops as needed. Be sure to use clean pads, rags, and wipers too. A three-stall restroom with two urinals and two sinks, given an industrial situation where grease is present can require up to five flat mops. Carry the number of flat mops that will complete the task without having to waste time washing them out on the fly.

- Work toward the exit door.
- If odors are an issue, as soon as the floor cleaning is completed, grab the sprayer of Enzyme-based Deodorant-Digestant. Pump several squirts of Enzymes into the toilet and close the lid. Spray the inside of the urinals thoroughly. Lightly apply Enzymes to splash areas on the walls and floors. (If the walls are sheetrock or other surface harmed by excess water, use a sponge or wiper instead.)

- Refill all paper product, hand soap, deodorant, seat cover, and hygiene dispensers, and install fresh trash bags to mounted trash cans. Add all accessories like floor protective mats and urinal screens. Restore furnishings to original positions.

- Clean the inside and outside of all floor model trash cans. Replace the trash bags in the cans. Restore trash cans to original positions. If restroom odors are an issue, apply a few squirts of Enzyme-based Deodorant-Digenstant to the INSIDE of the trash bag liner.

- Remove all cleaning materials that may still be in area back to the carrier or cart.

- As the final task, clean the doorknobs. Close the door. Why? This indicates that the restroom has been sanitized. The next person in begins the process of re-contamination. Move on to the next area to be cleaned.

### STEP THREE – CLEANUP OF EQUIPMENT USED

- This is very simple. Cleaning equipment must be sanitized before the next job.

- Use the left over disinfectant to spray down the cart, buckets, tools, in short, every piece of cleaning equipment.

- Allow the proper dwell time. Rinse the cleaning equipment.



- Wash the microfiber flat mops and rags in disinfectant either by hand or with a machine. DO NOT USE BLEACH!

- Store equipment in a clean facility. What good is sanitized cleaning equipment if it is re-contaminated by a dirty janitor closet?

Is it necessary to perform all these tasks in every situation? Emphatically yes! Remember, germs know no limits except that of disinfection, and germs cause illness as well as unpleasant odors. Don't skimp in the restrooms as this is where your cleaning company can be broken.

We've talked a lot about procedures. It all boils down to one thing: proper restroom cleaning is an art backed by scientific fact.

**Fact #1:** germs create issues concerning health.

**Fact #2:** most restrooms are never fully disinfected which puts visitors at risk.

**Fact #3:** cleaning staff in general dread the task of sanitizing these very human spaces because they get negative remarks – which can usually be resolved by giving them proper training.

**Fact #4:** customers complain about unclean restrooms constantly and quite faithfully tell their friends about the terrible job the janitorial service has done.

And **Fact #5:** when a restroom, or whatever you want to call it, is properly cleaned to poetic perfection, you don't have to philosophize on the wholesomeness it exudes. It just is – clean. Cleanliness makes the Higher Power happy. Keep those W.C.'s sparkling to keep your customers enthralled with your inspired labor.