

OPEN THE WINDOWS AND LET THE SUNSHINE IN!

Using Mother Nature's fresheners is free and easy – plus nothing else works better than fresh air to get rid of odors. (If the weather simply won't permit you to open the house up, try to ventilate the rooms some other way, such as by turning on a fan ducted to the outdoors.)

If possible, let smelly items sit outside in the sun for a few hours.

REMOVE THE SOURCE OF THE ODOR

Obviously, nothing will help if the source of the odor remains in your home. Narrow down the problem and take out the trash, bathe the dog, clean out the fridge, or do whatever it takes to stop any more odor from being created.

CLEAN TO DEODORIZE

Vacuum – This includes not only carpets, but also upholstery and curtains. Sprinkle baking soda onto the carpets or upholstered pieces first and allow it to sit for 30 minutes and then vacuum thoroughly. Be sure to change the vacuum bag after cleaning up odorous areas.

Wash Hard Surfaces - This includes hard flooring, walls with glossy or semi-gloss paint (not flat paint!), counter tops, sinks, tables, etc... Any mild cleaner that will remove oils without damaging the surface or paint will do.

One of my favorite cleaners is a simple solution of half water, half distilled white vinegar. It also takes advantage of vinegar's odor removing properties. If you don't like the smell of vinegar, don't worry it will dissipate once it dries.

You should not try to wash flat paint and wallpaper. Instead, try using a dry sponge to remove the film that accumulates on walls and ceilings. These are a specialty item so look for them in janitorial stores and good housewares stores. Dry sponges are treated, natural rubber that are usually brown or red. (Use according to package instructions)

Shampoo the carpet (or have it professionally cleaned). If vacuuming with baking soda did not fully remove carpet odors, clean the carpet or have it done professionally. If you know the odor was a specific spot on the carpet, you could also spot treat that area.

For pet odors, I have had very good luck using a 50/50 water and white vinegar mixture in the carpet cleaner (do a patch test in an inconspicuous area first). If the carpet is dirty, you can always follow up with a traditional carpet cleaning solution once the vinegar has dried.

If the carpet remains problem after this, you may have to replace it to eliminate the odor entirely (especially if it has gotten wet as it may be harboring mold or mildew).

If the odor is the result of pet urine it will likely have saturated the carpet pad and subfloor. If you are forced to remove the carpet and pad spray the wooden subfloor with a white vinegar solution (or other commercially available product) and allow it to dry before laying the new carpet and pad.

Clean the upholstery (or have it professionally cleaned). Check first in an inconspicuous area that the upholstery is colorfast and compatible with cleaning solution you are using. Don't forget to vacuum under seat cushions, too.

For leather upholstery, wipe it down with oil soap, saddle soap or a cleaner specifically made for leather.

Wash clothing, bedding, and linens. Fabric holds on to odors so you may need to wash your bedding, linens, throw rugs, blankets, and any other fabric items. If possible hang them outside to air dry on a sunny day (if they can handle direct sunlight). If an item cannot be washed be sure to ask the dry cleaner BEFORE they clean the item as some dry cleaning solutions can actually set some odors for good (such as moth ball scent).

Change the filters in your HVAC (heating and air conditioning system). These filters can harbor odors and re-circulate them throughout the house. (Plus – Your systems will work more efficiently if the filters are cleaned or replaced regularly. If you believe that the ventilation system is the source of the problem, and changing the filters didn't help, you may want to consider having the ducts professionally cleaned.

USING VINEGAR

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If you haven't noticed, I love using white vinegar as a cleaner. It is natural and efficient! I use it for cleaning and for removing odors from clothing in the wash (I also spray it on my son's football pads, wrestling gear and other stinky items I can't wash.)

Vinegar - Here are a few ways I use it:

- Leave a bowl of vinegar out for 24 hours to remove odor from a room (works pretty well for cigarette smoke too).
- Adding a little vinegar to the hot cinders of a fire will help remove smoky smells from a room.
- Remove refrigerator odors by washing the inside regularly with warm soapy water followed by a wipe down with a 50/50 water and vinegar mixture.
- Place a half cup each of vinegar and water in an ovenproof container and heat it in the oven until boiling. Turn off the oven and let it stand overnight. The next day, wipe over with a cloth dampened in hot water and vinegar. The odors should be gone.
- Pour 2 1/2 cups of vinegar into the toilet bowl. Leave for 30 minutes, then flush. The toilet will be odor free again.

ABSORB THE ODOR

For a mild, but consistent, odor try using crumpled newspaper to absorb the order. Crumple as many sheets of newspaper as you can and put them in the stinky room for several days (may take over a week). The more newspaper you use, the better the odor-absorbing capacity it will have.

Be sure to put down an old blanket or sheet so you do not leave stains from the newsprint on anything, Leave the room closed up with the newspaper in it for several days. A week or two is even better.

COVER THE ODOR

Occasionally you will have a temporary odor in your home that you need to mask just until it has had time dissipate (cooking odors come to mind).

It is easy to mask this type of odor with candles, diffusers store-bought room fresheners. It is bets to choose clean scents (soap, cinnamon, citrus) rather than florals. If you prefer a unscented product, you can try an odor-absorbing gel.

Burning incense can be extremely overwhelming so, once again, I would not suggest you use it to eliminate an odor problem.

PAINTING

A new coat of paint is always a good way to introduce a "new" smell to your home. Kilz has an odor blocking primer and there are odor absorbing paint additives available which can help eliminate the smell of cigarettes. Your local home improvement store should be able to help you find what you need for your specific issue.

FINAL WORDS

If the suggestions above do not solve the problem, or you think the odor is caused by molds, chemicals, rats, or another potential hazard, you need to contact a professional. Stronger methods may be efficient but they can also be dangerous if used improperly.

If you are thinking of selling your South Forsyth home, please call me (706-455-0180) and I'll provide you with my full Seller Pre-Listing Preparation Package.