

10 Essential Cleaning and daily life Tips for Living in a German Home



A practical guide
for expats who
want to keep
their landlord
(and themselves)
happy.

By Clean and Happy

“Transforming spaces into havens of cleanliness and joy”

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1. Understand the German Standard of “Clean”

Moving to Germany, many newcomers quickly notice something striking: the level of cleanliness expected in everyday life. Here, “clean” is far more than just neat or tidy — it is precise, thorough, and, for many, surprisingly meticulous.



In many countries, a quick sweep of the floor or a wiped countertop might be considered sufficient. In Germany, however, attention to every detail matters. Even surfaces that are not immediately visible, corners, or edges can be noticed and are expected to be maintained. Bathrooms, kitchens, and floors are not just kept tidy; they are hygienically spotless.

Cleanliness in Germany is closely tied to respect and responsibility — respect for the home, the landlord, neighbors, and even for oneself. This cultural expectation extends beyond private apartments: shared staircases, communal spaces, and even public areas reflect the same standard of care.

For newcomers, this can initially feel demanding. Tasks that might be optional elsewhere are treated as essential here. Recognizing these differences early can help expats avoid misunderstandings, feel more at ease in their new home, and approach household care with confidence and respect.

In short, the German standard of “clean” is higher and more precise than in many other regions, and understanding this mindset is the first step to fitting smoothly into everyday life here.

2. Respect the Floors

One of the first surprises many newcomers face in Germany is the strict unwritten rule about floors. Unlike in many other countries, it is common practice here to remove shoes indoors. Wooden floors, parquet, and tiles are treated with great care, not only for aesthetic reasons but also because they are often expensive and delicate.



Walking on these surfaces with outdoor shoes is considered not only careless but can also leave long-lasting marks, scratches, or dirt that may be difficult to remove. In German

homes, floors are a visible sign of care and respect — both for the property and for those living in it.

For expats, this can require a small adjustment: it's not unusual to keep a pair of indoor slippers or socks ready, and to politely ask guests to remove their shoes. This practice helps maintain the condition of the flooring, keeps homes hygienic, and aligns with local expectations.



Understanding and following this simple rule can prevent small conflicts, protect your deposit, and contribute to feeling fully at home in Germany. It's a subtle but important example of how German standards of living often combine functionality, respect, and cultural habits.

3. Windows – The National Obsession

In Germany, windows are more than just openings to the outside world — they are a reflection of order, pride, and attention to detail. For many newcomers, it comes as a surprise

just how much emphasis is placed on sparkling, spotless windows throughout the year.



Clean windows are a visible sign that a household is well-maintained. This is not merely about aesthetics; it's about demonstrating care for the home and respect for neighbors. In some areas, especially in southern Germany, landlords and neighbors notice even minor streaks or dirt on panes.

Equally important is ventilation. German homes are built to be energy-efficient and well-insulated, which is excellent for comfort but can lead to dampness if not properly managed. Regularly opening windows — ideally several times a day for short periods — is essential to prevent mold formation and maintain a healthy indoor climate.

For many rental agreements, proper ventilation is explicitly mentioned in the lease, making it a tenant's legal responsibility. If mold develops due to neglecting ventilation, the tenant can be held accountable, sometimes affecting deposit claims or leading to remediation costs.

Understanding and following these expectations — keeping windows clean, ventilating regularly, and observing contractual obligations — helps newcomers avoid misunderstandings, protect their deposit, and align with German standards of hygiene and responsibility.

4. Descaling is Key

One of the first practical challenges many newcomers face in Germany is hard water. Unlike in some other regions, German water often contains high levels of calcium and minerals. Over time, this can lead to limescale buildup on faucets, shower heads, sinks, and other surfaces that regularly come into contact with water.



Hard water is not only a cosmetic concern — it can also affect the longevity of appliances such as coffee machines, kettles, and washing machines. Small deposits gradually accumulate, and if left unattended, they can be difficult to remove and even damage delicate surfaces.

Many products on the market promise miraculous results, ranging from very cheap to very expensive. In most cases, the marketing hype exceeds the actual effectiveness. Surprisingly, simple, affordable solutions such as vinegar essence or citric acid — when used correctly — are often far more effective. Applied with a soft cloth or a spray and allowed to sit for a short period, they can tackle limescale gently and efficiently. These solutions also benefit appliances like kettles and coffee machines.

While the detailed application techniques will be covered in a later chapter, the key takeaway for newcomers is that effective descaling does not require expensive products, but rather knowledge of the right, gentle methods. Being aware of this early helps expats maintain their home according to German cleanliness standards, protect their appliances, and avoid unnecessary expenses.

5. No Harsh Chemicals

In Germany, households increasingly favor gentle, environmentally friendly cleaning methods, aligning with both high cleanliness standards and sustainable living. For expats, adopting these methods helps maintain the home efficiently, protect surfaces, and create a healthy indoor environment.

Expats may initially be surprised by the number of specialized products available in stores, many of which promise miraculous results. While marketing can be convincing, in most cases simple, safe, and affordable solutions — such as vinegar

essence or citric acid — are more than sufficient when applied thoughtfully. These substances are highly effective for tackling limescale, cleaning sinks and taps, and even maintaining appliances like kettles and coffee machines.



The key to success lies in combining gentle methods with appropriate tools. Soft cloths, microfiber towels, and spray bottles help to apply solutions evenly and protect surfaces. This ensures that delicate materials, such as wooden floors, tiles, or ceramic, are not damaged, while the home remains hygienic and visually appealing.

Bathroom

Bathrooms are a focal point for hygiene in German homes. Limescale and soap residues are common, but aggressive chemicals are usually unnecessary. Vinegar essence or citric acid, applied with soft cloths or spray bottles, can remove buildup effectively. Proper ventilation complements cleaning efforts and prevents mold formation.



Kitchen

Kitchens require both hygiene and care for surfaces. Countertops, sinks, and taps benefit from gentle descaling and cleaning solutions. Vinegar or citric acid can safely tackle mineral deposits, keeping surfaces functional and visually appealing. Using soft cloths or microfiber towels ensures surfaces remain undamaged.

Floors & Surfaces

Wooden floors, parquet, and tiles are often delicate and expensive. Harsh chemicals can damage finishes or leave residues. Regular sweeping, damp mopping with gentle solutions, and attention to spills maintain their beauty. Encouraging everyone in the household to remove shoes indoors further protects floors.

Appliances

Appliances such as kettles, coffee machines, and washing machines are affected by hard water. Simple, mild descaling with vinegar or citric acid prevents buildup and prolongs their life. Applied correctly, these methods are far more effective than many commercial products and avoid harsh chemicals.

6. Bin System Basics

One of the most immediately noticeable aspects of German household life for newcomers is the rigorous system of waste separation. Unlike in many other countries, Germany has developed a highly structured recycling culture, designed to protect the environment and make the most of limited resources.

Households typically sort waste into multiple categories: paper, packaging, organic waste, and residual trash. Many regions also have separate bins for glass, and some localities require color-coded containers or bags. While the system may

seem complex at first, each type of waste has a specific purpose, and following the rules is considered a basic responsibility for every resident.



Expats may find it surprising that proper disposal is taken seriously: failing to separate waste correctly can lead to warnings, fines, or complaints from neighbors. Understanding the logic behind the system — that every item has its proper place — helps newcomers avoid unnecessary stress and integrate smoothly into local routines.

In addition, proper waste management is a subtle reflection of the German values of order, responsibility, and respect for the community. By adapting to this system, newcomers not only comply with local regulations but also demonstrate mindfulness and consideration for the environment and neighbors alike.

7. Laundry Etiquette

For newcomers, the rules around laundry in Germany can be surprisingly strict compared to other countries. Many households emphasize energy efficiency, respect for neighbors, and adherence to quiet hours, which all influence how and when laundry is done.



Using dryers or washing machines during late evenings, nights, or on Sundays can disturb neighbors and is often considered inappropriate or even against building regulations. German homes, especially apartment complexes, frequently have shared laundry facilities with posted schedules or quiet time rules.

In addition, many residents practice careful sorting and washing routines, not only to maintain clothing quality but also to minimize energy and water consumption. Understanding and respecting these routines helps newcomers integrate smoothly into the household and community.

By following local laundry etiquette, expats demonstrate consideration, responsibility, and awareness of environmental and social norms, avoiding conflicts and maintaining harmony with neighbors.

8. The Legendary “Kehrwoche”

In many parts of Germany, particularly in the south, residents are familiar with a tradition called “Kehrwoche”, literally translated as “sweeping week.” This practice involves tenants taking turns to clean shared spaces such as staircases, hallways, entrances, and sometimes even sidewalks.



For newcomers, the concept may seem unusual, but it is deeply rooted in the culture of responsibility and community.

Kehrwoche is not just about appearances — it is a shared duty that ensures that communal areas remain safe, clean, and welcoming for everyone living in the building.

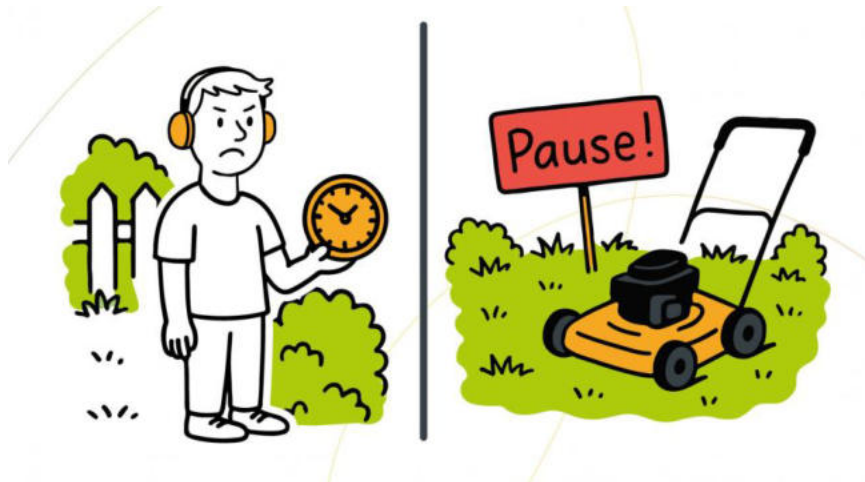
Failing to participate properly in Kehrwoche is noticeable and can lead to complaints or minor penalties. Observing the schedule and fulfilling one’s turn is therefore both a social expectation and a practical responsibility.

For expats, understanding Kehrwoche provides insight into broader German values: attention to detail, respect for neighbors, and a proactive approach to shared responsibilities. Embracing this tradition helps newcomers integrate smoothly into their new communities and demonstrates consideration for both property and people.

9. Respect Quiet Hours ("Ruhezeiten")

In Germany, maintaining peace and quiet is more than just courtesy — it is often a legal requirement. Many neighborhoods and apartment buildings enforce quiet hours, known as "Ruhezeiten", during which loud activities such as vacuuming, drilling, or even playing music are restricted.

Typically, these quiet hours are observed during the night and in the afternoon on Sundays or public holidays. While the exact rules may vary by municipality or building regulations, the principle is the same: residents are expected to minimize noise to avoid disturbing others.



For newcomers, this can be surprising. In many countries, daily cleaning or household chores at any time are normal. In Germany, failing to observe Ruhezeiten can lead to complaints, warnings from neighbors, or even fines. Respecting these periods is therefore both a cultural expectation and a practical necessity.

Understanding Ruhezeiten also provides insight into broader German values: consideration, order, and respect for community living. By aligning daily routines with these expectations, expats can avoid conflicts, maintain good relations with neighbors, and enjoy a more harmonious home environment.

10. When in Doubt – Ask for Help

Moving to a new country often comes with unexpected challenges, and maintaining a home in Germany is no exception. From strict cleanliness standards to complex recycling rules, newcomers can sometimes feel overwhelmed.



When in doubt, it is perfectly acceptable — and even wise — to ask for help. Professional cleaning services are widely available, discreet, and accustomed to meeting the high expectations of German households. Seeking assistance is not a sign of laziness; rather, it demonstrates practicality, foresight, and respect for both the home and the people living in it.

Using professional help can also provide valuable learning opportunities. Observing how experienced cleaners approach tasks, which methods they use, and how they maintain standards can help expats adopt the most effective and gentle techniques themselves.

Ultimately, understanding when to do it yourself and when to call in support ensures that the home remains hygienic, well-maintained, and in line with local expectations. This approach gives newcomers confidence, reduces stress, and allows them to enjoy their living environment while fully integrating into the cultural norms of Germany.

About the Authors – Clean and Happy

Clean and Happy stands for cleaning services with **heart and mind**. We specialize in **high-quality cleaning for sophisticated households**, where precision, discretion, and friendliness matter most. Our reputation is built on **meticulous attention to detail**, the **ability to handle even extreme contamination**, and the **warm, accommodating attitude** of our team.

We employ **mostly English-speaking, well-trained professionals from various countries**, all of whom go through a **comprehensive training process** focusing on integrity, confidentiality, and precise cleaning methods.

The chapters above represent only a small part of the topics we deal with every day.

Please contact us if you need help with:

- Move-in cleaning
- Move-out cleaning
- Deep cleaning
- Window and glass cleaning
- Steam and eco cleaning (chemical-free)
- Kitchen and bathroom sanitation
- Carpet and upholstery cleaning
- Post-renovation cleaning
- Household organization
- Laundry and ironing services
- Regularly scheduled cleaning (weekly, biweekly, or monthly, depending on your needs)

Some of our team members are also excellent at organizing homes, ironing, or managing your laundry completely.



Just ask – **our manager will contact you personally.**

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We are the only English cleaning service in the Munich area.

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