

HOW TO DO STUFF BETTER

Today's Lesson: Housework 101

Tired of asking your mom for help around the house? Let us help you out.

BY AMANDA PALM
The Battalion

Leaving the comfort and safety of home for college can be a scary experience, especially when you realize Mom is no longer around to cook and clean for you. As the laundry piles up into heaps, your refrigerator screams to be filled with food and the layer of dirt on your floor begins to look like brown carpet, you are struck with the realization that you have no domestic skills.

That is what happens when you spend the first 18 years of your life being taken care of and waited on. You do not need to worry or to call Mom to beg her to come cook and clean for you. There is still plenty of time to learn the keys to domesticity.

I don't have a thing to wear!

Most college students do not have a washer and dryer and therefore are forced to use a laundromat. Then the confusion begins.

Counting quarters, choosing a detergent, deciding whether to use fabric softener, debating whether to use dryer sheets for added freshness, choosing which colors should be washed together, determining what clothes should be left out of the dryer — the list goes on and on. It could easily drive a person to drinking. No wonder somebody began building laundromats with bars in them.

Crystal Pitts, a Scrub Pub employee, said she is convinced males are more particular about their laundry than females because many have never done their own laundry before.

"They ask us what kind of soap they should use, if they can use bleach — all sorts of questions," she said. "I had one guy come in here and strip down to his boxers and wash everything he had on. And of course, if a red sock happens to fall into a load of white underwear and turn everything pink, it's never the guy's fault. Something has to be wrong with the washing machine."

Pitts said some males who come to the Scrub Pub have female employees inspect their clothes after they are washed.

"Sometimes, the guys would go home to change," she said, "and come back to make sure they looked OK before going out on a date."

Move over Chef Boyardee, it's time for Van Can Cook.

As yummy as Chef Boyardee and Ramen noodles are, you are in college now. It is time to expand those taste buds beyond meals you can buy for less than a dollar. Say goodbye to frozen dinners, macaroni and cheese and anything with the word "helper" in it and say "howdy" to some good home cooking.

Keep it simple, and you will be amazed at the meals you can create. And if you get really good at cooking, a dinner quickly can turn into a great way to schmooze the opposite sex.

Tonni Hinojosa, a chef at the Plaza Cafe at the Hilton Hotel in College Station, has a few meal suggestions for college students.

"Grilled chicken is really easy to do, and so is barbecuing," he said. "You can throw meat on the grill, and you have a good meal."

Hinojosa said cooking can be fun, and it is a great way to attract the opposite sex.

"I got off work late one night and didn't want to go home to change, so I went out in my chef uniform," he said. "Girls were falling all over it. They would say things like 'Oh, you're a chef?' and 'Will you come over and cook me dinner?' It was crazy. Women definitely like guys who can cook."

"God made dirt, so dirt don't hurt!" Or does it?

Not only is Mom no longer around to clean your room for you, but neither of your parents are around to lock you in your room until you clean it. So as tests and projects roll by, the dishes, clothes, garbage and dust pile up before your eyes. Luckily, you are at an age where you can still get away with being a slob, but even slobs have their limits. When algae begins to grow in your bathtub and dust clouds float up from the carpet each time you take a step, it is time to break

out some elbow grease and get to cleaning.

Jarrod Smith, a freshman kinesiology major, is not the average college man. He does not let dust collect on the furniture, and he hates to let dishes pile up in the sink.

"I am pretty neat, and I clean once a week," he said. "I don't like things to be dirty. When I clean, I vacuum, dust, everything. Dirty dishes are my biggest peeve, so we run the dishwasher a lot."

Like many college students, Smith grew up with his mom cleaning up after him and making his bed for him every day.

"It's hard to get up and make my own bed," he said. "Coming to college means there is more responsibility to get used to. I have to be in a good mood to clean."

Call me "Miracle Grow."

Yard work is yet another aspect of domestic life. This does not mean mowing the lawn or chopping down trees, although those things are important. It means having a garden, growing some vegetables and maybe even some sweet-smelling flowers. At first it sounds strange, even crazy, but getting in touch with nature and bringing out the green thumb in you is not as weird as it seems.

Kevin Tait, a 23-year-old from San Francisco, Calif., said he is skeptical about the idea of gardening.

"I'll get out and mow the lawn any day," he said. "But I don't think I'm going to start planting fruits or flowers any time soon. That's just goofy."

After thinking about planting a flower garden, Tait said, he came up with an idea.

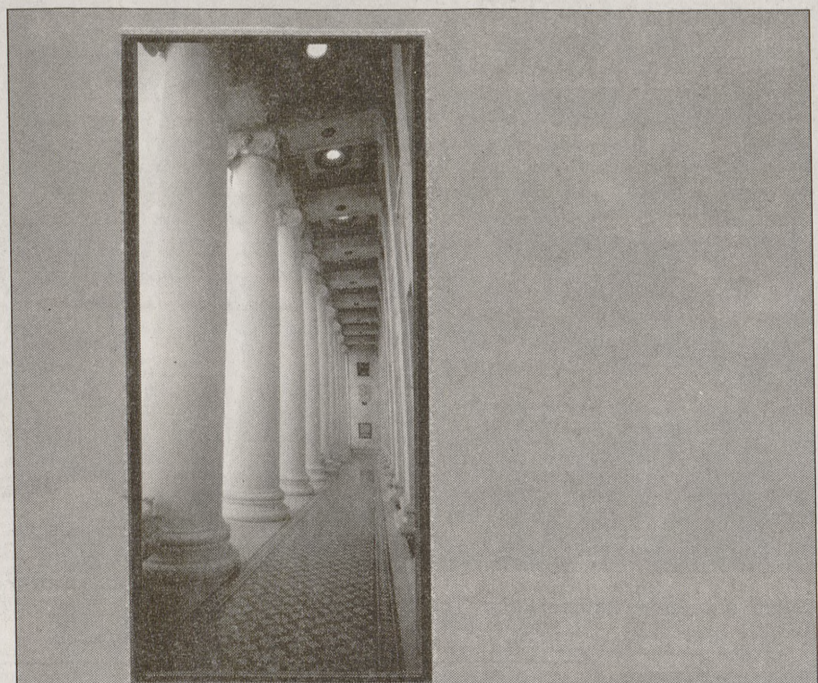
"If you were able to grow flowers like roses and stuff girls liked, then you could use those to give your girlfriend," he said. "You wouldn't have to spend a fortune on a dozen roses every time you did something wrong. So maybe having a rose bush in the backyard isn't such a goofy idea."

Deep down, somewhere inside you, Martha Stewart or Julia Child may be screaming to get out. Your green thumb may be desperate for action. It just may take a while to get past all the built-up dirt, grime and dust to find them.



ROBERT HYNCEK/THE BATTALION

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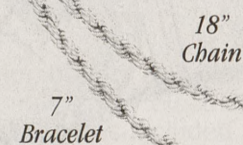
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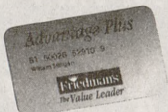


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