

Brushes

Brushes tend to gather and hold dust instead of scattering it, and for this reason are especially useful in cleaning. The types to be selected depend upon the household furnishings. Where there are no walks or rugs to be swept, homemakers may prefer floor brushes to brooms because they gather up the fine dust from smooth-finished surfaces more efficiently. A wall brush is essential in every home for dusting walls, ceilings, curtains, and draperies. For cleaning a toilet bowl, a brush is more sanitary than a cloth. For upholstered furniture and lamp shades, a well-chosen brush is better than a whisk broom. A separate brush is needed for stairs, baseboards, and window sills. It is difficult if not impossible to clean radiators without a good brush made for this purpose. Some radiator brushes are also adapted to dusting carved furniture and decorative iron work. Households usually need a scrub brush.

In selecting brushes it is well to examine as many types and qualities as possible, in order to understand quality differences and find the brushes best adapted to the household's furnishings. Brushes are made of pig and boar bristles, horse and goat hair, and palmetto, palmyra, or Tampico fibers. The bristle brushes are the most durable, and most satisfactory where a stiffer brush is desirable. Hair is softer. Vegetable fibers are stiffer and coarser than either of the others. Although palmetto, naturally brown in color, is the most durable, the majority of fiber brushes are made of the softer Tampico fiber. Vegetable fibers sometimes are mixed with hair in some types of the less expensive brushes in order to keep the price down, but do not hold dust as well as hair or bristles. The bristles, hair, or fiber of the brush may be stapled or cemented in wood or twisted in wire. When wire is used, it should be rustless galvanized steel, with the twists close together so the stock will be full; the wire used in some brushes will rust.

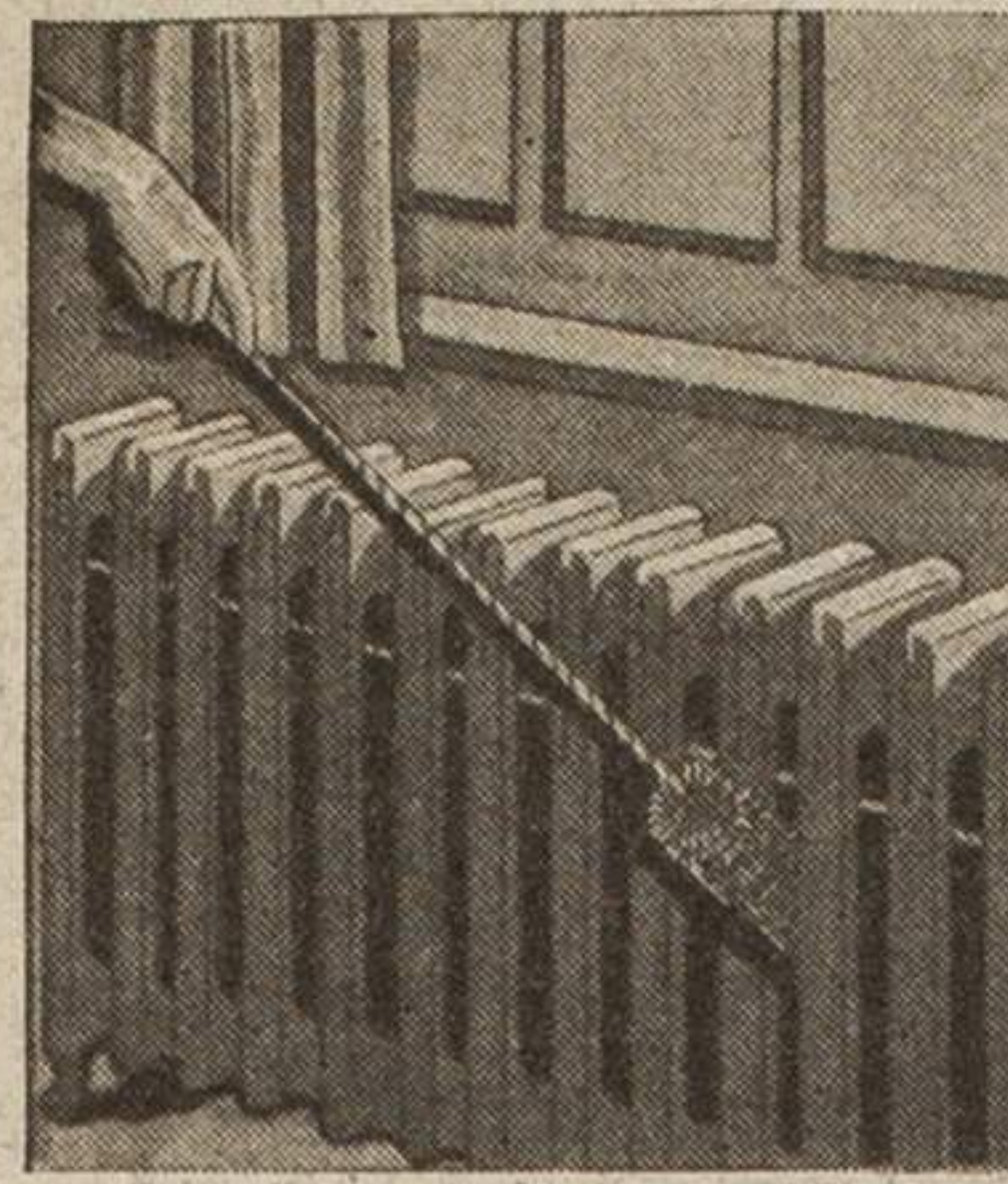
Price alone is little guide to the quality of a brush because some methods of marketing are much more expensive than others and are reflected in the price to consumers.

A few simple principles should be followed in the care of brushes. All of them should be washed frequently enough to keep them clean, using warm water and soap, rinsing thoroughly in clear water, and shaking to straighten the bristles or fibers. Brushes twisted in wire should be hung to dry; those set in wood blocks should be dried with the bristle side down so water will not soak into the wood; and all brushes should be hung on hooks when not in use.

Floor brushes of the best quality for household use are made of grade A horsehair, with full tufts stapled firmly in a hardwood block. Sizes for household use have blocks 12, 14, 16, and 18 inches long and about 3 inches in width. In most brushes the handle can be changed from one side of the block to the other each week so the hair will wear down evenly.

Wall brushes of the best quality are made of soft, white hair from the side or beard of the goat, twisted in rustless galvanized wire. Hair from under the goat's body is used in a lower-grade brush. Wall brushes should be very full and fluffy. Those with a handle set in a flexible spring socket will lie close against the wall. Some of the less expensive wall brushes are made of horsehair. These are efficient in cleaning walls but are stiffer and may snag delicate draperies.

Wall dusters made of wool fleece do satisfactory cleaning when new, but they soil quickly. It is very difficult to keep them from matting when they are washed, and they may soon become so hard surfaced that they will smear the walls, unless they are cleansed with a dry-cleaning fluid rather than soap and water.



Radiator brushes having the greatest usefulness are long-handled, cylindrical in shape, and made of bristles twisted in rustless wire. Those tapered toward the end get into the corners with less manipulation; those with flared ends are somewhat more expensive. Another type has a narrow, flat wood back into which hair about 2½ inches long is set. It is less adaptable to a variety of uses than cylindrical brushes, requires more manipulation, is less efficient in cleaning some types of radiators, but is durable.

Upholstery brushes are made with bristles or hair.

There are many shapes and sizes with varying degrees of firmness in the stock. Where upholstery fabrics are not too delicate, a bristle brush is desirable. Silk lamp shades and upholstery fabrics require a soft brush. Some are twisted in wire in the shape of a large clothes brush, or are cylindrical and tapered to be used also on carved furniture. Others of various shapes, such as counter brushes, have bristles or hair set in wood. The counter brush type with a long handle is most useful for brushing stairs, window sills, and baseboards.

Venetian-blind brushes of the best quality are made of gray or white goat hair twisted in rustless wire. They come with two to five prongs, so that more than one slat may be dusted at a time; the three-prong are the most popular. The stock should be very full or the brush will not dust well.

Toilet-bowl brushes that are easiest to keep sanitary are made of stiff bristles or of Tampico fibers twisted in rustless wire, in either circle or ball shapes. The bristle brushes are more expensive but do not drip after the water is shaken out. Although Tampico fiber mats down much sooner than hair, these brushes are cheap to replace. Some types of cement used to fasten the wires into the handle give off odors. Handles should always be enameled to make them less absorbent of water. A toilet-bowl brush also is made with the bristles or fibers fastened around a wood ball, but wood absorbs water and is more difficult to keep sanitary.

Scrub brushes usually are made of Tampico fiber and are inexpensive. More durable brushes are made of palmetto fibers, but the homemaker may find it more sanitary to use the Tampico fiber brushes and replace them when the fibers soften and mat. Scrub brushes with long handles, which do away with the necessity for getting down on the knees, are the most desirable. If the type without a handle is selected, it is well to get one that feels comfortable in the hand.

Polishing brushes for use on waxed floors are of two types, the electric and the hand-operated. Both have stiff vegetable fiber stock for polishing. One of the least expensive electrically operated types has a brush-covered drum. Others have one circular brush which whirls flat on the floor, or two circular brushes revolving in opposite directions. Those with two brushes are more expensive but are considered the most efficient. Some electric machines have a device for applying the wax, either by dripping it from a container or forcing it out with an electric pump. Those with a pump require care to keep the pump from sticking. Two sets of brushes are supplied with those that apply wax, one for spreading it and one for polishing. The durability of electric polishers depends upon the motor.

Hand-polishing brushes have fibers set in heavy blocks weighing about 5 to 15 pounds. The handle is hinged so it may be swung more easily. These require considerable strength to operate but are very inexpensive in comparison with electric polishing machines.