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TOP TIPS AND AMAZING ADVICE  
ON RUNNING AN EFFICIENT HOME



EMMA ANDREWS

SUMMERSDALE

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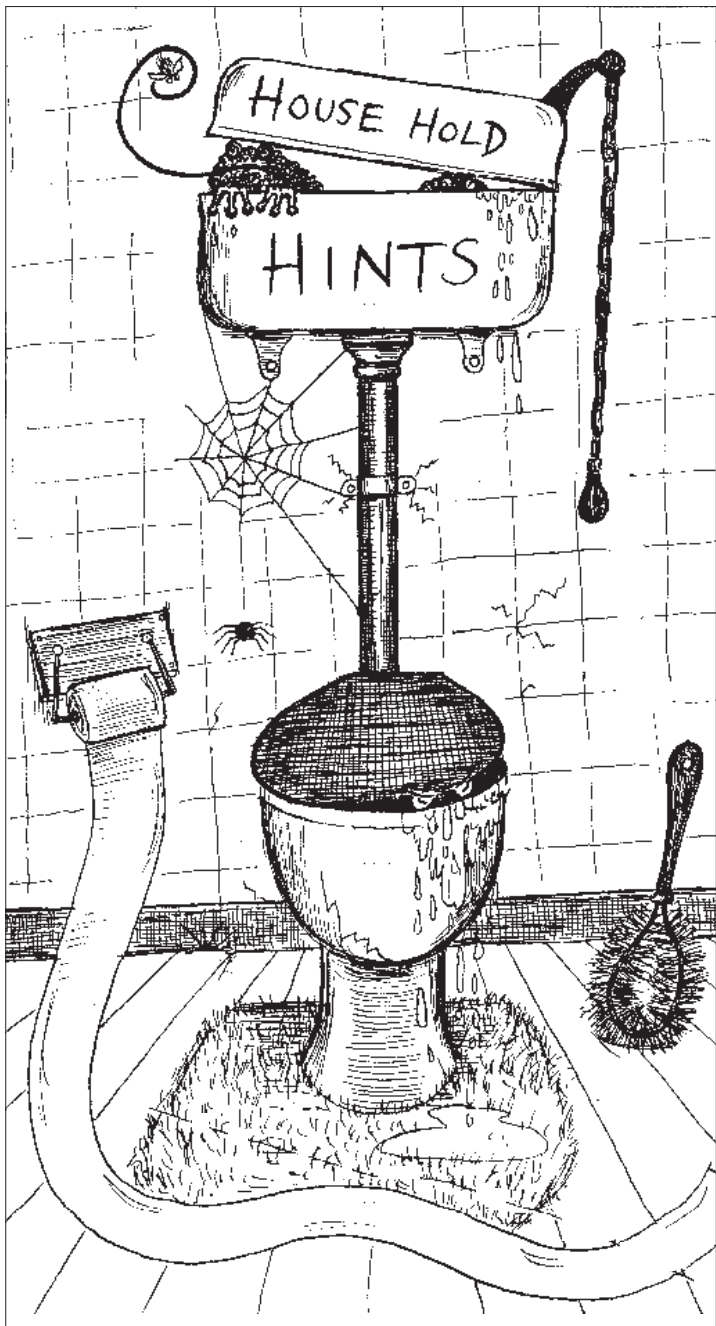
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## Introduction

If you have a household to run, you know what an endless uphill struggle it can be to keep things under control. If you seem to spend your whole life cleaning the house or attempting to keep your house in order, this is the book you have been waiting for. It is designed to make your life easier, showing how to use your time more efficiently, giving you more time to pursue your hobbies or to relax.

Hints like these are lessons that have been learnt through the experience of many people over many years. Household hints are normally passed from generation to generation, and from friend to friend. Bit by bit we accumulate knowledge on how to live in a modern society with all its gadgets, responsibilities and complications. This book represents a valuable short-cut to that knowledge, an easily accessible volume of vital information from which anyone could benefit.

## **The Organised House**

There have been many changes in the way that households are organised and run; these changes are mainly due to technological advances and social changes. The last century has seen a prolific increase in the design and availability of many household appliances. Most houses in this country have at least a Hoover and a washing machine and it would be hard to imagine life without them, but only 50 years ago both would have been a luxury that few could afford. There is no doubt that running a household was a full-time occupation in those days, (anyone who does not have a washing machine will know how time consuming it is washing clothes by hand). Apart from technological advances there have been a number of important social changes that have had a significant effect on the household. Families are, on average, smaller in size than they were, this means that there is theoretically less work to do.

Women have always traditionally been regarded as the homemakers, with the man of the house being the 'bread winner'. Tradition has now been flung aside, to give way to a change in the stereotypical roles that were once dominant. Household chores are usually shared by both partners, although there is an ever increasing number of men who stay at home while their partner goes out to work and they take full charge of the domestic responsibilities. With this in mind the book is aimed at both sexes and all ages.

Whatever the size of your house and family and regardless of whether you have all the latest household gadgets, there are still a number of tasks that have to be done in order to keep the home looking clean and tidy. Unfortunately there is never enough time to do all that we want, so sacrifices have to be made. Do you do the ironing or do you go out with friends? We all know what we would prefer to do but sometimes it gets to the stage where there are certain onerous tasks that must be attended to.

Running a home is an occupation in itself: if you have teenage children and you leave them on their own for a few days, by the time you return your house will be even more unrecognisable than it normally is. But if you, your house and your household is organised, things need not be so bad. A little efficiency and organisation will save you time, money and emotional strain: all you have to do is follow some of the golden rules in this book. One of the most important of these rules is to keep calm: it is very hard to be organised if you get in a flap every time something goes wrong.

## ***How to be organised***

### **Guarantees**

This information also refers to receipts and instructions for appliances: there are many occasions when you need to produce documentary evidence of the purchase of a product. It might be because you want to return it to the shop or the manufacturer, or

for insurance purchases. Keep them in a safe place where you will be able to find them when needed.

### **Lists**

It is worth buying scribble boards that you can wipe clean. They are useful for writing down things that you have to do, such as cleaning jobs, items of shopping or a dentist's appointment. Whatever it might be, if it is written down you are less likely to forget it.

### **Messages**

If you live in a busy household there are going to be times when messages don't get passed on. How many times have you taken a phone message intending to write it down or pass it on and then it completely slips your mind? Have a pad of paper by the phone with a pen tied **SECURELY** to it: use the thickest chains possible, as pens are notorious as the Houdinis of the stationery world.

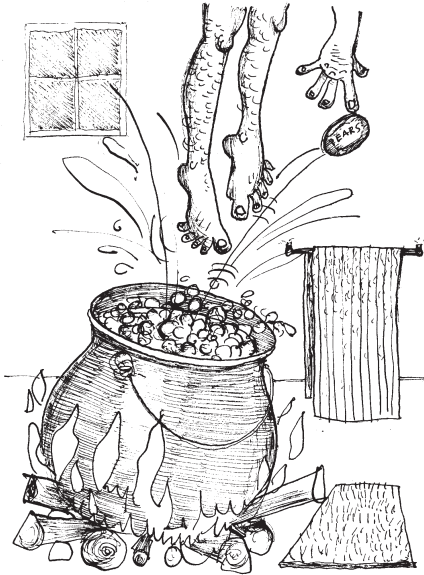
### **Children**

Children can give you a lifetime of pleasure. Allegedly. On the other hand children can create chaos within minutes. They are demanding, difficult and noisy (those are their good points). Depending on the age of your children you will encounter different problems, and I am not even going to contemplate giving any advice as there is simply not enough room in a book of this nature. What I will do is suggest a few tips that can help make things run a little more smoothly if you have children.

## **Young children**

- Try to instil a few ground rules even at an early age. Teach them not to leave their toys lying around: it can be a real hazard, especially in the kitchen.
- Keep sheets of paper and coloured pens at hand to keep your children amused.
- When the children are older make a list of telephone numbers of their friends in case you need to contact your child in an emergency.
- Keep a list of any allergies your children have, especially allergies to medication. Also keep an up to date list of inoculations. This will save you time trying to remember which of your children has had measles etc. It is not always easy to remember these things, especially if you have a large family.
- Keep a list of medical appointments on a notice board, so you don't forget when to take your children.
- Try to encourage your children to undertake extra curricula activities such as music lessons and sports. Although children should never be forced into activities they do not want to do (except washing up), there are times when they contemplate giving up a pastime because they feel it is too difficult. This is when strong encouragement should be given as they will probably end up thanking you later on.

## Safety tips



Each year there is an alarming number of horrific accidents that occur in the home: fires, scaldings, broken bones, electrocutions, etc. This might sound a little dramatic but it is the unfortunate reality.

It is also true that many accidents that occur in the home are avoidable if care is taken. You must be aware of the potential hazards that could happen, if you have children you should be even more conscious as children and accidents seem to go hand in hand.

In connection with safety in the home, make sure that you read the section on first aid and have at least a basic first aid kit. Most accidents that occur are not life threatening, but are more likely to be things like breaking a plate or glass and cutting a finger. Each area of the house has its own particular hazards as well as more general ones.

## **The Kitchen**

This is the scene of numerous accidents. Many are minor, others are more serious. Due to its function, ie. food preparation, there are a number of dangerous ingredients around: I'm not talking about food, more like knives, food processors, boiling water etc. Safety in the kitchen is essential, so here are a few guidelines.

### **Knives**

- Sharp knives are not necessarily more dangerous than blunt ones. A blunt knife can slip off when cutting food, especially things like tomatoes; they also require more force and will tear certain food such as meat. A sharp knife will give a nice clean cut.

- Never use a big knife for a small job and vice versa. A very cheap kitchen knife can bend when cutting tough objects, so it is worth investing in a couple of well made kitchen knives. Many accidents in the kitchen involve cuts from knives: this is usually due to a lack of care. A tip is to cut the way chefs do, that is move your fingers back with the knife so they are never in the line of the knife blade. If you have a friend in the catering business ask them to show you, as it is not that hard to learn.

- Take care if you store your kitchen knives in a drawer or when you are washing them up: if you are groping blindly you can cut yourself when trying to pick them up, so invest in a knife block.

### **Pans**

- If you have ever had the misfortune to be holding a saucepan of boiling hot water and then seconds later

you are only left holding the handle and the contents of the saucepan are on the floor or even over you, you will know how hazardous a loose handle can be. Make sure that you regularly tighten the handles on all your pans.

- Take care with the positioning of pans on your cooker. Remember to keep the handles from protruding over the edge of the cooker otherwise they could be knocked over. The safest way is to use the rear hobs rather than the front ones. If you have children make sure that they do not run around in the kitchen when cooking is going on.

### **Kitchen gadgets**

There is an increasing choice of kitchen gadgets: blenders, mixers, juicers, and processors. Many of them can be dangerous if used incorrectly. The golden rule is never try to cut corners - you might end up cutting your fingers off because many of these implements have very sharp motorised blades. When you are using a food processor make sure that you never feed in food while the blade is rotating. Always turn off a machine at the power point before changing blades.

### **Storage**

A well organised kitchen is normally a safe kitchen. Keep heavy items in low cupboards and lighter items in high cupboards. If you keep all your heavy pans in a high cupboard you will be risking injury every time you reach up to retrieve them. Never use a stool to

stand on if you are trying to reach an object, even a chair can be unstable. Ideally you should have a small kitchen step ladder.

### **Fire in the kitchen**

The most common type of fire in a kitchen is a fat fire. It can easily happen: you have a pan of fat on the cooker, the phone rings and you go off to answer it, forgetting all about the fat, and a few moments later your kitchen could be ablaze. When oil begins to smoke you know it is very hot and could ignite at any moment. If you do have a fat fire there are certain important ways of dealing with it.

#### *Rule one*

- Never pour on water directly to the oil. This is very hazardous and makes the fire worse.

#### *Rule two*

- Turn off the heat.

#### *Rule three*

- Place a damp cloth over the top of the pan and leave until you are certain that the fire is extinguished.

If you have a fire in the oven turn off the heat but don't open the door of the oven. If you keep the door closed the fire will extinguish itself when the supply of oxygen is used up.

#### *Other hazards*

### **Electrical**

There are two main hazards: fires and shocks, both potentially serious.

*Electrical fires can be caused by the main wiring in the house, overloaded power points, or faulty wiring on individual appliances.*

- If you have an old house and you feel that there is a problem with the wiring, ie. the lights start flickering or switches get warm, get help. Call an electrician to come and take a look: it could be serious.
- Never have too many appliances on a multi plug. It could overload it and cause an electrical fire.
- Make sure that all your appliances have the right fuse fitted. The fuse acts as a power breaker if there is a short circuit or electrical surge. If the wrong fuse is fitted you risk ruining the appliance and your life. Some people when they run out of fuses use a piece of foil to make the circuit: this is extremely foolish, dangerous and should never be done.
- Certain appliances need different fuses depending on how much current they draw.

Up to 600 watts use a 3 amp. fuse.

600 to 1000 watts use a 5 amp. fuse.

Over a 1000 watts use a 13 amp. fuse.

The appliance should give instructions as to what fuse must be fitted.

- Choosing the correct fuse is not the only part of electrical safety. Make sure that in lamps you do not use a light bulb with too high a wattage for the lampshade. If you use a high wattage bulb it could