4-H HOME IMPROVEMENT

UNIT 1
HELPING IN THE HOME

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References: Extension circulars from
Tennessee, Utah and
Virginia
HOME IMPROVEMENT

Unit I - Helping in the Home

Your choice of this project shows that you are not a selfish person, but have an interest in your home and other members of your family.

In this project you will be learning how to help others and to take your share of responsibilities in the home.

Here are some of the things you should do during the year. Check those you plan to do.

1. Make three or more items for the home.
   The following are some suggestions:
   - Set of place mats—at least 4 mats
   - Hot dish mat
   - Pot holder
   - Dish towel
   - Block and plank bookcase
   - Make flower arrangement for dining room
   - Arrange a cleaning kit
   - Any other item you wish to make (discuss with Leader or Agent)
2. Set an attractive table at least once a day for one month
3. Wash dishes once a day for at least one month
4. Clean woodwork in one room
5. Clean windows in two rooms
6. Keep a record of what you do
7. Share with someone else something you learned in this project. This may be done by demonstration, a talk, an exhibit or showing others what you have done and telling them what you learned.
8. Tell in writing what you have learned in the project.

Helping in the Dining Room

Setting the Table.—Setting the table correctly is one activity every 4-H Club girl and boy should learn to do. After you learn how, you can set the table quickly and neatly and will be glad you can help with this everyday task.

This Is What You Do:

1. Lay the cloth on the table over a silence cloth. Use the creases in the middle as a guide to be sure the cloth is straight.
2. Put place mats on the bare table. The cloth or mats may be linen, cotton, or plastic but should be clean.
3. Arrange a low bowl of flowers, fruit, or small growing plant in the center of the table.
4. Collect the napkins, dishes, glassware, and silver on a tray. Place tray on a table near dining table.

Set a Place for Each Person in This Way:

- **Plate.**—Open side up, about 1 inch from edge of table.
- **Knife.**—With cutting edge next to plate, at right of plate.
- **Fork.**—With tines up, at left of plate.
- **Spoon.**—At right of knife with bowl up.
- **Napkin.**—At left of fork, with open corner

A "silence cloth" is made of washable material and is used to protect the table and keep dishes and silver from rattling.
turned toward lower edge of plate.

Water Glass.—At tip of knife.
Cup and Saucer.—At right of spoon with cup handle turned to right.

Plates should be at least 24 inches apart, measured from center of plates.
Place: Silver in line with lower edges of plate and napkin.
Salt and pepper shakers near center.
Individual shakers just above each plate.
Chairs with front edges just under edge of the table.

Some of the Things to Remember and Practice Are:
Always be neat. Wash your hands before setting the table.
Use only clean dishes, silver, glassware, and linens.

To keep them clean, be sure to:
Pick up silver and cups by the handles only.
Hold glasses with fingers on the outside near the bottom.
Keep your fingers out of the dishes by holding each dish by the rim or with your hand on the bottom of it.

Make the table just as attractive as possible because this makes eating pleasant and thus aids in the digestion of food.
When you are using colored dishes, linens, and flowers, select colors that look good together.
Remember that the main idea in table setting is to arrange the dishes, glassware, silver, napkins, and food so that everything will be convenient and easily used.

Practice setting the table at least once a day for one month. Possibly you will want to continue.

Making Place Mats
Before you shop for fabric, look at your dishes and talk with your mother about color choice. Also, discuss this with your leader or agent. Do the dishes have a design on them? If so, choose a solid colored fabric that sets off the color in the dishes. If the dishes are plain, you may use fabric that is plain or patterned.

There are several ways to make place mats. They may be hemmed on all four sides (Fig. 1a); hemmed on the long sides and fringed on the ends, (Fig. 1b); or fringed on all four sides, (Fig. 1c).
Four place mats can be made from 27 inches (2 ¾ yard) of fabric 36 inches wide.

Each finished mat will be about 17 inches by 12 inches. If you want larger mats, ask your leader to help you figure the amount of fabric you will need.

1. Straighten fabric. When fabric is cut from a bolt in the store, it may not be straight. Straighten one end by tearing, or by pulling a thread and cutting along the thread line. (See Fig. 2)

![Figure 4](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

![Figure 5](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

2. Cut out place mats as shown in Fig. 3. Clip selvages ¼ inch every 3 inches.

To make place mats hemmed on all four sides, follow these directions:

1. On each long side turn and press ¼ inch fold along the stitching line. Then turn ¼ inch hem, press, and pin. (See Fig. 4)
2. Stitch hem by machine or hem by hand. Fig. 5 shows hemming stitch.
3. On each short side, turn a ¼ inch fold. Then turn, press, and pin a ¼ inch hem.
4. Stitch by machine or by hand.

To make your place mats with the long sides hemmed and fringes on the short sides, you would need to use a coarse fabric such as Indian Head or burlap. The fringe should not be more than ½ inch long. Here’s how you make the mat:

1. After you have cut the mats as shown in Fig. 3, pull out one thread ½ inch from the cut edge on the short sides.
2. Machine stitch along this line. Use a small stitch, 16-18 stitches per inch.
3. Pull out threads up to stitching line.
4. Hem long sides as directed in Steps 1 and 2, above.

To fringe place mats on all four sides:

1. Cut mats as shown in Fig. 3.
2. Pull out one or more threads ½ inch from cut edge on all sides.
3. Machine stitch on the drawn thread line all the way around as shown in Fig. 6.
4. Pull out the threads back to the stitching line to make the fringe.

Making Hot Dish Mats.—Unless your table has a plastic type top, it may be damaged by setting hot dishes of food on it. You may wish to make hot dish mats by one of the following instructions:

Looper-Clip Mats.—These are made on metal frames and is a type of weaving. Looper-clips may be bought at a dime store. Pot
holders may be made this same way.

Covered Asbestos Pads.—Also from a dime store you can buy square asbestos pads covered with metal. These look nice covered with Indian Head or sailcloth slip covers. The six-inch square pads are a good size.

To make covers:

1. If you use 6-inch pads, cut two pieces of fabric 7 inches square. Pull threads to straighten fabric like you did for the place mats.
2. Lay pad on wrong side of fabric allowing ½ inch on all sides. See Fig. 7. Mark around pad.
3. Put two pieces of fabric together with right sides toward each other. Pin in place.
4. Stitch the two pieces of fabric together on 3 sides. Stitch just outside the marked line. If you stitch on the line, the cover will be too small.
5. Clip extra fabric from stitched corners. (Fig. 8). Turn right side out and press.
6. Hem open edge.
7. Put pad inside cover. This makes a pretty protection for your table. Change covers when they are soiled.

Flowers for the Table.—A centerpiece on the table can make a simple meal seem like a festive occasion.

Flowers can be used to carry out a color scheme. Choose ones which will look well with your table setting, keeping in mind the colors of both the dishes and place mats.

Cut some lighter colors with long stems and a few darker ones with shorter stems. Put the flowers in a deep can of water for several hours so they can get a good drink.

Use a Low Container.—A dining table centerpiece should be low enough so that people can sit on each side of the table and see each other.

You will need to use a low container and some kind of holder. (Fig. 9)

Making the Arrangement.—There are many ways to make arrangements. Practice with flowers and other plant material you have gathered from your garden or from fields and roadsides. You will find helpful ideas in books and magazines and by seeing how plants grow naturally.

When you have been in the 4-H Improvement another year or two, you will do a more complete study of arranging flowers.

Helping in the Kitchen

Washing Dishes Without Electric Dishwasher.—Who told you washing dishes was a job to dread? Since it needs to be done every day in the year, why not learn to do it well? Wash dishes this way for at least two weeks.
Before you start washing dishes check with mother to see that you have the necessary tools and supplies close to the place where you will be working. Keep these things together.

Equipment
Sink or Dishpan
If you do not have a sink, use two dishpans—one for washing and one for rinsing. A rubber mat in the sink will cut down chipping and breakage.
Draining Rack is Helpful
Rinse dishes in hot water and leave in drainer. A draining pan or tray will be needed if the dish drainer cannot be set in the sink.
Plate Scraper
Scrape all food from dishes before washing. Use a plate scraper or paper napkin or paper towel.
Paper Towels
Use paper towels for removing grease from dishes and utensils before washing.
Tray or Service Cart.—Use a tray or serving cart to save steps in clearing the table and putting things away.
Soaps or Detergents.—Use enough soap to keep a light sudsy while washing.
Scouring Materials.—Non-scratching powders, pads, a prong of a wooden clothespin, or brushes can be used to remove hard and sticky food. Never use knives or good silver to scrape pans!
Other Supplies.—Be sure the dishcloth, sponge or brush you choose is clean and sanitary and used only for dishes.
Dish towels should be soft and absorbent.
Hot Water.—Lots of hot water is needed. Add hot water to your dishwater and rinse water as it cools. Change water when it gets dirty.

Getting Ready to Wash Dishes.—Try to wash all cooking utensils while preparing the meal. Put kettles used in cooking to soak and pile neatly.
As you leave the table, remove the dishes of left-over food. Put food in small, covered dishes in refrigerator. Clear the rest of the table. When carrying dishes from one place to another, a tray is a laborsaver.
Scrape, sort, rinse, and stack dishes in neat piles at right of sink or dishpan. Rinsing dishes helps to keep your dishwater from getting dirty. Be sure to rinse dishes if you are not going to wash them until later.
If you are left-handed, start with dirty dishes on left side of sink and work to the right.
Arrange together glassware, silverware, cups, saucers, small plates, and serving dishes in this order.
If dish pan or sink is too high for you, find a stool or wooden box to stand on. This will make the job less tiring. However, if the work surface is too low, place a wooden rack under your dish pan.

Doing the Job
1. Wash hands.
2. Partly fill the sink or dish pan with hot sudsy water.
3. Partly fill the rinse pan with scalding water. Place rinse pan and drainer to left of dish pan or sink.
4. Wash all glassware and put in rinse water. Then using both hands, lift from
rinse water and place upside down in drainer.

5. Wash silverware and place in rinse pan. Placing the silver in a colander or sink strainer makes it possible to lift silver from hot rinse water without burning the hands. Be careful not to bang silver for it scratches very easily. Place in drainer. Towel dry glassware and silver.

6. Wash the china. Rinse and place in drainer. Turn cups and bowls upside down. The china will dry while you wash pots and pans.

7. Wash kitchen utensils and pans, leaving dirtiest until last. Rinse and towel dry.

If you do not want to use a rinse pan, dishes may be washed as above, but all placed in the dish drainer and then rinsed with hot water. Use lots of hot water for this pour-over rinse. Make sure that all sides of the dishes are rinsed. Towel dry glasses, silverware, kitchen utensils and pans. China may be wiped or left to drain dry.

Special Tips

• Soak greasy and sugary dishes in hot water. Use cold water to soak other dishes and pans.

• Burned-on food can often be removed by filling pan with cold water and bringing it to a boil.

• Do not put electrical equipment in water. Wipe with a damp cloth and dry.

• To wash wooden ware, dip quickly and wash immediately in warm, sudsy water. Do not allow it to stand in water. Rinse well and dry thoroughly.

• Keep the gear part of the egg beater out of water.

• Wash sharp knives one at a time, rinse and dry without letting go of them. Handle carefully!

• Rinse milk and egg dishes in cold water as soon as you have finished them.

Cleaning Up

1. Put away dishes, pots and pans. If dish cupboards are near the dishwashing center, put dishes away as they are being wiped.

2. Wipe counter tops, kitchen table, range and refrigerator door, if necessary.

3. Empty water, wipe pans and drainer and put away.

4. Rinse dishcloth and scouring pad in soapy water, then clean water.

5. Hang towels and cloth to dry.

6. Clean sink. Scour if necessary.

7. Wash hands and apply hand lotion.

Using Electric Dishwasher. — Here's how a typical dishwasher works. After it is loaded with rinsed dishes and the switch turned on, the dishes are washed with jets of hot water. Then the dishes are given a hot rinse. The drain closes, and fresh hot water rises in the bottom of the tub. The impeller, which is a rotating arm with blades, begins to turn, churning water up to flush the detergent out of a cup. After five minutes the machine drains, then repeats the process with fresh hot water. It drains again, then gives two
hot water rinses. After draining, it fans heated air over the dishes for 20 minutes as they dry.

Care and Feeding of Dishwashers

1. Scrape and rinse dishes before putting them in dishwasher. A dishwasher is not a garbage disposer.
2. Load silverware handle down.
3. Load glasses and cups bottom up. Don't overlap flat pieces . . . water must get to every surface.
4. Lipstick on dishes, tarnish on silver, and pots and pans encrusted with cooked and caked food need pre-treatment.
5. Measure correct amount of the right kind of detergent and put it in the cup designed for it. Read the instruction book to know what to use.
6. Clean the impeller . . . see that it is free to rotate. Give it a flick with your finger to make sure.
7. Don't let small strainer over the drain in the bottom of the tub become clogged.
8. Once in a while dust the motor and parts, but be careful not to damage the wiring when you clean. A vacuum cleaner is good for this job.
9. If you are plagued by hard water, the hard water scum can be slushed off by running the dishwasher through a complete cycle without any dishes, using a cup of vinegar instead of a detergent. The only permanent solution is to install soft water in the line.
10. Do not put kitchen knives in the dishwasher . . . wooden handles may deteriorate, and the temper of the blades is damaged by prolonged high temperature.

Make These for the Kitchen

Dish Towel.—Any kitchen needs plenty of clean dish towels. If your kitchen needs a few more, you can make them.

Materials needed:

Fabric—may be muslin, toweling or other suitable material.

Sewing Supplies

Allow one yard of toweling about 17 inches wide to make a nice size dish towel.

To make:
1. Straighten the material by drawing a thread.
2. Cut on the drawn line.
3. Turn and baste or pin a ¼ inch hem on each end.
4. Machine stitch, following as close to the turned edge of hem as possible.
5. Back stitch 4 or 5 stitches at the beginning and end of stitching to fasten the thread.
6. Overhand stitch the ends of the hem to close them, or close by machine stitching.
7. Dish towels do not need a decoration on them, but you may put on a simple decoration if you wish.

Pot Holders.—It is important to have good, heavy pot holders to use in the kitchen. You can make your own.

Materials needed:

Strip of heavy material - 8 inches by 15 inches or two 8 inch squares Cotton flannel - two 7-inch squares - about the weight of cotton sheet blankets, or these pieces may be cut from the back legs of worn out cotton trousers.

To make:
1. Stay stitch each square of percale.
2. Center 2 layers of flannel on one square of percale or on one end of percale strip. Pin securely in place. (Fig. 2)
3. To hold the flannel in place, make 3
or 4 parallel rows of machine stitching.

4. Lay the two percale squares with right sides together. Or if the percale strip is used, fold crosswise with right sides together. Pin and baste together.

5. Allow ½ inch seam and stitch around the sides of the holder. Round the corners as you stitch. You may need to mark the stitching line around the corners with chalk or pencil to get the corners even. Leave about 4-inch opening on one side for turning.

6. Turn right side out. Close 4-inch opening by hand, using plain or blind hemming stitches. Pot holders may be woven from looper-clips. Check with your leader on how to make them.

You can make pot holder mitts if you wish. Ask your leader to show you how.

Helping Through the House

Keeping newspapers, magazines, and books picked up helps the appearance of a room a great deal.

If you save newspapers for any reason, have a place to keep them stacked neatly.

A bookcase helps keep a room organized, too. Here’s how to make one kind of bookcase.

Brick and Board Bookcase

Every important job needs a plan. On a separate sheet of paper make a drawing of your shelves as you want them to look. Here are some things to think about:

Where will you put the shelves?
How long is the space?
How many shelves do you want?
How long should they be?

Ask your mother and dad to help you answer these questions. They will have good ideas to share with you.

Look for pine or fir boards about 1 inch thick and 10 or 12 inches wide. Maybe you can find old boards around the house. Be sure the boards are straight and not warped. If you have to buy lumber, find out the cost per foot of the width you want. Then figure how much the lumber for your shelves will cost.

Use building bricks, concrete blocks, or glass bricks between the shelves under the bottom shelf. If your shelves are more than 54 inches long, use bricks or blocks near the center as well as at the ends.

The number of bricks or blocks you need will depend on their size and the number and length of shelves you want. If you use concrete blocks, you’ll find it easier to use half blocks than whole ones.

Materials Needed to Make Shelves:

- Boards cut to the size you want
- Bricks, concrete blocks, or glass bricks
- Sandpaper — 1 sheet medium and 1 sheet fine
- Water-base wallpaint and brush
- OR
- Penetrating wood sealer, pad of fine steel wool, old nylon stocking, and cup or small dish
- Newspapers
Before applying the finish to the boards, rub or sand with sandpaper until they are smooth. First use the medium weight and then the fine. **ALWAYS RUB OR SAND WITH THE GRAIN OF THE WOOD, NEVER ACROSS IT.**

**How to Apply Penetrating Sealer Finish**
- When applying penetrating wood sealer finish be sure to work in a well ventilated room in which there are no fires.
- Wear old clothes. Cover your work area with old newspapers, and dust the boards before applying the finish.
- Read the directions on the can of sealer before you start. Instead of a brush, you can use a pad made of an old nylon stocking. Your boards will need two or three coats.

**How to Apply Paint.—**Painting can be messy, so wear old clothes. Cover your work area with a thick layer of newspapers to catch the drips. Try to find a place where there is little or no dust. Wipe the article with a clean cloth. Put the board on old jar lids or small blocks of wood so the paint won't stick to the newspaper. Be sure to use a clean brush.

1. Stir paint until it is well-mixed.
2. Dip bristles into paint about half their length, and lightly tap rim of paint can.

3. Paint with light short strokes following the grain of the wood. Catch runs and drips, and smooth them with the brush.
4. Be sure paint is dry before you touch or move the board.

After the paint or sealer is completely dry, you're ready to build your shelves. Isn't it fun to see your shelves just as you planned in your drawing?

**Washing Windows.—**Windows should not be washed when the sun is shining directly on them because they will dry too quickly and show streaks. When washing windows, it is good to assemble all your tools before starting the task. This will save your energy. Another energy-saving suggestion is to use a good, sturdy, well-braced stepladder with a shelf attachment for the bucket to avoid unnecessary stooping. For safety, never stand on the top step of a stepladder. Always stand low enough so there are at least two steps above the one on which you are standing. This enables you to brace yourself against the ladder with your knees.

Before starting to wash the windows, dust the screens, glass and woodwork. If one person works on the outside while another works on the
inside, you can tell better when glass is sparkling clean. Use clear warm water, a chamois or soft lintless cloth and one of the following mixtures.

1. \( \frac{1}{4} \) cup household ammonia to four quarts of warm water.
2. \( \frac{1}{2} \) cup denatured alcohol to four quarts of warm water.
3. Two tablespoons kerosene to four quarts of warm water.
4. \( \frac{1}{4} \) to \( \frac{1}{2} \) cup vinegar to four quarts of warm water.
5. Soap is not advised for cleaning windows because it will streak.

Dip cloth or chamois in mixture. Wring dry as possible and wash the glass. Dry with a clean cloth. Be careful to clean corners and sills. It is easier to see streaks and eliminate them if you wash the outside of the window using horizontal strokes and the inside with vertical strokes. The streaks will show up in the light and you will be able to tell which side needs the extra polishing.

There are good commercial cleaners available if you prefer to use one of them. Read the label and follow instructions.

Arrange a Cleaning Kit. — The first step to easier cleaning is to keep your supplies together in a kit that can be carried from room to room as cleaning is done.

The kit can be an open basket or a box with handles. If a basket is used, it should be lined with oilcloth or plastic to keep any spilled liquids from getting on floor or fabrics. Use jars and small bottles so the kit will not be too heavy. Label each container so you know what is in it.

The cleaning kit might include:
- Whiskbroom or upholstery brush
- Soft clean cloths
- Treated dust cloths
- Small scrub brush
- Sponges
- Chamois
- Wax
- Neutral soap or synthetic detergent
- Mild scouring powder
- Dry cleaning fluid
- Window cleaner

Cleaning Painted Woodwork.—Start washing woodwork at the bottom and work upward. Water running down dirty woodwork causes streaks which are difficult to remove. To prevent running, never use cloths or sponges which are so wet they drip. Wash only a small area at a time and rinse with a cloth wrung out of clean water. Use any good paint cleaner. Check with your mother to see what she uses.

You can make a soap jelly cleaner by mixing \( \frac{3}{4} \) cup neutral soap flakes in a quart of boiling water. Let set until it jells. Use small amount of soap jelly on sponge or soft cloth to clean wood-
You may omit items, or add others depending on your needs and methods of cleaning.

A cobbler apron with deep pockets is a useful cleaning aid. You can keep your dust cloth, small vacuum attachments, and other cleaning equipment right at hand in the pockets while you are working. You'll probably find that an apron with a neck strap is more comfortable than one that ties at the waist only.

Give a Demonstration

You give a demonstration if you show and tell how to do or make something.

Here are some ideas for demonstrations. These you have studied in this project.

Make a hem
Set a table
Make a place mat
Make cover for dish mat
Make an arrangement for dining table
Scrape and stack dirty dishes beside dishpan
Sand and finish wood
Assemble a board and brick bookcase
Equip a cleaning kit
You can think of others
HELPING IN THE HOME RECORD

Below you will find an easy calendar for keeping your daily record.

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Wash Woodwork

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From the total above, fill in the blanks below.

I set the table ________________ times.
I washed dishes ________________ times.
I washed windows ________________ times.
I washed woodwork ________________ times.
I made or bought these articles for our home.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIST</th>
<th>MADE</th>
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<th>I RECEIVED HELP FROM</th>
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Part of your project was to share what you learned with someone else. This could be in the form of a Demonstration, Talks, or Exhibits. Fill in the section or sections which you did.

I gave ____________ demonstrations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>WHERE GIVEN</th>
<th>NO. PEOPLE</th>
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I gave ____________ talks about home improvement

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I made an exhibit: Yes _______ (or) No _______. Place of Exhibit

MY EXHIBIT INCLUDED:


Any other ways you shared what you learned with others.

Pictures of Things I Have Made For Our Home

Snapshots would be excellent. However, you may draw pictures and show samples of materials used. (Add extra sheets if you need additional space for pictures.)

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED IN THIS PROJECT

(Write in your own words what you learned in carrying out this project.)

This public document was promulgated at an annual cost of $814.00, or 13.6 cents per copy, to teach 4-H youth how to make home improvements and help in their homes. 10-6M-81.