
Kate: Hello, I'm Kate Colin and this is 6 minute English and today I'm joined as usual by Jackie Dalton. Well now we're well into the month of May and spring is well under way so today we're talking about the modern attitude to '**spring cleaning** and housework' – can you explain what spring cleaning is Jackie?

Jackie: Yes, **spring cleaning** is when you clean all your house from top to bottom (including the bits you don't clean very often!)

Kate: Well, today people have very varied attitudes to housework. Some people spend a lot of time cleaning, others employ cleaners to do it for them and some people do no housework at all, preferring to spend their free time doing something else completely.

Jackie: Yes, I recently heard of something called 'skimming' and this means that you spray a bit of furniture polish into a room to make it smell like you've been cleaning but in fact you haven't done any at all.

Kate: Oh – I might try that! Here's my question for this week - how many hours per week do you think the average woman spends doing housework?

- a) 3 hours
- b) 15 hours
- c) 20 hours

Jackie: Answers

Kate: We'll check your answer later but first let's listen to an extract which was recorded 20 years ago. It's with a lady called Edna McLaren talking about her mother and her attitude to housework when she was growing up. How do you think housework has changed over the years?

Clip 1

Monday was washday, Tuesday probably one bedroom, Wednesday probably another, Thursday, she'd perhaps do the front room. And of course there was all the outside to do, all the fronts and the backs and the toilets and then Friday, the carpets used to have to be taken up and then the floor had to be washed and then polished.

Jackie: Well, it seems women in the past had a very busy time cleaning their houses. It seems to have been a full time job! Of course now we have vacuum cleaners and washing machines to make our life easier. I certainly wouldn't have time to do all that and have a job as well.

Kate: Well yes, and many people do find it difficult to fit in housework round their full-time jobs and commitments, and some prefer to do the very minimum. In the next extract you'll hear from a lady called Vivien Emery, who admits she doesn't spend much time tidying her house. Is her house messy or tidy?

Clip 2

The state of my house is reasonably tidy, especially the rooms you can see. But I'm not obsessive about anything, I mean the kitchen's clean but it's very untidy - everything's on the worktops. The bathroom is clean but not particularly tidy and the downstairs loo, that's clean but there's all sorts - wellingtons and walking boots in there.

Jackie: Well it sounds to me that her house is fairly untidy but she insists it's clean. And she said she wasn't **obsessive** about anything. Now if you're **obsessive**, you're very interested or worried about something in an extreme way. For example people can get obsessive about cleaning, they always want to make sure that everything is clean and tidy. She admitted that there's lots of **clutter** in her downstairs loo or toilet. **Clutter** is a word we'll be hearing later and that means

there's lots of junk and stuff which is just lying around the house like piles of newspapers and books and thing like that.

Kate: What's your house like Jackie? Do you have lots of clutter lying around or are you a **clean freak**? A clean freak is when someone spends all their time cleaning and tidying.

Jackie: answers

Kate: Next we're going to hear from somebody who is a professional cleaner. We're going to hear her talking about **spring cleaning** and having a **clear out**. A **clear out** is when you throw or give away lots of things in your house you no longer need. Can you hear some reasons why she says **spring cleaning** is a good idea?

Clip 3

I think psychologically more than anything it's good to have a good **clear out**, you know, get rid of stuff and it just kind of clears the air, it clears your head. Open the windows, let the air in and I just think it kind of lifts your spirits to be able to have less **clutter** around.

Jackie: She said that spring cleaning clears the air and your head. So it not only makes things cleaner physically but it also helps you mentally and helps you think more clearly. She also said that having less clutter lifts the spirits. If something lifts your spirits, it makes you feel happier.

Kate: I certainly agree with that – maybe I'll have a clear out this weekend.
Lastly, let's have a look at some of the words we have come across today:

Jackie: First we had to **spring clean** which means to deep clean your house. This usually only happens once a year - in the spring.
obsessive is when someone is very interested or worried about something.
clutter which means a lot of junk and stuff which is lying around your house, like newspapers, books and shoes.

a **clean freak** is when someone spends all their time cleaning and tidying.

clear out is when you throw or give away lots of things in your house you no longer need.

to **lift your spirits** means that something makes you feel happier.

Kate: And finally let's go back to the question I asked you earlier. I asked how many hours per week do you think the average woman spends doing housework?

Jackie: And I said...

Kate: And I'm afraid you were wrong, the average woman spends 15 hours per week doing the housework which seems like a lot when you compare it to the average man who spends just 7 hours. Something not quite right there I think!
That's all we have time for I'm afraid. Until next week.

Both: Goodbye!