

CHECKLIST · HOSTING

The host's checklist: what Airbnb guests actually take stars for

Guests rarely write that it was dirty. They write «a bit tired», give four stars, and you never learn which room they meant.

A four-star review with no comment is the most expensive feedback there is: it costs you visibility without telling you what to change. The Superhost threshold is a 4.8 average, and at that level the distance between four and five stars is not a matter of taste — it is a few fixed things, and they are almost always the same ones.

This is not about cleaning more. Most hosts already clean thoroughly, and cleanliness is still the single most common reason for a lost star. Host and guest are looking at different things: the host sees what was done, the guest sees the one thing that was not.

Nine points below, in the order a guest meets them.

The nine points

☐ 1. Hair. Always hair.

This is the single detail that triggers the most cleanliness comments. One hair in the shower is not read as «a hair». It is read as «the previous guest», and from that moment the guest starts looking for more.

Three hiding places: in and around the drain, in the join between shower wall and floor, and on the floor behind the bathroom door — never wiped, because the door stands open while you clean.

Lift the drain grate every time. Do the drain last, after the floor, and finish the bathroom floor with a dry cloth or paper: dry paper catches hair that a wet cloth pushes around.

★ DO THIS

Close the bathroom door and look at the floor behind it before you leave the room.

☐ 2. The smell in the first ten seconds

Smell is the one impression a guest cannot switch off, and it is formed before the suitcases are down. A home that has stood locked for two days smells stale however clean it is.

Do not cover it. Scented spray reads as «something is being hidden», and a good number of guests react to strong fragrance in itself. What you want is the absence of smell, not a different smell.

Cross-ventilate for ten minutes after cleaning, empty every bin even when there is no rubbish in it, and leave the bathroom door open so the room dries. Check the dishwasher is empty and its filter is clean — it is the most common source of the smell nobody can find.

✦ DO THIS

Step outside, wait a minute, come back in. Your nose resets in under sixty seconds, and then you smell what the guest smells.

☐ 3. Linen: the standard is not clean, it is freshly changed

A guest cannot see that linen has been washed. They can only see whether it looks freshly changed, and those are not the same thing.

What decides it: the fold lines from ironing or packing, pillowcases pulled fully out into the corners, no creases left from where you sat on the edge, and no hair on the pillow. White makes this easier than a pattern, because white shows that it is clean rather than hiding that it is not.

Check the mattress protector every time, not every third time.

✦ DO THIS

Make the bed last, after all dusting in the room. Dust settles downwards, and a made bed is a dust trap.

☐ 4. The grease film in the kitchen

Cooking grease settles as a thin, tacky film on everything near the hob, and it is nearly invisible. It is felt, not seen.

The guest finds it by touching something: the underside of the wall units, the side of the cooker, the extractor handle, the edge of the cupboard door beside the hob. A tacky surface is the clearest signal there is that a kitchen was wiped rather than cleaned.

Ordinary soap handles it while it is new. Older films need a degreaser and a few minutes of dwell time — not more scrubbing — then a pass with clean water, or the product leaves its own film.

✦ DO THIS

Run a fingertip under the wall-unit edge next to the hob. If it sticks, you know what is left on the rest of the kitchen.

☐ 5. Dust at eye level — from the bed

Everyone cleans at the height they stand at. The guest is lying down, and from a bed eye level is somewhere else entirely: the top edge of the skirting, the door frame, the edge of the television, the top of the bedside lamp, the flat top of a radiator.

This is the most common source of the word «tired» in a review. The place is not tired — it has a grey layer on exactly the surfaces in the line of sight of somebody lying awake at seven in the morning.

Lie down for two minutes after the room is finished and look around from there.

✦ DO THIS

Do the same on the sofa. The underside of the coffee table is the same mistake in another room.

☐ 6. The bin itself, not the bag

The bag is changed every time. The bin is almost never washed, and it is the bin that smells — liquid that has leaked from a bag dries into the base and into the groove under the rim where the bag folds over.

Wash the inside and the rim with soapy water regularly, and dry it completely before the new bag. A damp bin with a fresh bag smells within a day.

Put a spare bag in the bottom, under the one in use. That is not cleaning, it is a courtesy guests notice — and one of the things that ends up as a positive sentence in a review.

✦ DO THIS

The bathroom and the bedroom need a bin too. Without one, the contents end up in the kitchen bin or the toilet.

☐ 7. The kettle, the coffee maker and anything drunk from

The kettle is one of the few things in the home a guest looks inside. Limescale in the base is harmless and reads as dirty, and the reading is what counts.

Descale it with citric acid or vinegar water, rinse twice, and leave the lid open so it dries. Coffee makers have the same problem inside, plus a filter holder that turns sour if grounds are left in it.

Glasses go from the dishwasher straight into the cupboard with water spots and limescale streaks. Dry them with a clean, dry tea towel first. A streaked glass looks used however clean it is.

✦ DO THIS

Store cups upside down. It keeps dust out between guests and it looks deliberate.

☐ 8. Mirrors, glass and shiny surfaces

A mirror is the surface most guest photographs are taken in front of, and the one that shows poor work most clearly. Streaks on a mirror tell a whole story about how the rest was done.

Streaks come from three things: too much product, a cloth that is not clean enough, or the surface drying too fast. Use little, work in one pass, and finish with a dry microfibre worked in a different direction so you can see what is left.

The same applies to the shower screen. Limescale on glass comes off with an acidic product, not with scrubbing — scrubbing grinds dull patches into the glass that never come out.

★ DO THIS

Look at the mirror from the side, not straight on. Streaks only show in raking light, which is how a guest walks past it.

☐ 9. The first-thirty-seconds test

The last thing you do before locking up is step out, close the door fully, and come back in as if you were the guest. Count to thirty and note everything you notice without looking for it.

What you notice in thirty seconds is exactly what ends up in a review: smell, light, temperature, the first visual impression from the hallway, and whether anything is out of place. Anything you have to search for will not cost you a star.

★ DO THIS

Switch on the light you want them to see, and set the heating to what you want them to walk into.

The seven places that cost the most stars

In short, if you have ten minutes left before check-in:

- ★ The drain and the bathroom floor behind the door.
- ★ The underside of the wall units beside the hob.
- ★ The top of skirting and door frames, seen from the bed.
- ★ Inside the kettle, and the dishwasher filter.
- ★ The bin itself, not the bag.
- ★ Mirrors and the shower screen in raking light.
- ★ The smell, judged again after a minute outdoors.

What is not worth your time

- ★ Cleaning inside cupboards the guest does not use. Empty and dry is the requirement, not gleaming.
- ★ Changing linen that was not slept in. Check it, air the room, leave it.
- ★ Polishing kitchen fronts to a shine. Not tacky is the standard; shiny is not.
- ★ Buying welcome gifts before the basic cleaning is reliable.

When to hand the turnover over

The arithmetic is simple and it is not about cleaning. A turnover takes two to four hours in a normal flat. If you cannot fit it between an eleven o'clock checkout and a four o'clock check-in, without stress, every time — including the weekend you are somewhere else — the problem is the calendar, not the task.

The second reason is consistency. A guest does not compare with the previous guest, but your reviews do. One poor round in ten is the one that sits at the top for three months.

The room-by-room checklist our team works to is published at [/airbnb-vask/sjekkliste](#). It is our working document, not an extract of it.

The 4.8 Superhost average is Airbnb's own published threshold. The rest of the list is our experience from turnovers, not a platform rule.



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