

# ***LIVING ESSENTIALS***

A GUIDE TO LIVING IN PARIS: CLEANLINESS & ESSENTIAL TOOLS



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## ***Why is this so important, you ask?***

**Because cleanliness is important to your health, both physical and mental.**

Not everyone is going to get an A+ for cleanliness: your accommodation is your space to feel at home, and if that means you're comfortable with skipping some chores, that's of course up to you. However, there are some basic tasks that are crucial to avoiding common big-city problems, such as rodents, bed-bugs, and other infestations. It is best to be proactive to maintain a clean and sanitary living space.

This might be your first time living away from home and some tasks and processes might be new to you. This guide provides general house cleaning and maintenance practices that can be helpful for any apartment, home, or city.

## GENERAL CLEANLINESS



Like any big city, the Paris streets, public spaces, and transport vehicles are not the cleanest. But there are some ways you can avoid spreading these germs in your own space.

- Take your shoes off at the door
- Don't sit on your bed in the same clothes that you wore to sit in public transportation
- Wash your hands when you get home
- Bring hand sanitizer with you when you're out
- Plan for regular deep cleaning days of your apartment
- Keep your accommodation tidy, put trash in bins, not laying around the apartment
- Take out the trash frequently to avoid rodents and pests

## TRASH & RECYCLING

For a helpful guide from the Mairie de Paris: [follow this link](#)



### TRASH

- Use a bin with a lid to avoid smell (especially in small apartments)
- Use a small bin, and remove the trash more frequently
- Have a plan, a day you consistently take out the trash
- In Paris, **the trash bins are all green**, make sure all trash placed in these bins is **contained in a plastic bag**



### RECYCLING

- There is an active recycling system in Paris, look for the bins with yellow lids
- Keep a separate bin/organizer in your apartment to separate recycling from your trash
- **Recycling can be placed loosely in these bins**, it doesn't need to be contained in plastic bags



### GLASS

- Be courteous of your neighbors: put your bottles in the glass bins during daylight hours (not during hours when people are sleeping, as it is often loud when they crash in the bin with other glass)
- FYI: Glass bins are not meant for broken glass, such as drinking glasses, mirrors, etc.
- Lids are allowed, but ensure they are screwed on tight to the jars or bottles
- Glass bins have a **white lid with a hole in the middle**

## LAUNDRY

This dreaded chore is easily procrastinated, but it is a must. Staying up to date on your laundry is extremely important, not just for your hygiene, but for efficiency. It's better to do a load every few days than to wait until you have 5 loads of laundry you need to do all in one day, especially when using communal laundry rooms shared with other residents.



General tips on how often to wash:

- Sheets & towels: Weekly
- Undergarments/athletic clothes: after each wear
- Shirts/blouses: after 1-2 wears
- Jeans: after 4-5 wears
- Suits/Casual jackets: after 5-6 wears



### GENERAL NOTES

- Washing machines in France are generally much smaller and much slower than those in the U.S.
- There are "LAVERIES" throughout Paris (Laundromats)
- DO NOT put too many clothes in a machine, there needs to be extra space for the clothes to move around
- Make sure to always empty the lint trap after using a dryer; if you do not empty it, it can become a fire hazard
- It's good practice to keep the washing machine door open when you are not using it to let it air out



### PRODUCTS

- **Liquid / Powder Detergent:** (*Lessive*) the main cleaner - pulls away the dirt and grime from clothing
- **Detergent pods/tablets:** must be used at high temperature to properly melt - we do not recommend using these, as they will often not fully dissolve.
- **Softener:** not necessary, but you can add it to your routine to help fabric feel softer, combat wrinkles, and reduce static (remember, it doesn't work as a cleaning agent)
- **Stain Removers:** often best to apply this as soon as possible, let it sit, then wash



### SETTINGS

- Temperatures will be in Celsius (use 40° for colors & 30° for lights). Use hotter water for more soiled clothes to remove germs
- Common settings: normal/cotton, permanent press, and delicate
- When in doubt: the most common wash cycle is 'cotton' or *coton* (the icon usually looks like a little cloud or tree) and about 30°C water
- **FYI, fast cycles use more energy and water, slower wash cycles are more eco-friendly, so while you're angry that your wash is taking hours, just know, you're saving the planet one slow laundry load at a time**



## DISHES & SINKS



### DISHES BY HAND

- **IMPORTANT:** all food waste should be disposed of in the trashbin or compost before cleaning dishes in the sink to avoid **sink clogs**
- Best practice: wash your dishes right after use
- OK practice: wash your dishes within 24 hours of use
- SPONGE: rinse and wring it out after each use. **REPLACE** it after 2 WEEKS to avoid bacteria growth and odor
- **Fact: your sink has more germs than anywhere else in your apartment. It also should be cleaned after doing dishes**



### WHAT TO BUY & TIPS

- Pack of sponges (more economical). They need to be replaced often, so have some on deck so you don't forget
- A dish brush (or a tougher sponge), for cleaning hardened food or burnt pans
- Dishsoap for hand cleaning: *liquide vaisselle*
- Dishwasher Detergent: *tablettes lave-vaisselle* or *nettoyant lave-vaisselle*
- Vinegar and baking soda: *vinaigre et bicarbonate de soude* (to clean burnt pots/pans)



### DISHWASHER

- Best practice: remove all the food from the dishes before placing them in the washer - this will avoid clogs
- Typical cycles for the dishwasher may last 1 to 3 hours, it's smart to run it overnight
- **MUST USE** specific dishwasher fluid or capsules, **NEVER** traditional dishsoap

## PLUMBING

With many historic buildings, it is not surprising that the plumbing is not state-of-the-art and most city dwellers have their own *Paris plumbing saga* to share. Here are some things to be prepared for:

- The pipes are small - kitchen and shower drains clog easily
  - Clean drains regularly
  - Avoid anything going down the drain (garbage disposals do not exist here, use a sink strainer to catch food before it goes down the drain & a hair catcher in the shower)
  - **NEVER** flush feminine hygiene products, or any other products (toilet paper only!)
- Hot water heaters are often in individual apartments (not shared), but they are small
  - Prepare for shorter showers (10-12 minutes or less)
- Know who to contact if you have plumbing problems (landlord or otherwise)

### TIPS TO AVOID MOLD IN BATHROOMS

After showering:

- Air-out the room by opening the door, window, or vent. If there is a fan, keep it on until the room is dry
- Don't leave the shower curtain pushed to one side, have it pulled open so it can dry fully
- Hang-up towels and bathmats, don't leave them on the floor or in a pile
- In winter: keep a heater or towel rack heater turned on to help dry the damp room



## ELECTRIC



When you move into your own apartment in Paris, you will most likely have to set-up your own electric contract. Your landlord might have suggestions for which company to choose (maybe there is a standard choice for the building), but you might have the autonomy to make the choice on your own. Some popular options in Paris include: EDF, TotalEnergies, Ohm Energy, and more.

- Here is a helpful website explaining the process:  
<https://en.selectra.info/energy-france/guides/electricity>
- **Your electricity bills will contain two charges:** a **fixed subscription charge**, and the **per kWh rate** for the power you consume

### IMPORTANT THINGS TO NOTE

- How much does it cost per month?
  - This will depend on the size of your apartment and your usage. It could be anything from 15€ for a small studio, to 150€ for 80+ square meters
- Usually about 50% of the monthly bill comes from heating and cooling. The other 50% is used by water heaters, lighting, washers & dryers, kitchen appliances, etc.
- Be aware of what you have plugged in, and unplug appliances when they aren't in use.
- Electricity in France runs at 230 Volts, meaning that if you are coming from another country in Europe, you should be able to use your electrical devices (although you may need to purchase a **plug adaptor**). If you're coming to France from North America, however, watch out! As electricity in North America runs on 120 V, some electronic devices might not work properly. Learn more here: <https://en.selectra.info/energy-france/guides/electricity/voltage-outlets-plugs>

### TIPS!

- **When you move in, take a photo of the Electric Meter:** to have proof of the starting meter number and make sure you don't get overcharged
- Winter
  - small apartments: turn off your heater before leaving your apartment
  - keep your heat on a low setting and wear layers to stay warm
  - space heaters use a lot of energy and are a fire hazard, be careful with them
- Summer
  - invest in a fan, turn it off when you leave the apartment
  - Take cool showers
- Use the eco-mode on your washer
- Hang-dry your clothes

## POWER BOXES



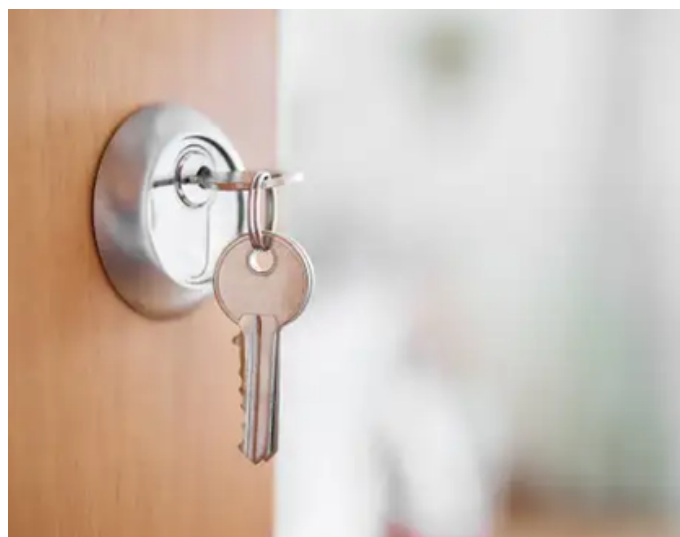
Your power went out? Maybe you blew a fuse. Here's how to check.

- Go to your fuse box and see if there is a switch facing the opposite direction from the rest, flip it to match the others.
- If the main switch is off - turn off all switches, then turn the main switch ON, and one by one turn on the small switches to find where the problem is
- If nothing is working, contact your electric provider

## KEYS

It is very important to keep your keys with you at all times and to always have your door locked, whether you are home or out. Many doors in France lock from the inside using the key and may have an additional deadbolt lock. Housing insurance only covers theft if the door was locked. Even if the door locks automatically, it should always be deadbolted.

Lock-outs in Paris can result in very costly solutions and may take a very long time; therefore, take extra caution to keep track of your keys!



### IMPORTANT THINGS TO NOTE

- Locksmiths do not work 24/7, so if you get locked out after business hours, they might not be able to arrive until the following day.
- If you request service outside of business hours, the locksmith can charge (and they often do) excessive fees.
- Not all locks are the same, and some doors need to be broken in order to 'unlock' the door. This means the tenant is then charged for the service, a new lock, and a new door, which leads to very expensive invoices, sometimes in the thousands of euros.

### TIPS!

- Always keep your keys in the same place, put them there directly when you get home - it's best to keep them visible next to the door so you see them on your way out.
- Know where your spare key is. Does your landlord have one? If so, set a rule or procedure for how and when you can request it in case of an emergency



## GROCERIES

It is remarkably common to have very small refrigerators and kitchens in Paris; therefore, grocery shopping turns into a regular occurrence as people shop every few days for small amounts of groceries, instead of doing one large trip. Many shops are quite small, so you may also find that you need to stop by a few different places to get all the items on your list.



### Tips

- Reusable bags are common here, remember to bring them with you to the store, or you'll have to buy new ones, or pay extra for plastic bags
- There are many shops in Paris offering a range of products and prices, don't be afraid to check-out a few of them in your area to find your go-tos



### Open-Air Markets

- Each arrondissement has its own outdoor market - most of them on 2 mornings a week, find where yours is and check it out!
- Fresh produce, seafood, meat, flowers, etc.
- Bring cash, the merchants likely won't accept bank cards
- If you go right before they close, there might be less options, but also it's a good time to bargain for cheaper prices



### Shop Local

- Find your local specialty shops!
- Paris is known for having many little artisan shops of high quality goods, find the ones closest to you
- Baker: *boulangerie*
- Pastry maker: *pâtisserie*
- Cheese Shop: *fromagerie*
- Butcher: *boucherie*
- Produce Seller: *primeurs*