



## HouseTalk Download: Learn Basic Thai Cleaning Instructions

When expats move to this region they get the opportunity to hand their cleaning chores to others. Some wobble in alarm at the wickedness of it all while others embrace the concept with broad smiles.

If you are the embracing kind who now needs to give instructions to a Thai housekeeper or cleaner, then this basic lesson on Thai cleaning phrases is for you.

In this post I bounce from charades to hand wagging to using two Thai words and more (but not in that order). All have their uses.

NOTE: I have not included the full copy of the post in this file but you can find it here: [HouseTalk: Learn Basic Thai Cleaning Instructions](#)

### What washing, cleaning verbs to use with what:

The Thai language has a sort of generic word for cleaning, ทำความสะอาด /tam-kwaam-sa-àat/ (to do, make cleanliness). But beware. When a chore needs to be done a certain way, in order to avoid confusing your housekeeper you'll either need different verbs to communicate the type of cleaning, be really good at charades, or have a maid who can read your mind.

▶ [V] Clean ทำความสะอาด /tam-kwaam-sa-àat/  
Generic, not suitable for everything you'll need.

▶ Sample: Clean (the) house.  
ทำความสะอาด บ้าน /tam-kwaam-sà-àat bâan/

▶ house บ้าน /bâan/  
office ที่ทำงาน /têe-tam-ngaan/  
living room ห้องรับแขก /hông-ráp-kàek/  
kitchen ห้องครัว /hông-krua/  
bedroom ห้องนอน /hông-non/  
bathroom ห้องน้ำ /hông-náam/  
car รถ /rót/

You can instruct your housekeeper to “clean the house” or “clean the kitchen” but it leaves the finer details, the how and what, up to her.

The verbs and nouns in this file are separated for a reason. Some are interchangeable but some are not. For instance, you wouldn't tell you maid to wash your computer in loads water. And don't laugh... it happens.

▶ [V] Clean ล้าง /láang/  
To wash with water, liquids (often by hand).

▶ Sample: Wash (the) dishes.  
ล้าง จาน /láang jaan/

▶ dishes จาน /jaan/  
fridge ตู้เย็น /dtôo-yen/  
vegetables ผัก /pàk/  
fruit ผลไม้ /pǎn-lá-mái/  
cars รถ /rót/

▶ [V] Clean ซัก /sák/  
Wash (cloth items).







▶ Sample: Wash (the) clothes.  
ซัก เสื้อผ้า /sák sêua-pâa/

- 🔊 clothes เสื้อผ้า /sêua-pâa/  
 sheets ผ้าปูที่นอน /pâa-bpoo-têe-non/  
 bath towels ผ้าเช็ดตัว /pâa-chét-dtua/  
 carpets พรม /prom/  
 curtains ้าม่าน /pâa-mâan/  
 fabric furniture เฟอร์นิเจอร์ ที่เป็น ผ้า /fer-ní-jer têe bpen pâa/

## On to even more cleaning verbs:

Now that we've gotten the washing out of the way let's get to the rest of the chores. Some anyway. Not all are listed (the series will deal with those later) but I've included enough to get you started.


- 🔊 [V] Dust บัดฝุ่น /bpàt-fùn/  
 Sample: Dust (the) coffee table.  
 🔊 บัดฝุ่น โต๊ะกาแฟ /bpàt-fùn dtó-gaa-fae/
- 🔊 Coffee table โต๊ะกาแฟ /dtó-gaa-fae/  
 Wooden furniture เฟอร์นิเจอร์ ไม้ /fer-ní-jer mái/  
 Bookshelves หิ้งหนังสือ /hīng-nǎng-sěu/
- 🔊 [V] Mop ถู /tǎo/  
 To mop/wipe repeatedly with cloth or mop.  
 Sample: Mop (the) floor.  
 🔊 ถู พื้น /tǎo péun/
- 🔊 floor พื้น /péun/  
 corridor โถงทางเข้า /tǎhng-taang-kào/
- 🔊 [V] Wipe (clean) เช็ด /chét/  
 Wipe by hand with or without fluids (water, Windex, etc).
- 🔊 Sample: Clean (the) windows.  
 🔊 เช็ด หน้าต่าง /chét nǎa-dtàang/

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 Windows หน้าต่าง /nâa-dtàang/  
 Mirror กระจก /grà-jòk/  
 Coffee table โต๊ะกาแฟ /dto-gaa-fae/  
 Counter top เคาน์เตอร์ในครัว /kao-dtêr nai kua/  
 Kitchen table โต๊ะกินข้าวในห้องครัว /dtó-gin-kâao nai hông-krua/
  
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 [V] Vacuum ดูดฝุ่น /dòot-fùn/
  
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 Sample: Vacuum (the) rug.  
 ดูดฝุ่น พรม /dòot-fùn prom/  
 rug พรม /prom/  
 sofa โซฟา /soh-faa/  
 sofa เก้าอี้ยาว /gâo-êe-yaa/
  
- 
 [V] Scrub, polish ขัด /kàt/  
 Scrub, polish (any tough dirt, items that need polishing).
  
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 Sample: Scrub (the) bathroom tiles.  
 ขัด กระเบื้องห้องน้ำ /kàt grà-bêuang hông-náam/
  
- 
 bathroom tiles กระเบื้องห้องน้ำ /grà-bêuang hông-náam/  
 shoes รองเท้า /rong-táo/  
 silver เครื่องเงิน /krêuang-ngern/

## Basic cleaning instructions:

When an item appears in more places than one you'll need to either physically take your housekeeper to where it is or say which room it's in.

So if you want your housekeeper to dust the bookshelves in the living room you would say:

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 Dust bookshelves in (the) living room.  
 บัดฝุ่น หิ้งหนังสือในห้องรับแขก  
 bpàt-fùn hĩng-năng-sěu nai hông-ráp-kàek

You can also use the below arrangement:

- ▶ Dust (the) living room bookshelves.  
ปัดฝุ่น หิ้งหนังสือ ห้องรับแขก  
bpàt-fùn hīng-năng-sěu hōng-ráp-kàek

Below are the basic rooms in a house:

- ▶ Kitchen ห้องครัว /hōng-krua/  
Living room ห้องรับแขก /hōng-ráp-kàek/  
Bedroom ห้องนอน /hōng-non/  
Bathroom ห้องน้ำ /hōng-náam/

### Bringing in the when:

The time you want a chore to get done can be equally important as the what and where. Like, if I'm still in PJ's when the housekeeper arrives and want to jump in the shower asap I use this phrase:

- ▶ Clean (the) bathroom later.  
ทำความสะอาด ห้องน้ำ ทีหลัง  
tam-kwaam-sà-àat hōng-náam tee-lǎng

Or, because water is used I can also say it this way:


- ▶ Clean/wash (the) bathroom later.  
ล้าง ห้องน้ำ ทีหลัง  
láang hōng-náam tee-lǎng

Here are a variety of words denoting time:


- ▶ Today วันนี้ /wan-née/  
Everyday ทุกวัน /túk-wan/  
Now ตอนนี้ /dton-née/
- ▶ Once a week อาทิตย์ ละ ครั้ง /aa-tít lá kráng/  
Once a month เดือน ละ ครั้ง /deuan lá kráng/  
First ก่อน /gòn/  
Later ทีหลัง /tee-lǎng/

Using today, everyday, and now in front of a sentence puts the emphasis on the time. Today, everyday, and now, shown in first grouping shown above, can be used both at the front and the end of a sentence. The second grouping cannot be used in the front of a sentence without changing the meaning.

Sentence structures to play around with:

-  Clean (the) bathroom today.  
ทำความสะอาด ห้่งน้ำ วันนี  
tam-kwaam-sà-àat hōng-náam wan-née

Or


-  Today clean (the) bathroom.  
วันนี ทำความสะอาด ห้่งน้ำ  
wan-née tam-kwaam-sà-àat hōng-náam

### Going from charades to using actual Thai phrases:

Without knowing a lick of Thai you can communicate by using the charade method + cleaning materials. I know because I did a lot of arm waving before introducing McDonalds into the equation (a long story and one I might get to later).

What you do is physically take the maid and the needed cleaning materials to the item needing cleaning, and then go through the motions. If she is still perplexed (or overcome by the giggles even) you might want/need to show how the actual chore is done.

The next step up from charades is using two words of Thai. You can say “clean this” while pointing at the item.

-  Clean this.  
ทำความสะอาด นี่  
tam-kwaam-sà-àat nêe

Going that route leaves the method up to personal interpretation, so even better is wagging the cleaning materials towards your maid (Windex, mop, whatever) with one hand while pointing to the item you need cleaned (windows, floors, whatever) with the other as you attempt those magic two words. Good luck.

If you know the right verb but you don't know the name of what you want cleaned, you can resort to pointing at the item while saying the verb plus นี่ /nêe/ (this).



Wash this. ล้าง นี่ /láang nêe/  
Wash this. ซัก นี่ /sák nêe/  
Dust this. ปัดฝุ่น นี่ /bpàt-fùn nêe/  
Mop, wipe this. ถู นี่ /tǔo nêe/  
Wipe this. เช็ด นี่ /chét nêe/  
Vacuum this. ดูดฝุ่น นี่ /dòot-fùn nêe/  
Scrub, polish this. ขัด นี่ /kàt nêe/

Tip: If you don't remember the difference between ล้าง /láang/ and ซัก /sák/, or ถู /tǔo/ and เช็ด /chét/ then scroll back up to double-check.

### Spreading a little Thai kindness:

A basic post on communicating with your Thai housekeeper is not complete without mentioning manners.

Thais, for the most part, lean towards the polite. If you [read my เกรงใจ /krenng jai/ post](#) you'll sort of understand why.

In the case of giving instructions, softening direct orders with kindness is just a sweet way to go. Please note that I'm not saying to do this every time but peppering demands with niceties does give a polite Thai touch.

When you need to get the attention of your housekeeper begin conversations with ขอโทษ ค่ะ /kǒr-tôht kâ/ (excuse me) if you are a female, and ขอโทษ ครับ /kǒr-tôht kráp/ if male.

Adding a ขอบคุณ /kòp-kun/ when a thank you is due is no different than in the west.

Again with the peppering (no need to grovel by overkill), to soften instructions end sentences with นะคะ /na-ká/ if you are female and นะครับ /na-kráp/ if you are male.



Excuse me ขอโทษ /kǒr-tôht/  
Thank you ขอบคุณ /kòp kun/  
Polite particle female ค่ะ /kâ/  
Polite particle male ครับ /kráp/  
Conformation particle female นะคะ /na-ká/  
Conformation particle male นะครับ /na-kráp/



Clean (the) bathroom later. Ok?  
ทำความสะอาด ห้องน้ำ ทีหลัง นะคะ  
am-kwaam-sà-àat hông-náam tee-lǎng na-ká

I just love the sound นะคะ /na-ká/ makes tripping off the tongue. Don't you? Oh, and while I have you here. No, you do not ไหว้ /wâi/ your Thai maid.

For more, read the full post at: [HouseTalk: Learn Basic Thai Cleaning Instructions](#)

Catherine Wentworth  
Women Learning Thai... and some men too ;-)

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Note: The transliteration comes direct from [Thai2English.com](#) and should be used for ballpark pronunciation only.

Also note that these materials are for your own personal use only (I paid to record for private use and no more).

Disclaimer: When compiling the HouseTalk posts I run the Thai phrases and vocabulary through [Thai Skype teacher Khun Narisa](#). But when I code the posts I often tweak a little. So what I'm saying is that snafus are all mine and will be dealt with as such.