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## How to unblock a sink

A blocked sink can be inconvenient, smell awful and become an incubating ground for bacteria. So knowing how to unblock a sink is something that everyone should know how to do.

You don't need fancy tools to unblock a sink, or any special skills at DIY or plumbing. But it helps to not be squeamish, as you'll be encountering all kinds of slime and food remnants.

### **Avoiding a blocked sink**

The very best way to avoid a blocked sink is to stop certain things going down the drain. Keep an eye out for:

- Food
- Tissues
- Drinking straws
- Cotton wool buds
- Bits of plastic
- Paper
- Basically anything that isn't water or another liquid

Prevention is always better than cure, and a fair bit cleaner and less smelly too.

### **Unblocking a sink: your options**

There are a few basic ways to unblock a sink, and their effectiveness all depends on how blocked up the sink is, and what's clogging it up.

Here's how to unblock a sink, in three easy stages. Try them each in turn, and hopefully at least one of them will get your sink unclogged and functioning properly again.

**Step 1:** Use a plunger. Plunging sucks air out of the pipe and then forces it back in, which helps to dislodge the blockage. Place the cup over the plughole, and ensure a seal is formed, then move the handle up and down in a pumping action. You will know the blockage is clear when you fill the sink up and it drains quickly.

**Step 2:** Sometimes a hard burst of water can push out whatever is blocking your sink. Take a plastic milk bottle or 2-litre drink bottle, fill it with hot (not boiling) water. Tip the bottle upside down with the bottle hole against the plughole, and squeeze as hard as you can. The fast, directed flow of water may well fix the problem.

**Step 3:** Sometimes a plunger can't unblock the sink because the blockage is thick and greasy and the suction of the plunger can't dislodge it. In this instance, you will need to do something to break down the blockage.

There are a lot of drain unblocking solutions on the market. However, they can be harsh and linger in the drain and around your sink. A more environmentally-friendly solution to unblocking a sink is to use a mix of baking soda and vinegar.

First, pour baking powder down your plughole. Then tip in the vinegar. You will hear a lot of fizzing, and some froth may come back up the plughole. Once this settles down, tip some hot water down the plughole to flush the pipe through.

If that doesn't work you can also use bleach to dissolve blockages. The best thing to do with bleach is to pour some down the plughole last thing at night and then flush with hot water in the morning.

**Step 4:** Most blocked sinks happen because the U-bend gets clogged up, and sometimes the only solution is to remove the U-bend and clear it out by hand. To do this, you will need:

- A small bucket or dish
  - Some plumber's tape
  - A wire coat hanger
1. Look under your sink and find the U-bend; it's the first bend in the pipe immediately below the plughole.
  2. Put your bucket/dish under the U-bend and carefully unscrew the section of pipe. The U-bend has two sets of threads, one at either end. As you loosen them, any backed up water will drain out, so take your time.
  3. Once the flow of water has stopped remove the U-bend and use the wire coat hanger to clean out the inside of the pipe. You can also use a cloth and some warm water to help clean everything out.

Once it's all clean, fix the U-bend back into place, using plumber's tape to make it is watertight if needed. Run the tap to make sure the U-bend is watertight.

Please contact us if none of the above works, as the blockage could be situated elsewhere.