

# SCIENCE MUSEUM

# GALLERY GUIDE

## THE SECRET LIFE OF THE HOME

### INFORMATION



Age **7-11,  
11-14, 14-16**

Topic

**SCIENCE, DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

Location

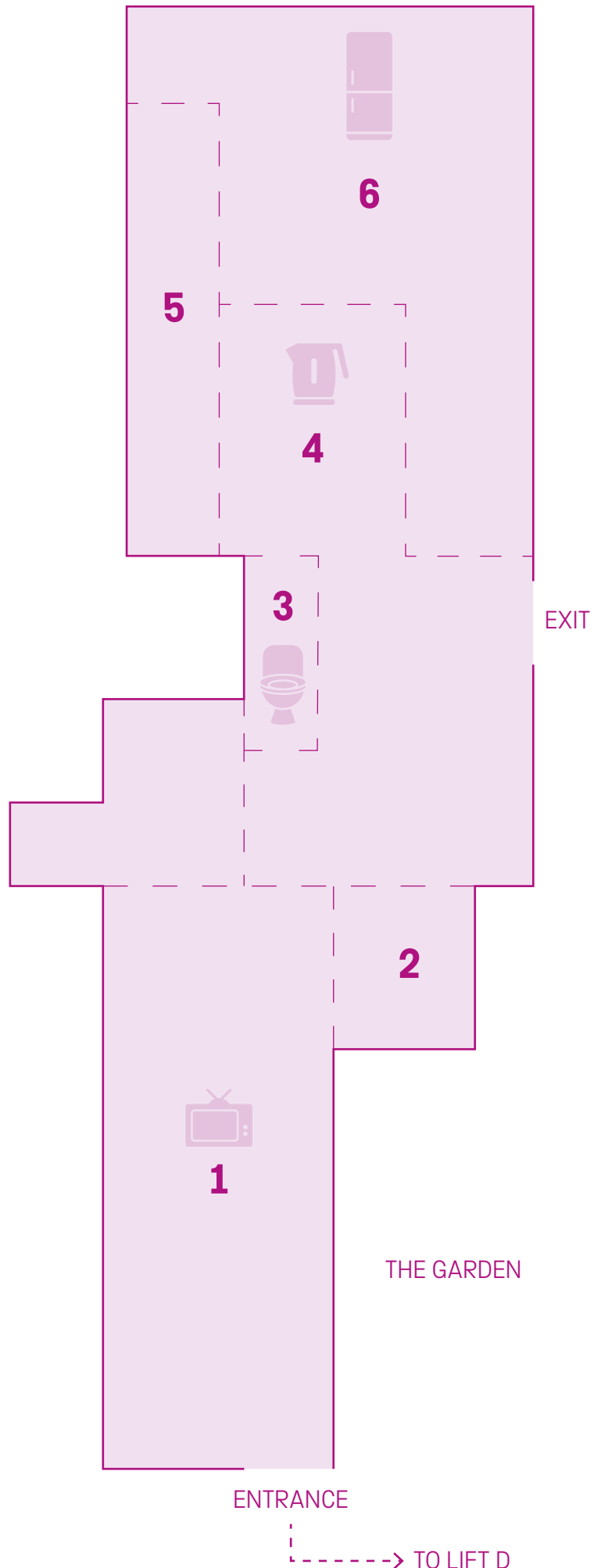
**LEVEL -1, SCIENCE MUSEUM, LONDON**

***The Secret Life of the Home* tells the story of how our homes have changed over time and reveals the hidden workings of everyday household objects. It shows domestic technology from the late 19th century through to the early 2000s.**

There are many intriguing items from the past and some that might look familiar from our homes today. The gallery shows that, as our lifestyles have changed, we have created better and more efficient gadgets as we expect things to be faster, cheaper and easier to use.

In the gallery you will discover how electricity has replaced many forms of power, how design has changed in the home and how advertising has evolved over time.

- 1 Entertainment and technology**
- 2 Cleaning the home**
- 3 Toilets**
- 4 Electricity in the home**
- 5 Heating the home**
- 6 Food preparation and storage**



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## 1 Food preparation and storage

Food preparation has gone from being a time-consuming and exhausting task to something that can be completed in an instant. The invention of refrigeration allowed food to be stored at lower temperatures, slowing bacteria growth and keeping food fresher for longer.

**Don't miss: Seeger refrigerating cabinet, c 1900**

This early fridge kept food cold by using ice instead of electricity. Large blocks would be delivered to your home by an 'ice harvester' and placed in the silver compartment on the right to chill the whole cabinet.



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## 2 Heating the home

Throughout history, heating our homes has been important for keeping us happy and healthy. Different types of fuel have been popular over the years, each one coming with its own benefits and risks.

**Don't miss: 'Beatrice' portable cylindrical gas heater, 1910**

This small heater burned gas to produce heat, and could be moved around the home to keep different rooms warm.



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## 3 Electricity in the home

Doing all the laundry and cleaning by hand would take a long time and a lot of effort. With the introduction of electric-powered household appliances, machines could do the hard work for us.

**Don't miss: Electric washing machine, c 1920**

The electric motor in this machine made washing clothes much faster than doing it by hand – but it often gave electric shocks when wet!



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## 4 Toilets

Good toilets are essential to our health, as poor disposal of human waste can lead to diseases such as cholera and diarrhoea. Toilets are designed to move waste away from drinking and bathing water to avoid contamination.

**Don't miss: Pan closet, 1850**

Despite beautiful decoration, the metal part of this toilet was so difficult to clean that it could collect almost a kilo of dried poo.



## 5 Cleaning the home

Cleaning technology has evolved through the years from carpet beaters to bagless vacuum cleaners. The discovery of bacteria in the 19th century helped us understand how important it is to keep our homes clean.

**Don't miss: Electrolux Trilobite ZA1 vacuum cleaner, 2003**

The ZA1 was the world's first domestic robot cleaner. It used ultrasonic sensors to work its way around a room and could even return to its charge point independently when its battery ran low.



## 6 Entertainment and technology

Personal technology has changed with our desires to keep ourselves entertained in the home. The way we watch TV has evolved the most: originally we could only view it on a central piece of furniture in our homes, but now TV is available on small personal devices we can take anywhere.

**Don't miss: Baird mirror-lid television, 1936**

Large early TV sets like this had to be mounted with the screen facing vertically instead of horizontally. This meant that a mirror was needed to help people view it comfortably.



### Think and talk about...



Exploring this gallery, or back at home or school, use these questions to help you think about how science and technology connects to our everyday lives:

- What interests or surprises you about the objects in this gallery?
- What do you think homes of the future might look like? What gadgets would you like to see to help make your life easier?
- How could you find out more about these objects?

### Make the most of your visit

Each display case in this gallery relates to a different aspect of home life.

Lots of the objects have been stripped back and taken apart so that you can see their inner workings. There are also hands-on activities and challenges dotted around the gallery to help you explore how these gadgets once worked.

### Explore more...

Explore more about the technology in everyday life in the *Making the Modern World* gallery.

Find out more about televisions, the internet and communication in the *Information Age* gallery.

Continue the experience back in the classroom and at home too. The Science Museum website features many hands-on activities inspired by the principles demonstrated in the gallery, which you can use to investigate the science in your home.