Stain Removal Guide

General Rules
• Treat stains promptly. Fresh stains are easier to remove than old ones. If the stain is on a nonwashable fabric, take it to the dry cleaner as soon as possible. Tell the stain and the fiber content of the garment.
• Read and follow package directions when using any stain removal product.
• Always test stain removers on an inside seam or other hidden part of garment for color fastness. To test, apply product and let stand 2-5 minutes, then rinse. If color changes, do not use product on garment.
• When using a bleach, do not try to bleach just one area of garment; bleach the entire garment to prevent uneven color removal.
• When treating, place stained area face down on a clean paper towel or white cloth. Apply stain remover to the underside of the stain, forcing stain off the fabric surface instead of through it.
• Never put chemical dry-cleaning solvents directly into washer.
• Throughly rinse and air dry areas treated with dry-cleaning solvents before placing in washer, to avoid a fire.
• Do not mix stain removal products together. Some mixtures, such as ammonia and chlorine bleach, can produce noxious fumes.
• Always launder washable items after treating to remove residues of the stain and the stain remover.
• Have patience; it takes a little extra time and effort to remove some stains.
• Remember, some stains cannot be removed.
• Take nonwashable items to dry cleaner as soon as possible; identify stain and fiber content of garment.

Definitions
Detergent—all-purpose synthetic detergent (liquid or powder). Use liquid detergent full strength; mix powder with water to form a paste when working into stain.
Dry-Cleaning Solvent—stain and spot removers available at grocery and hardware stores. A nonflammable type is safest to use.
Stain Stick—an enzyme-based cleaner available at grocery and discount stores. Most effective on food, grease, oil, protein, and dirt-based stains and can be used on any fabric and color. It can remain on fabric for up to one week.

Classification of Stains
• Wet—has a water base, such as fruit juice or sodas
• Dry—has an oil base, such as car grease or suntan lotion
• Combination—contains water and grease, such as meat gravy or ice cream
• Special—an unusual substance, such as tar or ink
• Unknown—one you cannot identify

Basic Supplies
Acetone
Ammonia
Alcohol (denatured or rubbing)
Amyl Acetate (banana oil)
Baking soda
Bar of soap (without deodorant)
Bleach
Chlorine (sodium hypochlorite)
Oxygen or perborate (nonchlorine, all-fabric)
Hydrogen peroxide
Commercial color remover
Brush (toothbrush)
Cloth (clean)
Club soda
Commercial color remover
Crystal Salts, such as Epsom salt
Detergent
All purpose
Light duty
Dry-Cleaning Solvent or Spot Remover (contains trichloroethane or perchlorethylene - nonflammable)
Prewash Products
• Enzymes presoaks or prewash
• Enzyme-based stain sticks
• Spray-type prewash soil and stain removers
Rust Remover
Soap (bar or flakes)
Sponge
Talcum powder
Turpentine
White vinegar

References
Stain Removal Chart, Soap and Detergent Association, 1991
Spot and Stain Removal, Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service, 1988
Stain Removal, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, 1990

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Publication 1480
Adhesive Tape, Chewing Gum, Rubber Cement - Harden surface with ice, scrape with a dull knife. Saturate with a preswash stain remover or cleaning fluid. Rinse, then launder.

Baby Formula - Pretreat or soak stain using a product containing enzymes. Soak for at least 30 minutes. Felt Tip or India ink cannot be removed. Launder.

Beverages (coffee, tea, soft drinks, wine, alcoholic drinks) - Soak stain in cool water. Pretreat with preswash stain remover, liquid laundry detergent, or a detergent booster in hottest water safe for that fabric. Note: Older stains might respond to treatment with an enzyme product, then washing.

Blood - Soak freshly stained garment in cold water for 30 minutes. Rub detergent into any remaining stain. Rinse, then launder. Dried stains should be pre- or soaked in tepid water with a product containing enzymes, then laundered.

Bleach - Apply a commercial rust remover. Follow manufacturer’s instructions. Some reduction in stain, sponge with dry-cleaning solvent. Allow to dry. Rub gently with detergent. Repeat if needed.

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Candle Wax - Harden with ice, then soak in cool water with 1/4 cup detergent per gallon of water. Spray with a prespray product; launder with a bleach that is safe for that fabric.

Catup/Tomato Sauce - Rinse in cold water, then soak in cool water with 1/4 cup detergent per gallon of water. Spray with a prespray product; launder with a bleach that is safe for that fabric.

Chocolate - Treat the stain with a prespray spray or prespray with a product containing enzymes. If stain remains, relaunder with bleach that is safe for that fabric.

Cider/Corn Syrup - Rub area with a stain stick product and let remain for 30 minutes, or longer for heavy stains; launder.

Coffee, Tea (plain or with sugar/sweetener) - Flush stain immediately with cold water if possible; or soak for 30 minutes in cool water. Rub the stain with detergent and launder with bleach that is safe for that fabric.

Coffee, Tea (with cream only) - Sponge stain with a dry-cleaning solvent. Air dry. Rub detergent, then launder in hottest water safe for that fabric (with bleach that is safe for that fabric). Pretreat or soak older stains with an enzyme product, then launder.

Cosmetics - Pretreat with stain stick, preswash stain remover, liquid detergent, or a paste of granular detergent or laundry additive and water, or rub with bar soap. Work into dampened stain until outline of stain is gone; rinse. If greasy stain remains, soak in an enzyme product. Rinse and launder.

Crayon (few spots) - Treat the same as for candle wax, or rub bumped stain with bar soap. Launder with hottest water safe for that fabric. Washer load size of clothes can be washed in hot water, or use a laundry detergent (not containing enzymes) and 1 cup baking soda. If colored stain remains, launder again, using chlorine bleach, if safe for the fabrics. Otherwise, pretreat or soak in a product containing enzyme or an oxygen bleach using hottest water safe for that fabric.

Dairy Products (milk, cream, ice cream, yogurt, sour cream, cheese, cream soup) - Pretreat with stain stick or soak in an enzyme presoak product; repeat, if needed. Rinse and launder.

Deodorants, Antiperspirants - Treat light stains with a liquid detergent and then launder. Pretreat heavy stains with a preswash stain remover. Allow to stand at least 5 to 10 minutes. Launder, using an all-fabric bleach.

Dye Transfer (white garment that has picked up bleeding dye from other garment) - Remove stains with a commercial color remover; launder. If stains persist, act quickly before stain dries. Use a dull knife to scrape excess tar from the stain. Do not rub. Let dry, then remove surface wax with a dull knife.

Egg - Pretreat with an enzyme product for 30 minutes for new stain, or several hours for aged stains; launder.

Fabric Softener - Moisten stain and rub with bar soap. Rinse, then launder.

If stain remains, sponge area with rubbing alcohol or dry-cleaning solvent. Rinse thoroughly and relaunder.

Fingernail Polish - Try nail polish remover, but do not use on acetate or triacetate fabrics. Place stain face down on paper towels and flush with remover. Replace paper towels regularly to absorb more wax and to prevent transferring the stain.

Place stain face down on clean paper towels. Sponge remaining stain with a prewash stain remover or cleaning fluid; rinse. Replace towels frequently. Let air dry; rinse.

Place wax stain between clean paper towels and press with a warm iron. Replace towels frequently; sponge with rubbing or denatured alcohol or dry-cleaning solvent, or rub detergent into stained area. Repeat if some stain remains. Rinse; launder. Drawing ink usually cannot be removed. Try pouring water through the stain before it dries, until pigments are removed. Allow to dry. If you notice some reduction in stain, sponge with dry-cleaning solvent. Allow to dry. Rub liquid household cleaner or spray starch on the stain (possibly overnight) in warm water to which 1 to 4 tablespoons of household ammonia have been added. Rinse and repeat treatment if necessary; launder.

Jodine - Rinse from back side of stain under cool, running water. Soak in solution of color remover, or sponge with a solution of sodium thiosulfate crystals (available at drug store). Rinse and launder.

Lipstick - Place stain face down on clean paper towels. Sponge area with dry-cleaning solvent, or use a prespray soil and stain remover. Replace towels frequently; wipe stain frequently; rinse. Rinse. Rub light-duty liquid detergent into stain until outline is removed. Launder; repeat treatment if needed.

Liquid paper - Sponge the stain with amyl acetate (banana oil). Air dry. Repeat treatment if necessary. Rub gently with detergent, then launder.

Menthone or Mint Oil - Place stain face down on clean paper towels. Sponge area with dry-cleaning solvent, or use a prespray soil and stain remover. Replace towels frequently; sponge with a solution of sodium thiosulfate crystals (available at drug store). Rinse and launder.

Mustard - Treat with a prespray stain remover, or dump water and rub with bar soap. Launder with chlorine bleach, if safe for that fabric, or use an all-fabric bleach.

Paint - Water-based paint, such as latex acrylic stains, should be rinsed in warm water while stain is still wet; launder. This stain usually cannot be removed after it dries. For oil-based paints, including varnish, use the solvent listed on the label as a thinner. If label information is unavailable, use turpentine. Rinse. Pretreat with prespray stain remover, bar soap, or detergent. Rinse and launder.

Perfume - Treat with prespray stain remover or liquid laundry detergent; rinse and launder.

Pretreatment (prespray products) - Treat with prespray stain remover, or dampen stain with water and rub with bar soap. Rinse and launder. If color of the fabric has changed slightly, apply ammonia to the stain and launder.

Pine Resin - Sponge the stain with cleaning fluid; let air dry. Rub with detergent and launder as usual. If stains persist, apply a few drops of household ammonia to fresh stain or white vinegar to old stain; rinse. Launder in hottest water safe for that fabric. Stubborn stains may respond to pretreating with a product containing enzymes, then launder using an all-fabric bleach, or a product containing enzymes, or a container of water with 1/4 cup each of ammonia and liquid detergent; launder. Red clay can be rubbed with a paste of vinegar and table salt. Leave for 30 minutes. Launder with hottest water safe for that fabric and bleach. Repeat if needed.

Pomade - Treat the stain with a prespray spray or prespray with a product containing enzymes. If stain remains, relaunder with bleach that is safe for that fabric.

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Warning: Always read garment’s label for fabric content and to determine if the garment is dry-clean-only or wash only.

Rust - Apply a commercial rust remover. Follow manufacturer’s instructions. Do not use chlorine bleach on rust.

Scorch - Launder with chlorine bleach, if safe for that fabric. Otherwise, soak in an all-fabric bleach and hot water, then launder. Note: Badly scorched stains cannot be removed. Launder.

Shoe Polish - Pretreat liquid shoe polish with a paste of dry detergent and water; launder. Use a dull knife to scrape residue of paste shoe polish from the fabric. Pretreat with a prespray stain remover or cleaning fluid; rinse. Rub detergent into denatured alcohol.

Pollen (tree or flower) - Sponge, then flush with dry-cleaning solvent. Let air dry. Rub gently with detergent. Launder as usual, using bleach that is safe for that fabric.

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