

# STAIN REMOVAL CHART FOR WASHABLE CLOTHING

Becky Culp\*

Damages created by spots and stains or their improper removal is one of the most common causes of discarded clothing. This chart is intended as a guide to extend the clothing dollar by minimizing replacements for damaged clothing.

### Principles of Stain Removal

- Know as much about the stain and fabric as possible.
- Do not press a stained fabric because heat sets in stains.
- Stains should be treated quickly. Old stains may be impossible to remove.
- Old remedies such as applying milk to ink stains are unreliable. The milk may produce an additional stain.
- Stain removers should be tested on an underside seam or other fabric to determine if harmful.
- Instructions for the use, storage and safety of all cleaning agents should be followed carefully.
- Excess stains should be blotted or scraped from the surface.
- Large and difficult stains should be left to a professional drycleaner. Point out the location and type of stain, if known.

### Procedure for Removing Stains

- Identify the stain.
- Work from the wrong side of the garment.
- Lay on a soft cloth or blotter and change when soiled.
- Sponge sparingly with a clean, soft and lintless cloth.
- Do not rub. A light or worn look may result.
- Avoid circling by brushing lightly from the center outward in as small an area as possible to reduce spreading the stain.

### How to Identify Unknown Stains

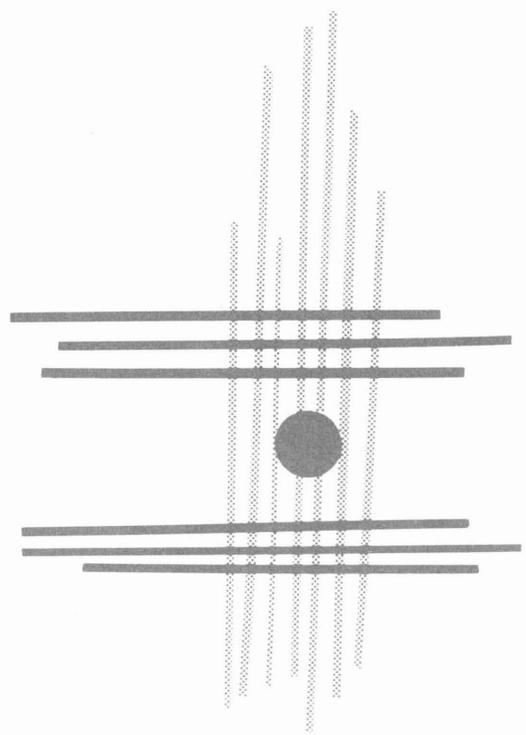
- Observe the color, appearance and location on the garment.
- Smell the odor.
- Feel the texture.

### Removing Unknown Stains

Unknown stains in a drycleanable garment should be taken to a professional drycleaner. The following sequence, beginning with the mildest action, can be followed without damaging washable garments. *Manufacturers' directions should be carefully followed for all products used. The procedure should be stopped when it becomes harmful.*

1. Soak in cold water for 30 minutes.
2. Work detergent\*\* into the stain and allow to remain 30 minutes and rinse.
3. Launder using a bleach\* safe for the fabric.
4. Soak overnight in a presoaking agent. Those containing enzymes attack protein stains.
5. Launder with detergent\*\* in water temperature as hot as suitable for fabric.
6. Sponge with grease solvent\*\*\*. Repeat if necessary, rinse and launder.
7. Launder using a commercial rust or color remover\*.
8. Mix equal parts bleach\* (safe for the fabric) and water. Apply directly to the stain. If stain remains, it cannot be removed.

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## Common Stains and How to Remove Them

NOTE: Due to the complexity of today's dyes, fabrics and finishes, it may be impossible to satisfactorily remove the stain without damaging the fabric. However, the following procedure will prove satisfactory in the majority of cases. Removal procedures may need to be repeated several times.

After following the recommended treatment, work in liquid detergent and rinse to remove any residue from stain solvents. Then, if a slight stain remains, launder in water as hot as suitable for the fabric along with an appropriate bleach\*.

STAIN	REMOVAL	STAIN	REMOVAL
Asphalt Tar	Sponge immediately with a grease solvent***. Repeat until stain is removed.	Fruits and Berries	Sponge immediately with cool water. If safe for fabric, pour boiling water through stain. Work detergent** into stain, rinse.
Beverages Perfumes	Sponge in cool water. Soak 30 minutes.* Sponge with alcohol*** if safe for fabric.	Grass	Work detergent** into the stain and rinse. If safe for fabric, moisten with lemon juice* and salt. Dry in the sun. Wash thoroughly.
Blood Carbon Paper (Regular) Pencil, Lead	Sponge with cool water. Soak 30 minutes. Rub liquid detergent** into area, rinse. If stain remains, apply a few drops of ammonia*** and repeat detergent treatment. Lead pencil may be removed from some fabrics with a soft eraser.	Mildew	If safe for fabric, moisten with lemon juice* and salt. Dry in the sun. Wash thoroughly.
Butter, Cream and Milk Chocolate Gravy and Sauces Grease, Oil and Wax Mayonnaise Vomit	Soak stain in cold water for 30 minutes. Work detergent** into stain. Rinse and dry. If stain remains, sponge with a grease solvent*** and dry. Repeat if necessary.	Mud	Let dry and brush. Soak in cold water. For iron clay soils remove same as rust.
Candle Wax Paraffin	Rub with ice cubes and carefully scrape excess off surface. Place between several layers of paper tissue and press with warm iron. Remove remaining stain with a grease solvent.***	Mustard	Work detergent** into stain. Rinse. Prolonged soaking may be necessary.
Chewing gum	Same as for candle wax except do not press.	Paint and Varnish	Treat if possible before the stain dries. Sponge with thinner solvent recommended on the label or turpentine***. While still wet with solvent, apply detergent** and soak. Launder. Repeat if necessary. Stain may be impossible to remove.
Candy Coffee and Tea Egg Scorch Soft Drinks Vegetables and Catsup	Sponge stain with cold water. Soak for 30 minutes. Severe scorch damages the fabric and cannot be removed.	Ring-around-the-collar	Apply detergent** and let set 30 minutes. Launder.
Carbon Paper (Duplicating)	Sponge with rubbing alcohol***.	Rust	Sprinkle salt on the stain and moisten with lemon juice* if safe for fabric. Dry in sun and rinse. Repeat, if necessary. Commercial rust and/or color removers* may be used as directed.
Cosmetics and Crayon	Sponge detergent** onto stain until outline is gone. Rinse and dry.	Shoe Polish	Due to various kinds, several methods may need to be used. First, work detergent** into stain and rinse. Sponge with alcohol*** and rinse. Apply grease solvent or turpentine***. Launder and bleach*.
Deodorants and Perspiration	Sponge with detergent**. Launder in water temperature and bleach suitable for fabric. Color may be restored by sponging fresh stains with ammonia*** and old stains with vinegar***. Rinse.	Urine	Soak 30 minutes in cool water. Work in detergent** and rinse. Launder in bleach* safe for fabric. If fabric color has changed, sponge with ammonia***. If stain still remains, sponge with white vinegar***.
Fingernail Polish Mimeograph Fluid Ink, Ballpoint	Sponge with nail polish remover***. Use amyl acetate on acetate fabrics.	Yellowing, Age	Wash in as hot water and strong bleach* as safe for fabric. Use a color remover* on white fabrics.

### Stain Removers

Manufacturers' directions should be carefully followed for maximum results.

\*Bleaches: *Chlorine bleaches* are identified by "hypochlorite." Usually liquid, they should not be used on wool, silk, polyurethane foam, spandex or blends of these fibers, on finishes such as embossed and durable press and on certain dyes. If in doubt about bleachability of dyes, apply one drop of mixture containing one tablespoon bleach to ¼ cup water. Let stand one minute and examine for color change. Never apply directly to clothing.

*Oxygen bleaches* are usually dry and safe for all fabrics and colors. They are more effective in warm and hot water and for an extended wash or soak time.

*Color Removers* are safe for all fabrics but will remove most dyes. Use when bleaches are not effective.

*Commercial Rust Removers* may change the color of some dyes. Do not let come in contact with the skin.

*Lemon juice* may damage fabric or color.

\*\*Detergents: *Granular forms* should be made into a paste with water to be worked into stains.

*Liquid forms* can be applied directly.

*Enzyme detergents* aid in removing protein stains such as food and blood.

\*\*\*Solvents: (1) Non-Greasy—

*Water* (cold) is the most useful.

*Fingernail polish remover* (acetone) is not safe for acetate. Use amyl acetate.

*Ammonia, nonsudsy.* Dilute to 10%.

*Isopropyl (Rubbing) Alcohol.* Dilute to two parts water for one part alcohol. May remove color.

*Turpentine*

*White vinegar* (10% acetic acid) may change the color of some dyes. If so, moisten with ammonia.

(2) Greasy—

Do not use carbon tetrachloride. Buy those containing *perchloroethylene* or *trichloroethylene*. Aerosol sprays and tubes are also available under various brand names.

### References

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