

The diluted dishwashing-soap solution called for below is made with 1 tablespoon of fragrance- and dye-free liquid soap (containing sodium laurel sulfate, or sodium laureth sulfate) and 9.5 ounces of water. Pour it into a tiny spray bottle. Do not use the enzyme detergent, called for below, on protein fibers, such as silk, wool, cashmere, or angora. Always wash fabric after using a dry solvent (such as mineral spirits or acetone), and do not use acetone on acetate.

sponsored by



STAIN REMOVAL BASICS

NOTE: This chart is for washable items only.

STAIN	TREATMENT
GREASE (butter, oil, mayonnaise)	Treat area with a dry solvent (such as mineral spirits or acetone) in a well-ventilated room. Using an eyedropper, rinse with isopropyl alcohol; dry well. Spray diluted dishwashing-soap solution on any remaining residue, and soak the item in an enzyme detergent before washing.
PROTEIN (blood, egg)	Spray diluted dishwashing-soap solution on stain, and let it sit; rinse in tepid water. If stain remains, treat area with an enzyme detergent, and wash according to label instructions.
FRUIT OR VEGETABLE (juice, jam)	Spray diluted dishwashing-soap solution on the stain to remove sugars. Using an eyedropper, flush the area with white vinegar and then hydrogen peroxide to remove any remaining color. Follow up with an enzyme detergent to remove residue before washing.
GRASS	Treat area with a dry solvent in a well-ventilated room. Press with cheesecloth; tamp with a soft-bristled brush. Repeat to remove as much pigment as possible. Flush area with isopropyl alcohol, tamp, and let dry. Follow up with an enzyme detergent to remove residue before washing.
RED WINE	Spray diluted dishwashing-soap solution on stain; tamp with a soft-bristled brush. Flush with water, apply white vinegar, and tamp; let stand several minutes; flush again. If stain remains, apply hydrogen peroxide, and let stand. If stain persists, apply 1 or 2 drops of ammonia to wet area. Flush with water. Treat with an enzyme detergent; wash. If stain is still there, apply a powdered nonchlorinated color-safe bleach, such as sodium percarbonate; rewash.
WHITE WINE	Flush the stain with cold water, and spray with diluted dishwashing-soap solution. Treat area with an enzyme detergent, and then wash.
COFFEE OR TEA	Using an eyedropper, flush area with lemon juice or white vinegar to remove stain; then treat with a stronger bleach, if necessary. To help remove sugar or milk, spray area with diluted dishwashing-soap solution, then wash with an enzyme detergent.
CHOCOLATE	Gently scrape off excess chocolate; spray area with diluted dishwashing-soap solution. Follow up with an enzyme detergent to remove residue before washing.
LIPSTICK	Use a dull-edged knife to remove excess lipstick. Using an eyedropper, apply a dry solvent (such as mineral spirits or acetone) in a well-ventilated room; tamp with a soft-bristled brush. Flush area with isopropyl alcohol, and tamp. Repeat until all stain is removed, and let dry. Spray with diluted dishwashing-soap solution. Treat with an enzyme detergent, and wash.
WAX OR GUM	Use ice to freeze wax or gum, or place item in the freezer; scrape or crack off as much as you can, then remove residue with an oil solvent or mineral spirits. Rinse with isopropyl alcohol; let dry. Treat with an enzyme detergent; wash.
MUSTARD	Using an eyedropper, flush stain with vinegar; then wash with diluted dishwashing-soap solution.
SAUCES (tomato, ketchup, barbecue)	Scrape off sauce; spray area with diluted dishwashing-soap solution. Soak in tepid water. If color remains, apply white vinegar with an eyedropper. Treat with an enzyme detergent; wash. If color persists, apply several drops of hydrogen peroxide; let sit. Rinse; treat again with enzyme detergent, and wash.
SOY SAUCE	Spray with diluted dishwashing-soap solution; tamp with a soft-bristled brush. Flush with water, apply white vinegar, and tamp; let stand several minutes, and flush again. If stain remains, apply hydrogen peroxide, and let stand. If stain persists, apply 1 or 2 drops of ammonia to wet area. Flush with water. Treat with an enzyme detergent; wash. If stain is still there, apply a powdered nonchlorinated color-safe bleach, such as sodium percarbonate; rewash.
VINAIGRETTE	First, treat stain as a grease stain (see grease, above). Then flush with white vinegar to remove any remaining spot. Follow up with an enzyme detergent to remove residue before washing.
FELT-TIP INK	First, build a "dam" around stain with mineral oil or petroleum jelly. Always work within the confines of the "dam." Test the ink with a cotton swab saturated with water and another one saturated with isopropyl alcohol to determine whether the ink is oil-based or water-based. Whichever solvent pulls more pigment out of the stain is the one that should be used. If isopropyl alcohol is more effective, follow the steps for ballpoint ink stains below. If water is more effective, spray the stain with diluted dishwashing-soap solution, and then flush with cold water.
BALLPOINT INK	Build a "dam" around the stain with mineral oil or petroleum jelly. Always work within the confines of the dam. Treat area with isopropyl alcohol using an eyedropper. Remove any remaining pigment with a dry solvent in a well-ventilated room; let dry. Rinse with diluted dishwashing-soap solution, then wash with an enzyme detergent in warm water.
MUD	If stain is a combination of mud and grass, treat grass stain first (see grass, above). Shake or scrape off residue; pretreat stain with diluted dishwashing-soap solution, and soak. Then treat with an enzyme detergent; wash.