



Custodial Basics

Brent Bourne, June 2008

We are frequently asked questions about how to clean certain areas and remove specific stains. Here are a few tips to help out in that area. I hope you find them useful. Don't forget, we have an excellent Building Service worker course that we offer. If you're interested make sure you contact the office for more information.

Measuring Products

Carefully read the label and make sure you add the right amount of cleaning solution to your water. For example, if a solution is to be mixed on the basis of one cup per gallon of water, make sure you use exactly that amount. Too much and you are wasting money because it won't clean any better. Too little and you won't get the job done and you will have to do it over.

Stains

There are so many stains that it is practically impossible to list them all. The extent and nature of the stain make results uncertain, so it is always advisable to first test a small area in an inconspicuous place. When removing a stain, always start at the outside edge and work inwards. This approach will avoid leaving a noticeable ring. Stains can be removed by employing one of two cleaning methods: either using a poultice or a solvent. A poultice is a paste-like substance which is spread over the stain and left for awhile.

Removing Stains

1. A poultice is prepared using an abrasive cleaning powder and water which is mixed to a paste-like consistency. This substance is applied to the stained area to a half-inch depth and is left for a 24-hour period. The poultice is then carefully removed to avoid scratching the floor.
2. Stains which are insoluble in water cannot be removed by the poultice method. In the case of this type of stain, the solvent method must be used. A discussion on various stains requiring solvents is provided below:
 - a) Alcoholic Beverages
Clean with soap and water. Follow with denatured alcohol. If the stain remains, apply 10 percent oxalic acid in water. In the case of terrazzo or marble flooring use hydrogen peroxide.
 - b) Candy
Scrape off surplus material, wash the stained area with warm water, and then use carbon tetrachloride. Asphalt and rubber requires a synthetic detergent.
 - c) Blood
Use cold water first to dilute the stain, then apply a few drops of ammonia. Allow the stain to soak for an hour or longer, after which rinse with clear water and blot with absorbent cloth.

- d) Chewing Gum
When this material cannot be removed with a scraper, pour carbon tetrachloride around the deposit so the liquid will soak underneath, and then lift off. Rubbing with ordinary or dry ice will sometimes make the material brittle enough to crumble.
- e) Chocolate
Use ammoniated alcohol with a mix ratio of nine parts denatured alcohol and one part ammonia.
- f) Cigarette Burns
If not too extensive, remove the blemish with steel wool. Sometimes a little detergent and water makes the process more effective.
- g) Coffee Stains
On any kind of floor, coffee stains can be treated with a cloth saturated with glycerin diluted in three or four parts water. Hydrogen peroxide may be used to remove coffee stains on linoleum and marble.
- h) Heel Marks
Use carbon tetrachloride and steel wool to remove the mark. If the floor is asphalt or rubber, use a synthetic detergent and steel wool.
- i) Indelible Ink
From any type of floor, carefully use an acetone cleaner, applying the solution quickly and wiping immediately. It is best to remove this stain in small portions rather than in a single application across the whole stain.
- j) Iodine
Light stains can be removed with an ammonia-saturated cloth. Deep stains should be allowed to soak until the stain disappears.
- k) Lacquer
With the exception of rubber and asphalt floors, use acetone or amyl acetate. On rubber and asphalt floors, use denatured alcohol and steel wool.
- l) Paint And Varnish
Except for linoleum or marble, prepare a poultice of tri-sodium phosphate and allow the stain to soak for several minutes. Add water to keep the poultice damp. When the paint or varnish has softened, it can be washed away.
- m) Oil And Grease
Saturate a cotton cloth with hydrogen peroxide and a second cloth with ammonia. Place the second cloth over the first. Repeat this procedure until the stain disappears.
- n) Rust
On all kinds of floors, use one part sodium citrate crystals to six parts of water, added to an equal portion of glycerin. Apply poultice to stain and allow to sit for 2 to 3 days.
- o) Soft Drinks
Apply a solution of bleach and oxalic acid on all floors except marble and terrazzo where hydrogen peroxide should be used.
- p) Soot
Cover with salt or rub in calcium carbonate and brush off. Wash with detergent and water. If the stain remains, apply carbon tetrachloride except in case of rubber or asphalt, where tri-sodium phosphate in a solution can be used with fine steel wool or a powdered abrasive cleaner.

- q) Tar
Use carbon tetrachloride on any floor except asphalt and rubber. Allow the chemical to penetrate under the stain and lift off the tar substance. On asphalt or rubber, apply dry ice until the tar crumbles.
- r) Tobacco
Apply lemon juice in water or equal parts of alcohol and glycerin. The latter mixture should always be used on marble and terrazzo floors.
- s) Urine
Scrub with several applications of lukewarm water, allow to dry and then follow with a solution of one-part vinegar to three-parts water. If the stain is old, use the same treatment as indicated for rust treatment.
- t) Vomit
Scrape away as much food particles as possible and then wash stained area thoroughly. A tri-sodium phosphate solution can be applied to remove deep stains.