



LifeSmarts

Learn it. Live it.

Key Points

READ CLOTHING LABELS

Fabric type affects what stain treatments are safe to use.

KNOW YOUR STAIN TYPE

Protein, oil, dye, or tannin—different stains require different treatments.

NOT ALL PRODUCTS ARE EQUAL

Enzyme-based detergents like Tide are especially effective for organic stains.

TREAT STAINS QUICKLY

The longer a stain sits, the harder it is to remove.

Core Concepts

PRETREATING WORKS

Applying a stain remover or detergent before washing can make a big difference.

COLD WATER VS. HOT WATER

Protein-based stains (like blood or sweat) should be rinsed in cold water first to avoid setting the stain.

STAIN REMOVAL IS A CHEMICAL REACTION

The right cleaner breaks down the molecules in the stain—soap alone isn't always enough.

KNOW YOUR ENZYMES

Enzymes target specific stains: protease for protein, lipase for fats, and amylase for starches.

RUBBING CAN MAKE IT WORSE

Blot stains gently. Scrubbing can spread the stain or damage fabric fibers.

SOME STAINS TAKE MULTIPLE CYCLES

Tough stains might not come out the first time; re-treat and wash again before drying.

HEAT SETS STAINS

Avoid using the dryer until you're sure the stain is gone, heat can make it permanent.

StudySmart Guide - StudySmart Guide - StudySmart Guide - StudySmart Guide

Stain Science

Additional Resources

Tide – Stain Solutions

Step-by-step stain removal tips organized by stain type, with explanations of which products work best and why

<https://bit.ly/4lkkUqk>

American Cleaning Institute – Stain Removal Guide

Explains the chemistry behind different stains and the best removal methods for each type

<https://bit.ly/4mBIJvZ>

YouTube - How to Remove Any Carpet Spot or Stain (in Two Steps or Less!)

A carpet cleaner shares his secret to DIY'ing your carpet stains

<https://bit.ly/4m8ariK>

YouTube - Chlorine Bleach VS Oxygen Bleach (What's the Difference?)

Which bleach should you use and when?

<https://bit.ly/45m7dp>

Listen to the Podcast



Explore and Explain

1. Why do different types of stains require different cleaning methods or products?
2. How can treating a stain quickly improve the chances of removing it completely?
3. What are the risks of using the wrong cleaning product or technique on certain fabrics?
4. How can learning basic stain removal skills help extend the life of your clothing and household items?

Knowing how to remove stains effectively can save money, protect your belongings, and reduce waste.

Stain Removal



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Acronyms

ASTM

American Society for Testing and Materials

HE

High Efficiency

MSDS

Material Safety Data Sheet

P&G

Procter & Gamble

SDS

Safety Data Sheet

Vocabulary

AGITATION

The scrubbing or motion that helps cleaners work better—but too much can damage fabric

BLOT

To gently press a cloth or paper towel on a stain to lift it—rubbing can make it worse

DYE-BASED STAIN

A stain with strong color (like ink, grass, or berries) that may need special treatments to remove

ENZYME CLEANER

A product that uses natural enzymes to break down stains from food, sweat, and other organic messes

OIL-BASED STAIN

A stain from butter, grease, or makeup—removed best with degreasers or solvents

OXIDATION

A chemical reaction (often from air or some cleaners) that can set stains and make them harder to remove

PROTEIN-BASED STAIN

A stain from blood, eggs, or dairy—best treated with enzyme cleaner and cold water

SURFACTANT

An ingredient in cleaners that helps water spread and lift stains more easily

TANNIN-BASED STAIN

A stain from coffee, tea, wine, or tomato sauce—heat can make it worse, so treat with cool water

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