

Cleaning and maintaining a painted finish will depend on the finish and the type of dirt or mark that needs to be removed. Some marks or stains are difficult to impossible to completely remove without removing the painted finish as well. If that turns out to be the case, then priming and repainting would be recommended. The painted surface should have been allowed to fully dry for at least three full weeks before the first cleaning attempt.

## Determine finish of the painted surface

Flat, eggshell or stain finishes tend to be less durable and are more likely to rub off if scrubbed too hard or washed with too abrasive a cleaner. Avoid harsh chemicals. Start by testing a mix of mild detergent and water in an inconspicuous area before embarking on cleaning the entire surface.

Semigloss or glossy finishes tend to be durable enough to stand up to degreasing cleaners but are also susceptible to scratches. Test a small area first.

## Cleaning process

Clean loose, surface dust/dirt off first using a soft, non-shedding cloth, HEPA vacuum, air compressor or soft bristle dust brush. Avoid using tack cloths as they may leave a residue behind.

Best practice is to start with as gentle a cleaner and process as possible. The product and process should be tested on a less visible area to make sure the product and process isn't too harsh, removes the paint or alters the color.

## List of gentle cleaning products

- Start with trying room temperature or warm water and a soft cloth. If that doesn't work move to using something in the water to assist with stubborn dirt, stains, or marks.
- Mr. Clean Magic Eraser
- A few drops of mild dye-free liquid dish soap added to approximately half a bucket of warm water. Once these solutions have been mixed thoroughly, use a soft sponge to gently remove dirt and grime from the painted surface. Make sure to wring out the sponge completely between each wipe and rinse session. Sponge should be damp not soaking wet when applying to the surface.
- Mix one teaspoon of liquid dye-free dish soap and ¼ teaspoon of distilled white vinegar into one quart of warm water.
- If you come across any stubborn stains on painted surfaces, turn to baking soda and water. Baking soda is a natural stain fighter—mix a half cup of baking soda with a quarter cup of water until it forms a paste. Gently rub that paste into the stained part of the painted surface and the stain should lift.
- A stronger mixture is one cup ammonia, ½ cup distilled white vinegar and ¼ cup baking soda in a gallon of warm water.
- A little bit of hydrogen peroxide can take care of stubborn stains.
- Rubbing alcohol is worth a try if all else fails.

## Tip

- Whichever method of cleaning you choose, it's a good idea to have two buckets and two sponges on hand: one bucket for the cleaning solution and one bucket for the plain, warm water to rinse the cleaning solution residue from the painted surface. Remember the sponge should be damp not soaking wet. Too much water can create bubbling or watermarks.
- Make sure the cleaned, painted surface is completely dry before doing any touch up.

*Note: If the dirt, marks, and stains are very stubborn and all the cleaning suggestions above have not resulted in success, unfortunately it may be necessary to put a fresh coat of primer and paint to get the pristine finish needed for your project.*