

Natural stone - Stain removal

The sensitivity of stone to stains varies. The most important factors are the type of stone - whether it is granite, slate (silicate stone), or marble, limestone (carbonate stone) - and the stone's density. Colour, texture, surface finish, and overall condition of the stone also play a role. Stain removal must be adapted to each situation.

Some stones may be impregnated - check with your stone supplier!

The advice below applies to untreated stone.

General

Stains should be removed quickly to prevent them from penetrating the stone. If a stain penetrates deeply, it can be very difficult or impossible to remove. Caution is necessary to avoid worsening the stain or damaging the stone. Always choose simple methods before resorting to chemicals.

The basic principle is the paste method, in which a solvent is combined with an absorbent material (see yellow fact box).

First step:

Try to absorb the stain using paper towels or another absorbent material. Then treat with a damp cloth and water. Next, use a solution of water and dishwashing liquid or neutral all-purpose cleaner. Always work from the outside of the stain toward the centre to prevent spreading. If a solvent is used, rinse thoroughly afterward with water and neutral all-purpose cleaner.

Cement mortar

Stains from hardened cement mortar are very difficult to remove. Remove the mortar before it hardens whenever possible.

Granite/Slate

Hardened cement stains can be removed using glycolic acid and a stiff brush or wooden scraper. Do not use a steel brush, as it may scratch the stone and cause rust staining. Pre-wet the surface before acid washing, and rinse thoroughly with water afterward. Note: Acid can damage grout.

Marble/Limestone

For stones with honed or coarser surfaces, hardened cement stains can be carefully scraped off. Then, manually sand the surface with fine wet sandpaper, steel wool, or a nylon pad to match the surrounding stone. Always test on a small area first. Polished surfaces are very difficult to restore with this method. Acids should not be used on polished marble or limestone, as they can cause etching and greater damage than the stain itself.

Grease/Oil

Grease and oil stains should be removed as quickly as possible to prevent penetration into the stone. Blot dry with paper, then wash with a solvent and absorb the solvent using paper or another absorbent. Suitable solvents include white spirit, thinner/cellulose thinner, acetone, or unleaded petrol (95 octane).

For deeper stains, use the paste method (see yellow fact box). Rinse with a solution of neutral all-purpose cleaner.

Rubber soles

Black marks from rubber soles can be removed with thinner, white spirit, or turpentine. Rinse with a solution of neutral all-purpose cleaner.

Glue

Glue compositions vary and may require different treatments. Remove residues with thinner. Oil-free acetone can also be used carefully.

Marker pens

Use denatured alcohol on a cloth. Thinner or oil-free acetone can also be tried carefully. If the stain has penetrated, use the paste method. Then clean with a neutral all-purpose cleaner.

Oil/Enamel paint

Use thinner or turpentine with absorbent paper, followed by the paste method if needed. Rinse with an ammonia-water solution if required.

Latex paint (Plastic paint)

Such stains are very difficult to remove once hardened. Wipe off before dry, by using water. Hardened stains can be scraped off with a razor blade. If needed, follow with a warm caustic soda solution and rinse thoroughly.

Rust

Rust stains are very difficult to remove, especially if they have been on the surface for a long time.

Granite/Slate

Oxalic acid or cleaners containing oxalic acid can be used. Rinse thoroughly afterward with a solution of neutral all-purpose cleaner.

Marble/Limestone

Consider the importance of the rust stain versus potential etching damage caused by oxalic acid. Warning! Acids damage marble and limestone (polished and honed surfaces are etched by acid). Use acids with caution and rinse thoroughly with a solution of neutral all-purpose cleaner afterwards.

Wax (Stearin)

Remove as much as possible mechanically by gently scraping with a knife or similar tool. Alternatively, use freeze spray. Then clean with unleaded petrol (95 octane), possibly as a paste. Wash with neutral all-purpose cleaner afterwards.

Tea

Granite/Slate

Tea stains are difficult to remove. Try first with dishwashing liquid or neutral all-purpose cleaner. Remaining marks can be bleached with a chlorine-based cleaner.

Marble/Limestone

Tea can cause discoloration, especially on light stones if not wiped immediately. Try dishwashing liquid or neutral all-purpose cleaner. If discoloration remains, bleach with chlorine-based cleaner - but note that this may etch or bleach the stone. Rinse thoroughly afterwards.

Tape

Glue residues from tape can be removed with thinner or cellulose thinner. Acetone can also be tested carefully.

Chewing Gum

Scrape off or use freeze spray.

Urine

Clean thoroughly with dishwashing liquid or a solution of neutral all-purpose cleaner.

The Paste method

This method involves mixing the chosen solvent with an absorbent powder, such as chalk, bentonite clay, or potato starch, to form a paste. Apply the paste to the stain, which may first be moistened with the solvent. Leave the paste on until it has dried, then brush it off and wash the surface with water. Always test first on a small area. Repeat the treatment if necessary.

Always follow the safety instructions for the products used!

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Swedish Stone Industries Federation "Sveriges Stenindustriförbund"

www.sten.se

