



CLEANLINESS FACTS

TIPS AND TRENDS FROM THE SOAP AND DETERGENT ASSOCIATION

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FINE WOOD FURNITURE Custom Care Keeps It Beautiful

Fine wood furniture, regardless of type of wood, method of construction or decorative finish, is treated with a final layer of protection. Usually this finish consists of several coats of a transparent nitrocellulose lacquer. However, polyurethane, acrylic lacquers, polyesters, varnish and shellac may also be used. If this final finish is kept clean and free from wear and damage, observes The Soap and Detergent Association, the wood itself can retain its beauty for a very long time.

To help absorb everyday wear and tear, as well as guard against accidental spills, the final finish should be protected with regular applications of polish or wax. Some furniture care products, especially paste wax, will also help camouflage signs of wear and/or minor imperfections in the finish.

Because dust contains thousands of particles of fiber, earth and silica, dusting with a dry cloth can create tiny scratches that dull the finish. To provide a cushion against scratches, always dust with a polish-moistened cloth. The polish will also help hold the dust particles so they are not released back into the air to settle, once again, onto the furniture. A furniture care product that contains cleaner, solvent and polish all in one tends to keep furniture cleaner longer than an oil-based one because there's no oily residue to attract dirt.

Do not use soap and water on fine wood furniture. It will not remove soils that accumulate on wood surfaces, such as grease from cooking and heating fumes. Plus, soapy residue leaves the piece looking dull and unattractive.

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Soft, 100% cottons, including terry toweling, cotton diapers, cotton knitwear and flannel, make the best dusting and cleaning cloths. Synthetic fabrics are not absorbent enough. Oil-treated fabrics can soften the wax, leaving the surface sticky or cloudy. Paper towels, coarse materials, linty fabrics and old clothing with snaps, seams or buttons can all scratch the finish. ■



HARD WATER PROBLEMS

Cleaning Solutions

Hard water is water with a high concentration of calcium and magnesium. The amount of hardness minerals varies throughout the country, and even from county to county or from city block to city block. Water hardness also varies from season to season.

How does water hardness affect cleaning? When the hardness minerals combine with some soils, insoluble salts are formed which are difficult to remove, thus the obstacle to good cleaning. Telltale signs of water hardness include: stiff and/or grey, dingy laundry; cloudy or spotty dishes; mineral deposits inside the dishwasher, around faucets and drains or a soap ring around the inside of the bathtub; kitchen and bathroom fixtures that appear dull and discolored; and generally poor cleaning results.

Soft water contains 0.0 to 3.5 grains of hardness minerals per gallon (gpg); very hard water contains more than 10.6 gpg. Even moderately hard water (3.6 to 7.0 gpg) can create cleaning problems.

Water hardness minerals must be controlled by holding them in solution in wash water or by precipitating (settling) them out of solution. This is what "softens" water. One major role of detergents is to soften water which allows the detergent to clean more effectively. Because of the water softening properties of detergents, one way to improve or boost cleaning action in hard water is to use extra detergent. This extra amount is needed because some detergent will be used to soften the water, leaving less detergent to do its cleaning job. Some detergent labels will give the amount to use for hard water. If specific directions are not given, use slightly more detergent than is recommended. Experiment with the exact amount until you are satisfied with the results.

The Soap and Detergent Association suggests several additional ways to overcome hard water problems. A mechanical water softener is the easiest but the most expensive method. Less expensive options include adding slightly more detergent or cleaning product than recommended on the label. Detergents function better in warm

or hot water, so increasing water temperature will improve cleaning. Also avoid overloading the washer or dishwasher.

In the laundry, sort clothes carefully and pretreat all stains. Add a water softener or a detergent booster, such as washing soda or borax, to the wash along with the regular detergent. It will soften the water and allow the detergent to work more effectively.

Powdered detergents have a harder time dissolving in hard water — liquids will dissolve easier. If using a powdered detergent, put the detergent and any other laundry additive in the wash water before adding clothes, letting the running water thoroughly dissolve the detergent.

In the dishwasher, hard water may cause spotting or filming on dishes or poor cleaning results. In addition, hard water deposits may form on the inside of the dishwasher. To prevent this, use slightly more detergent than recommended. A rinse agent will also help prevent spotting by helping water easily sheet off dishes and glassware.

If a hard water film has built up on dishware or the interior of the dishwasher, a stripping agent can be used to remove it. Follow label directions precisely. Some dishwasher manuals may suggest other methods to remove hard water film. It is important to follow these directions carefully as some products can cause rusting of stainless steel or damage to some dishware. A lime remover can be used to remove lime and rust deposits from the dishwasher interior.

To avoid hard water deposits on hard surfaces, including porcelain, chrome and glass, prevention is the best solution. Keep these surfaces dry by wiping with a sponge or soft cloth. Otherwise, when the water evaporates, it will leave the hard water minerals behind. These minerals build up to form the hard water crust that often occurs on kitchen and bathroom fixtures. Cleaners that are specially formulated for tubs and tiles will also remove hard water deposits. Adding a bubble bath or water softener to bath water will help prevent bathtub ring. ■

also
hard water
mineral remover

HUMAN SAFETY LABELING

Understanding Precautionary Statements

A product's label supplies a great deal of important information, such as use instructions. But, in terms of human safety, nothing is more important than the information that appears in the precautionary statement. To ensure accurate safety information, the Federal Hazardous Substances Act governs how these precautionary statements are used on household cleaning product labels.

The Soap and Detergent Association strongly advises consumers to examine the labels on all household cleaning products and to pay careful attention to precautionary statements.

Fortunately, most household cleaning products are not dangerous. If exposure in small amounts or swallowing small amounts would not cause major harm, then the product is not required to give any precautionary statement. Many window cleaners, fabric softeners and some hand dishwashing detergents fall into this category.

The "signal word" is the first, and largest, word in the precautionary statement. CAUTION or WARNING is the mildest warning. These two interchangeable words are the ones most commonly used for household cleaning products. When they appear in the statement, it means that the product is not likely to produce permanent damage as a result of exposure, if appropriate first aid is administered. For example, the eye or skin could become inflamed or, if the product is swallowed, dizziness or upset stomach might occur. Many laundry detergents, automatic dishwashing detergents, disinfectants and all-purpose cleaners fall into this category. If certain food chemicals, such as vinegar, were sold as cleaning products, they, too, would fall into this category and require human safety labels.

DANGER indicates that greater precaution should be taken and often appears on specialty products intended for tough jobs, such as cleaning the oven or unclogging drains. For example, with accidental exposure of the eye or skin to the undiluted product, tissue damage could occur. Should the undiluted product be swallowed, the mouth, throat or stomach might be damaged. If the product were exposed to an

open flame, the material could ignite.

Although POISON is not classified as a signal word under the Act, it is the strongest indication of hazard. It is rarely used on household cleaning products. However, it may be found on household lye, on some car care items, such as antifreeze, and on insecticides and rodenticides.

Specific phrases, such as "eye or skin irritant," "harmful if swallowed" and "flammable" are included in the precautionary statement. These explain the possible consequences that could occur if the product is misused.

Precautionary measures are also included. These describe actions to be taken or avoided. For example, the label might instruct consumers to wear rubber gloves for protection, to avoid product vapors and/or to use the product in a well-ventilated area. If flammability is a concern, a phrase such as "Do Not Use Near Open Flame or in Areas Where Sparks May Be Generated" may appear. Consumers may also be advised against mixing a product with anything that might cause a dangerous reaction. If this precaution appears, the label will be specific about which combinations to avoid.

When necessary or where appropriate, first aid instructions are also included in the precautionary statement. For example, the label might state "If Swallowed, Drink a Glassful of Water. Call a Physician." or "In Case of Eye Contact, Flush Eyes with Water for 15 Minutes."

If they are relevant to the hazard, the precautionary statement will also include handling, storage and disposal instructions. Examples include "Do Not Reuse Container," "Store Away From Heat or Out of Direct Light," and "Store Out of the Reach of Children."

As an added safeguard, keep products in their original containers with product labels intact. Instructions, precautionary statements and first aid instructions vary according to a product's ingredients. It can be dangerous to use a product incorrectly or to follow the wrong emergency treatment guidelines. Take advantage of all the information on labels to get the best and safest use from cleaning products. ■





MISCELLANY

Basic Shelving Comes Home

Today's consumer quest for value, along with the growing home office movement, have created an increased demand for sturdy, affordable, basic shelving that goes beyond the plain old gray steel options of the past. Because computer manuals and electronic equipment are heavy, shelf width and strength are now important considerations. Because the home office is often located in a den or family room, good design is equally important.

Light-colored laminates, coated steel in a wide variety of colors and mixtures of glass and wire, wood slats and laminated wood particle board are visually appealing. They are also easy to clean, notes The Soap and Detergent Association. Clean laminated wood with a dusting product, glass and wire with a multi-surface or glass cleaner, coated steel with an all-purpose cleaner.

Practical features include adjustable shelving that can be arranged so floor space underneath can be used for a desk or other furniture, units that can be reconfigured to adapt to changing needs and shelves that are pin-mounted into the dry wall so they can hold heavy items.

High Tech Textiles

Protection from the elements is an important attribute of new polyester fibers spotted by The Soap and Detergent Association.

Polarguard HV (High Void) utilizes trapped air space as an effective barrier against temperature extremes. It is used for warm, lightweight, water resistant, machine washable, highly compressible cold weather gear.

BTU, or Bio Thermal Underlayers, is named for its primary end use — thermal underwear and socks that are quick drying, odor resistant, machine washable and shape retentive. The computer-engineered fibers wick away perspiration and prevent chafing by lifting the fabric's surface away from the skin.

Finesse, a microdenier polyester, is used to create a closely woven fabric that keeps water out but lets air in. Although mainly used for skiwear and rainwear, its luxurious hand makes it

an attractive choice for other types of apparel.

ESP, an acronym for Extra Strength Performance, is a textured polyester filament. A high degree of stretch and recovery and the ability to withstand the effects of sun, chlorine and salt water make it a good choice for active wear.

Year-round Yuletide

The names and surrounding tabletop displays may say "Christmas," but the motifs on much of this season's new tableware are designed for year-round celebrations.

Subtle designs, suitable for Christmas and beyond, include delicate rim motifs, celestial themes and simple green bands. Some manufacturers are offering non-specific patterns, such as tartans and florals, in holiday reds and greens, reports The Soap and Detergent Association. White and gold china, suited to any kind of celebration from Christmas to birthdays to anniversaries, can be enhanced by the colored crystal being produced by several glassware manufacturers.

Other innovations give the consumer the option of using a pattern throughout the year. For example, salad plates coordinated to a basic year-round pattern feature a special holiday design.

Consumers who already own traditional Christmas dinnerware are showing increased interest in matching accessory pieces. In this market, Santa Claus and Christmas trees continue to be the most popular motifs.

Softer Shoulders Ahead

Rounder, thinner pads that enhance the body's natural silhouette are fast displacing oversized, exaggerated shoulder pads, according to reports gathered by The Soap and Detergent Association.

Many of these constructed sewn pads use cotton and polyester batting, while others use a molded polyester filling. With this next generation of pads, better quality and construction will, hopefully, eliminate the cleaning problems engendered by bulky, oversized shoulder pads. ■

Q & A**SDA Answers Your Questions**

Q: I will be doing a lot of holiday entertaining and want my dishes and glasses to look especially nice. What is the easiest way to keep them sparkling clean?

A: For the easiest clean-up, wash them in the dishwasher following a few simple guidelines. Make sure the water is hot (at least 130°) — dishwashing detergents work best in hot water. If water coming from the tap is less than 140°, turn up the thermostat on the water heater or use the high-temperature option on the dishwasher. Follow the dishwasher manual instructions for proper loading, and do not overload! Also follow manufacturer's instructions for the proper amount of dishwashing detergent to use. You may need to use extra detergent if you have hard water or if you are washing heavily soiled, greasy dishes. Use a rinse agent to help minimize spotting and filming. It will speed up the drying process because it causes water to sheet off dishes and glassware.

Q: I've recently noticed reddish-brown stains on my clothes after they have been laundered. What are the stains and how can I get rid of them?

A: The stains are probably caused by iron or rust in the water or pipes. Rust stains can also be caused by rusty metal zippers, hangers, buckles and snaps. Another source can be the inside of the washer or dryer if the finish has been scratched or damaged.

Never use bleach to remove rust stains — it can intensify the discoloration. Use a rust-removing agent to do this job. A rust remover can be purchased in grocery, discount, variety and drug stores. Follow label directions carefully.

With rust stains, prevention is the best approach. Before doing laundry, run the tap water (hot and cold) for a few minutes to clear the pipes and avoid overloading the washer. Drain your hot water heater periodically to remove bottom sediment, and if rust in the water is a chronic problem, ask your plumber about installing an iron filter system. ■

WHAT'S NEW?

Cleaning those hard-to-reach places is easy thanks to two new vacuum attachments. The Ceiling Fan Vac has a 6" head with a mouth-like slit that fits around the blade of a ceiling fan. This, plus the angled swivel head, enables it to simultaneously remove dust from both sides of the blade. For effectively cleaning corners, the Edger has pull-down "wings" that transform a 6" brush into a crevice tool. Both fit any 1¼" hose or nozzle.

(IdeaWorks, Inc.; 74-90 Highway 111; Suite 121; Indian Wells, CA 92210)

Come clean with the Super Soapy Sudsy Bodybrush. The bath brush features bristles designed to hold soap longer, making better suds for a better lather. The 20" long handle cuts down on bending and stretching, making the brush particularly attractive to people who are physically challenged.

(Flo-Pac Corporation; 700 N Washington Ave; Suite 400; Minneapolis, MN 55401)

The Whirlpool Corporation is offering three comprehensive teaching resources covering cooking, refrigeration and clean-up home appliances. Targeted at high school and adult audiences, each guide includes product explanations and hands-on projects designed to make appliance instruction easy. The guides were developed under the guidance of an advisory panel of educational professionals. (Whirlpool HomeLife Network Services; Mail Drop 2400; Whirlpool Corporation; Benton Harbor, MI 49022) ■





"KEEP IT CLEAN" BRIEFS

Drying a small load of clothes reduces the tumbling effect and prolongs the drying time. Add 3 - 4 clean, dry towels to a small dryer load to speed up drying time.

Spray starch helps protect blouse and shirt sleeves from soils and wear. On wrong side of cuffs, spray starch and iron. Spray cuff on right side and iron to smooth out any creases and wrinkles.

Always launder washable items after treating them with spot removers. Washing will remove residues of both the stain and the stain remover.

After the holidays, take a few simple steps to keep your linens in fine shape for years to come. Always clean linens before storing to prevent stains and creases from setting. Do not starch before storing as starch may attract unwanted insects. To store linens without unsightly creasing, roll them around empty paper towel or wrapping paper tubes or hang on hangers in the closet. ■

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