

The Most Important Tip For cleaning Upholstery: Blot The Spill Quickly

If you don't just have general dirt, or old stains, but instead a fresh spill, you don't want that spill to soak into the furniture stuffing, into the wood, or to set into the upholstery fabric.

Therefore, the first thing to do when any spill occurs is to blot (not scrub or rub) the spill up with a white cloth as quickly as possible to lessen the spread of the stain, and to keep it from setting in a larger area. Blotting is perhaps the most crucial, and also common sense part of how to clean upholstery.

How To Know What Upholstery Cleaners Should Be Used To Clean Your Upholstery

Next, you need to know what types of upholstery cleaner should be used on your upholstery.

This is dependent on two things: (1) the type of fabric the upholstery is made of; and (2) the type of spill or stain on the upholstery.

Each will be addressed in turn.

Upholstery fabrics can be mystery sometimes, because the fabrics used for upholstery can be varied, such as cotton, wool, silk, acetate, linen, rayon, olefin, and acrylic just to name a few, including blends of these fabrics.

In addition, different upholstery fabrics have been dyed with different colors, in different ways, and the age of the upholstery should also be taken into account.

Note, if this is very old upholstery, or antique or very valuable, I would suggest calling in a professional.

If you don't know what upholstery cleaner can be used on your upholstery the first step is to look at the tag. If you have removed it call your furniture store or Interior Designer to find out the fabric code.

Understanding Upholstery Cleaning Codes

The furniture industry has created a code for its care tags so you can quickly know how to clean upholstery when a spill occurs.

These tags are typically found hanging in an inconspicuous place on the side of the furniture, or under seat cushions.

Here is what the codes mean:

W: Clean the upholstery fabric with a water based detergent.

S: Clean the upholstery fabric with a water free product, such as dry cleaning solvents.

WS: You may clean the upholstery fabric with either a water based cleaner or a water free cleaner, depending on the type of stain. (This is the best type of upholstered furniture to purchase if you plan to remove your own stains.)

X: This upholstery fabric must be professionally cleaned. You should only vacuum and brush it -- never use any type of upholstery cleaner on it yourself. (Unless you are extraordinarily rich, you really want to steer clear of buying furniture with this on the tag in the future.)

What To Do If You Don't Have The Upholstery Tags Anymore

With all cleaning methods I would suggest that you test your upholstery stain remover first in an inconspicuous area, to check to make sure the stain removal method will not harm it and for color fastness.

If you are unsure, or want to be especially cautious, I would call a professional for advice or assistance on how to clean upholstery without tags still attached or accessible.

I also suggest when you don't know the codes or the stain, start with the most conservative cleaning method and proceed cautiously from there.

The Type Of Stain Or Spill Also Impacts What Cleaning Method And Cleaner You Use

There is no one size fits all upholstery cleaner that will work on all types of stains, such as food and drinks, protein, oil and grease, and other stains.

Two good resource for instructions on how to clean upholstery can be found on the web at www.stain-removal-101.com and www.stainbusters.com , both sites lists many common types of stains, and gives instructions for cleaning specific types of stains from upholstery.

These instructions assume your upholstery has a code of WS.

If your fabric is not coded WS, and the cleaning method suggested conflicts with your tag you will need to call a professional to help clean your upholstery, or try the following dry cleaning methods which explain how to spot clean dry clean only upholstery.

Upholstery dry cleaning is the only method you should use on certain upholstered furniture stains and spots, depending on the type of fabric you've got on your furniture.

Not all upholstery fabric is made alike, and some fabrics can be cleaned only with water, others only with dry cleaning solvent, and others with either water or solvent.

Dry cleaning Spots on Your Upholstery

Some decisions must be made when your upholstery has an "S" code, since dry cleaning solvent upholstery cleaning has its own tips and techniques that are different than the more common water based cleaning methods.

Decide Whether To Call In A Professional

The first thing you need to decide is whether you actually want to tackle your upholstery dry cleaning job yourself, or call in a professional.

Typically, any upholstered items whose tag requires a solvent only cleaner, or says something like "dry clean only" means it is a pretty expensive piece of furniture. Any time you do something yourself you take the risk into your own hands that you may ruin something, so you need to decide whether you want to do that or not.

Further, the more surface area you have to clean the more I would encourage you to just call a professional. The methods listed below are best for spot cleaning a small spill or stain, not cleaning an entire piece of furniture that has accumulated general dirt and grime over the years. If you need the latter just call a professional. However, if you want to try to proceed to clean your own spot or small spill, after weighing the pros and cons, read on for tips for how to do it as safely as possible.

Gather Your Upholstery Dry Cleaning Supplies

The first thing to do is to gather the appropriate supplies for the job. Many readily available upholstery cleaners are actually water-based cleaning products, so read the labels carefully to make sure the product you choose is a "dry" upholstery cleaner. The word "dry" in this instance means it does not contain water, but instead is an OMS or solvent. I recommend Guardsman Dry cleaning fluid as it is readily available at most furniture stores. There are many other varieties available, including several in powder form made specifically for upholstery.

Steps For Safe & Effective Upholstery Dry Cleaning

Once you have the right tools it is time to begin cleaning your spot or stain. Here are the steps to take. Make sure, if possible, to work in a well ventilated area, since many of these dry cleaning solvents can

be unhealthy to breath and have quite a strong smell.

1. Vacuum first - The first step is to vacuum your upholstery thoroughly, especially wherever the spot of stain is located. When you vacuum first you will remove any loose dirt and dust which could otherwise make a sort of mud or sludge which is hard to clean up and can make the spot worse.
2. Test the cleaner in an inconspicuous area - Next, test the dry cleaner you've chosen in an inconspicuous area of the upholstery, such as under a cushion, to make sure it does not harm your fabric before you use it directly on the spot or stain.
3. Apply a small amount of dry cleaning solvent with a white cloth - Each cleaner is slightly different so be sure to read the directions on the one you choose, but typically with dry cleaners a little goes a long way. It is typically best to apply a small amount to a cloth and then blot at the spot or stain with it, onto the upholstery fabric, instead of applying directly onto the upholstery itself.
4. Keep blotting - It may take a while, but blotting (not rubbing) is the best method for upholstery dry cleaning spots and stains. Keep at it, but make sure not to saturate the upholstery with too much solvent.
5. Blot up as much solvent as possible once the stain or spot is removed - You can't rinse out the solvent now that the stain is removed, since this is upholstery after all, but sometimes these solvents can leave a ring around the treated area if as much of it is not removed as possible. To avoid this use a new, slightly damp cloth to wick up as much solvent as possible from the area and let it dry thoroughly

Notice: Due to the extensive number and varying composition of fabrics on the market today, Integratect does not guarantee any of the cleaning instructions offered on this web site will not harm a fabric or furnishing. Customers are urged to call a professional IICRC certified cleaning company if they are uncertain about their fabrics cleaning code or which home cleaning method to use. Integratect does not guarantee its application will protect fabrics from stains caused by body fluids, food dyes, acids, chlorine or bleach.