



Home Maintenance Tips and Tricks



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Restoring laminate countertops

It is almost impossible to restore the color and eliminate scratches from plastic laminate. The same properties that make plastic laminate durable also make it impossible to patch or repair. You can clean and polish laminate with a product like Gel-Gloss. It is a white, milky cleaner and polish similar to liquid automotive wax. With some rubbing, Gel-Gloss can remove many stains and discoloration. When it dries, buff with a clean cotton cloth. This will leave a protective finish that tends to mask scratches so that the laminate looks refinished. It also leaves a smooth, sealed surface that resists water spotting and stains. If the counter gets dull in the future, repeat the process.

Refinishing laminate countertops

Another, more transformative option, is to use Rust-Oleum's Countertop Transformations or other similar competitor's products. These coating systems (available at home centers and some hardware stores as well as Amazon) are a simple way to transform worn or damaged laminate counter tops into a new countertop surfaces. These products are available in an assortment of colors ranging from light to very dark. The advantages of these systems are that they drastically transform the appearance of your countertop and you don't have to remove them. The instructions are generally clear, and the kit comes with everything you need (minus basic painting tools), plus, at least the Rust-Oleum version includes a very detailed DVD. These products can be applied to any laminate or hardwood countertop in reasonable condition. Burns and scratches are fine, but fill deep dents and chips before you use it. Most reports we've read is that they are generally very easy to apply. In terms of durability, the manufacturer's compare them to laminates. Most reports also state that scratching the surface is surprisingly tough—no marks at all. And you can reapply the system to renew the surface later if you want. They generally get excellent reviews.

Removing a white ring from a wooden table

A white ring on a table is caused by moisture absorbed into the table's clear finish. Professional re-finishers call this effect "blooming." Most blooming can be removed by rubbing with mild abrasive to remove a thin coat of finish above the white area. Use automobile polishing compound, or appliance polish (a baking soda-and-water combination or a non-soapy ammonia will also do the trick) and lightly rub the affected finish in the direction of the wood grain. Repeat the motion for 5 to 10 minutes, until you break through to the condensation that has seeped into the surface. Then dry and clean the area with a soft cloth and seal the finish with furniture or paste wax. You may need to touch up the finish if the bloom was deep. Consider using oil finish for a touch-up. A white bloom is usually only in the clear surface finish. A darker stain indicates wood damage below the surface finish.

This could require complete refinishing with a cotton swab, and then rinse and blot with water and usually the grease stain disappears. Stubborn or large areas may require a second treatment.

Cleaning Your Fireplace

To remove the soot and debris from your fireplace, first remove the andirons and grate from your fireplace and take them outside. Scrub them with a nylon brush to remove soot. Rinse them with water and wipe them dry. Fireplace-using a fireplace shovel, remove the ashes and debris. Discard into a trash can. Once they are entirely removed, scrub the walls of the fireplace with a nylon brush. Place newspapers along the bottom to collect the falling soot. Begin at the top, and work your way down. Remove the newspapers and discard.

Deep Cleaning Your Fireplace

Now that you have removed the soot and the debris, you can use a warm-water, bleach and Trisodium Phosphate (TSP) solution to deep-clean your fireplace walls and the floor of your fireplace. Mix 6 tablespoons of TSP, 1 cup of bleach and 1 gallon of warm water in a plastic bucket. Wearing gloves, dip a nylon brush into the bucket, and then use the TSP solution to scrub the walls and floor of your fireplace until they're clean. (Old fireplaces may contain stains you can't remove.) Rinse the floor and walls with clean water and towel-dry. Replace your grate and andirons. You're now ready to enjoy your clean and shiny fireplace.

Carpet Stains

For the most effective and reliable removal of most stains from carpets, we have found that Spot Shot works very well. It can remove some of the most stubborn stains, but be Careful on how you apply. We have found that you should follow the instructions on the can closely. Failure to follow the instructions closely, can cause bleaching or discoloration of carpets.

Oil/Grease Stains in Clothes

Grease or oil stains can ruin clothing. Regular clothes detergent usually is not very effective against these types of stains. We have found that acetone, carefully applied to many non-synthetic fabrics in an open area, and away from any flames or cigarettes, is an effective way to remove oil stains from non-synthetic clothes (be careful, acetone can damage some synthetics). You need to apply a liberal amount over the stain, the remove or spread out the oil or grease stain. Because acetone is extremely flammable, you should treat the fabric away from any flame source or cigarette. Once the acetone has evaporated fully, you can wash in your washing machine. If applied liberally in order to spread out the oil stain, you will see a marked reduction or disappearance of the grease or oil stain. Tough stains may require a second treatment and re-wash.

Oil/Grease Stains in Carpets

We have found that products such as goop or similar hand cleaning products are very effective in removing small grease or oil stained areas in carpets. Apply a small amount to the stain with a cotton swab, and then rinse and blot with water and usually the grease stain disappears. Stubborn or large areas may require a second treatment.



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