

# Cleaning Specialist Surfaces

## Vinyl

**Vinyl flooring is very easy to maintain.** However, that is only the case if it is cleaned regularly and with the right approach. You need to respect the purposes of vinyl. They are designed to have no need for waxing. The wax is already pre-applied to the material, giving it a long-lasting lifetime. However, because vinyl is most often used in kitchens, asphalt and ground in dirt is trailed through on shoes (although not always visible) and affects the quality of the floor. Those compounds do not mix well on vinyl and result in the floor yellowing over time. Regular sweeping of debris is necessary on vinyl floors, so advise your clients to take a sweeper over it daily to prevent discolouration. When cleaning vinyl you cannot use a wax cleaner. You can only apply a mild detergent and the best for that is plain old soap and water. Add a bit of washing up liquid to water in a mop bucket and get to work mopping it. When mopping, do not drench the floor, although the mop head must be as damp as possible. Too much water will get into any cracks, edges and seams around corners and bottom of floor-units, which can destroy the glue holding the vinyl in place. Do that too often and the vinyl will eventually come loose, corners will start to curl up and the professional looking floor will be destroyed, rendering a new floor covering inevitable. Remember - damp mops at all times, with the mildest of detergents. The water you use should not be hot as that will affect the glue holding the vinyl down. Use lukewarm water only. For best results, when a vinyl floor is very dirty and more water needs to be applied, be sure that there are two mop heads available. One to mop the mild detergent over the floor and the other should be dry to pick up excess water as you go. The biggest factor in loss of shine on vinyl floors is the incorrect use of chemical cleaners with a high PH balance. Neutral PH cleaners are best as they will not attack the wax covering on vinyl, which is why a mild detergent is good. The approximate PH level of washing up liquid is 9.4 on the PH scale. A little on the high end as neutral cleaners range between PH 5 and PH 10.



*Vinyle 1*

## Marble

**Marble is a porous stone and as such is liable to staining and discolouring.** As for cleaning vinyl, a neutral PH cleaner is required also for cleaning marble. A microfiber mop works best for marble floors and, depending on the extent of cleaning required, it may be sufficient to clean with warm water only. Only use a mild detergent on marble floors if necessary. Water alone has a neutral PH balance, and provided it is lukewarm and not cold, it will do a good job at cleaning to a shine. However, the difference with marble is that you cannot allow it to air dry as you will lose the shine you have worked to achieve. To maintain the shine you must dry the surface immediately, therefore a dry mop is essential. That is why a microfiber mop is recommended. You can use one damp cloth on the mop to clean the floor, replacing the pad with a dry cloth to run over the surface and dry it. For marble surfaces, such as worktops or fireplaces, the same caution should be taken. Use lukewarm water only with mild detergent if required. Clean first with lukewarm water and then dry off with a chamois, which is the best material for absorbing water.



*Marble 1*

## Granite

**Granite is another porous stone that requires delicate care when cleaning the surfaces.** For cleaning granite surfaces, you will need a sponge and a microfiber cloth, with a large bowl, or use the sink to fill with warm soapy water using a mild dishwashing detergent (i.e. neutral PH balance). Mix the soapy water to form suds (bubbles), as that is what you will be using to clean the surface and not the water itself. Once the suds form, it is that solution that you will use to clean with a sponge. Ensuring the sponge is not soaking wet but only damp with the soap suds, rub the suds over the granite surface to clean it. When you are finished cleaning you will not see a shine. You will need to buff the surface with a dry microfiber cloth to bring the surface to a shine. After this, if you find you are unable to attain a shine, it is probable there is still soap residue on the surface, causing a streaky and dull finish. If that does happen, wring out your cloth as much as possible and dry the surface again to remove any

leftover soap residue from the surface, and dry it in the process. Only when no residue is left and the surface is dry will granite be left with a shine.



*Granite 1*

## **Tiles & Grout**

**One of the more troublesome areas of cleaning is tiled areas.** Be it tiled walls, floors, or splash backs in kitchen areas, the tiles themselves are not difficult to clean. It is the grout between the tiles that forms the challenging part. The reason is simply down to the nature of tiling. Tiles themselves have low porosity, meaning they do not absorb liquids. Grout on the other hand is porous and does absorb liquid. That can lead to discolouration and that is what many find difficult to clean, without resorting to replacing the grout. To clean the tiles themselves is straightforward. Warm water sprinkled over the tiles first will help activation of a general all-purpose cleaner. The first step is to run the hot water tap, filling up an empty spray bottle. Spray the hot water over the tiled areas and leave it for a few minutes. Return to spray over the all-purpose cleaning solution, spraying areas as you go from top to bottom, using a microfiber cloth to clean in a circular motion. Once the tiles are cleaned, dry them off with a clean microfiber cloth, ensuring that any cleaning solution is removed from the area, preventing it attracting more dirt and grime. All chemical cleaning solutions must be removed for longer lasting cleanliness. Grout cleaning can be done in one of two ways. The first of which is by use of a steam cleaner with grout cleaning attachments. Some are hand-held, whereas others have crevice tool attachments, specifically designed for grout cleaning. At the end of the attachment there is a brush and the steam is applied through the brush tool. You can use the attachment to spray steam directly onto the grout, working from the top and brushing your way



down the tiles. Be sure to dry any lower surfaces as the water from the condensation runs down walled surfaces. If you are not using the steam cleaning approach, it is the same technique without the power of steam penetration. Instead, you will use an all-purpose cleaner to spray onto the grout, with a scrubbing brush to scrub away the dirt, grime, and grease from the surface of the grout. For white grout it is safe to use bleach, but you cannot use it on coloured grout as it will cause discolouration.



*Tiles and Grout 1*

## Leather

**The last thing you want to do is leave a leather sofa behind with cracks on the surface due to ineffective cleaning.** Leather is difficult to clean and therefore, unless absolutely necessary, cleaning should be avoided. The benefit of leather is that any spills can be soaked up immediately, so stains are rare. However, what is not so rare is damage to the leather (cracks appearing or discolouration) due to use of harsh cleaning solutions.. For regular maintenance of leather furniture, it should only be dusted and gently vacuumed. The vacuum's suction power must not be too strong; if your usual vacuum has a strong powerful suction, you may prefer to switch to a lower powered hand-held vacuum that you only use on leather furniture, or other delicate areas requiring vacuuming. Do not just vacuum the surface of the sofa. If cushions are removable, then take them off to get underneath the seating areas and backs, where most of the dirt will be found. Use a hand brush and pan first to get rid of any larger particles, and then use the appropriate vacuum attachment to eliminate smaller dust particles. Replace any cushions that have been removed and then dust the leather with a dry cloth. If you find there are troublesome spots that require cleaning, then only treat it with warm water first, using a soft damp cloth. Do not rub the leather too hard as that can damage the surface and push the dirt further into the leather fabric, making it more difficult to

get the dirt out. If that does not work, then use warm soapy water. Use the suds only to softly rub over the top of the leather, ensuring that you do not overly wet the material. You should find that the soft detergent and gentle application to the leather will be enough to remove marks. If that still does not work, then you will need to apply a leather cleaner product to the furniture. Before doing this refer to the care label and cleaning instructions, as some leather types cannot have any solutions applied to them, and/or only a product recommended by the manufacturers. If you are using a leather cleaner always adhere to the instructions provided. After any cleaning of leather furniture it is important to apply a protector over the surface. Some are available in the form of sprays, whereas others can be simple leather wipes that leave a protective coating behind.



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