

Stain Removal Cheat Sheet

First aid for 16 common laundry stains. Keep it by the washer.

Stain	What to do, in order	Watch out
Blood	1. Rinse from the back with cold water as soon as you can. 2. Work in an enzyme detergent or stain remover and let it sit 15 to 30 minutes. 3. Wash cold and check before drying; repeat if a shadow remains.	Never use hot water: heat sets blood.
Coffee	1. Blot, then flush from the back with cold water. 2. Rub in liquid detergent and wait about 10 minutes. 3. Wash at the warmest temperature the care label allows.	Do not put it in the dryer until the stain is gone.
Red wine	1. Blot without rubbing, then rinse with cold water. 2. Pre-treat with liquid detergent or a stain remover. 3. Soak in oxygen bleach solution if the fabric allows, then wash.	Do not rub and do not use heat before the stain is out.
Oil and grease	1. Blot the excess; cover with cornstarch or baking soda for 15 minutes if it is fresh. 2. Work in liquid detergent or dish soap and leave it 10 minutes. 3. Wash in the warmest water the label allows.	Do not tumble dry until you have checked the spot in good light.
Ballpoint ink	1. Place a clean cloth under the stain. 2. Dab with rubbing alcohol from the outside in, moving to a clean part of the cloth as ink transfers. 3. Rinse, pre-treat with detergent and wash.	Test alcohol on a hidden seam first, and keep it away from heat and flames.
Permanent marker	1. Blot with rubbing alcohol on a cloth placed under the fabric. 2. Rinse and repeat until no more color lifts. 3. Pre-treat with detergent and wash.	Never mix alcohol with bleach.
Grass	1. Brush off any dry soil. 2. Work in an enzyme detergent and let it sit 15 minutes. 3. Wash warm if the label allows; use oxygen bleach for what remains.	Avoid ammonia-based cleaners, which can set the stain.
Chocolate	1. Scrape off the excess with a blunt knife once it has hardened. 2. Rinse from the back with cold water. 3. Pre-treat with detergent, wait 10 minutes and wash.	Do not use hot water first: it sets the milk proteins.
Makeup	1. Lift off any excess without spreading it. 2. Work in liquid detergent or dish soap for oily makeup such as foundation and lipstick. 3. Rinse and wash at the warmest temperature the label allows.	Do not rub powder makeup in: shake or blow it off first.
Mud	1. Let the mud dry completely. 2. Brush or shake off as much as you can outdoors. 3. Pre-treat with detergent, soak if needed and wash.	Do not wipe wet mud: it pushes soil into the fibers.
Rust	1. Apply lemon juice and salt, or a rust remover made for fabric. 2. Leave it for the time on the label, out of direct heat. 3. Rinse thoroughly and wash.	Never use chlorine bleach on rust: it makes the stain permanent.
Sweat and armpit stains	1. Soak in cool water with oxygen bleach for at least an hour. 2. Work an enzyme detergent into the underarm area. 3. Wash and air dry until you are sure the stain is gone.	Skip chlorine bleach on yellow sweat stains: it can darken them.
Deodorant marks	1. Rub white marks off dry with a clean cloth or a nylon stocking. 2. For buildup, pre-treat with detergent and soak in warm water. 3. Wash as usual.	Let deodorant dry before dressing to prevent new marks.
Tea	1. Flush with cold water from the back. 2. Pre-treat with liquid detergent for 10 minutes. 3. Wash; use oxygen bleach for any tan shadow.	Do not dry until the stain has gone.
Chewing gum	1. Harden the gum with an ice pack or a short time in the freezer. 2. Scrape it off with a blunt edge. 3. Treat any residue with detergent and wash.	Do not pull warm gum: it spreads into the weave.
Bleach spots	1. Rinse right away with plenty of cold water to stop the bleach working. 2. Accept that the color is gone: a bleach spot is lost dye, not a stain. 3. Disguise it with a fabric marker or re-dye the garment.	Never add vinegar or other cleaners to a bleach spill.

Three rules for every stain: act quickly and blot, do not rub · keep heat away until the stain is gone · check the care label and test on a hidden area first. Never mix bleach with ammonia, vinegar or other cleaners.