



# ***Maintaining the Home***

## ***Wallpaper Selection and Cleaning***

# Maintaining the Home: Wallpaper Selection and Cleaning

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## General Information

Most modern wall coverings are labeled nonwashable, washable or scrubbable. If your paper wasn't labeled, but you have a small piece, take it to a wallpaper dealer and ask them what they would recommend. Or test an inconspicuous area, such as behind furniture, by wiping it with a damp cloth. If the wallpaper does not change in color or appearance, it probably can be safely cleaned as washable wallpaper. Always test any cleaning method in an inconspicuous spot before trying it on a wall open to view.

Vacuum off dust frequently. Don't let paper get too dirty before cleaning it.

## Wallpaper Cleaning: Non-washable Papers

Buy commercial wallpaper cleaner, (a dough-like material). Rub over the wallpaper surface, following the directions on product exactly. First test the cleaner in a place usually not seen, such as behind furniture, to see how it affects the wallpaper and that it does not streak. Vacuum or brush off any bits of cleaner that stay on wall.

## Wallpaper Cleaning: Washable Papers

Washable papers usually have a plastic coating. Clean this type of wallpaper with a damp cloth or sponge. Use water sparingly.

1. Make a sudsy solution of a mild white detergent. Try mixing hand dishwashing liquid in cool water in one bucket and some cool rinse water in a second bucket.

2. First clean the ceiling, whether papered or painted.
3. Then clean the walls from the bottom up, gently wiping overlapping areas in a circular motion, first with a damp sudsy sponge, then with a damp rinsing sponge.
4. Pat gently with a clean soft cloth or bath towel to remove any surface moisture.
5. If any area has to be rewashed to remove soil, let it dry completely before washing again.

Some foam cleaners may be used if the directions on the label allow it:

1. Spray a four-foot square area, holding the cleaner about 8 inches from the surface.
2. Wipe off the foam and soil with a clean damp sponge. Wipe the area with the rinsing sponge, and gently pat it dry with a clean towel.

## Wallpaper Cleaning: Scrubbable Wallpaper

Wall coverings labeled as scrubbable are vinyl or vinyl-impregnated paper. They can be scrubbed with a foam cleanser or all-purpose detergent, using a sponge or soft cloth, and rinsed with a clean sponge or cloth. Do not use any abrasive liquid cleaners such as Softscrub, or scouring powder, as these could scratch the vinyl finish. These wall coverings are more practical for rooms that get lots of use.

## Cleaning Fabric Wall Coverings

Some fabric wallpapers are vinyl-coated and easy

to wash. Others, like burlap or grass cloth, are very hard to clean when stained. You might try wiping lightly with a sponge dampened in suds and water; test first in an inconspicuous spot to be sure the water won't stain the covering. The best method is to follow the directions provided by the manufacturer or ask a dealer for a recommended cleaner..

Dust fabric wall coverings occasionally with a clean cloth or vacuum to remove loose dirt. Wash spots and stains with a sponge or soft bristle brush soaked in a mild detergent or soap solution. Rinse well. If you really have a trouble spot, add two or three tablespoons of bleach. Use the non-chlorine type for delicate fabrics. Rinse with plenty of clear water and dry with an absorbent towel to prevent streaking.

This material was adapted from publications produced by Michigan State University. Michigan State publications can be found on the Web at <http://www.msue.msu.edu/msue/>.

*This resource is one in a series on **Maintaining the Home** which include:*

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