



spot the difference

Is your lounge suite arranged for aesthetics and flow, or is the sofa placed just so to hide an ugly stain on your carpet? With the correct response to a spill or accident, unsightly blemishes on your floors, walls and upholstery can generally be removed.

With gravity the way it is, floors bear the brunt of accidents, and carpets in particular are prone to staining. Permanent damage can easily be prevented by acting quickly when spills occur. Wools of New Zealand suggests the following:

- > Scoop up solids before cleaning.
- > Blot out as much liquid as possible, using a clean white absorbent towel or a sponge.
- > Clean with the correct cleaning agent. Apply this onto the clean towel, not directly onto your carpet.
- > Rinse with cold or lukewarm water.
- > Blot dry with an absorbent towel, or use a cold-air fan to complete drying.
- > Do not rub or scrub your wool carpet, as this can cause permanent pile distortion.



For accidents involving alcohol (including red wine), coffee, tea, soft drinks and juice, as well as bleach, blood, urine and acrylic paint, the stain can often be removed simply with cold water. Don't saturate the carpet, though – if the backing becomes wet, it can create new splotches in the carpet and may also grow mould.

If cold water doesn't do the trick, clean the spot using a teaspoon of wool detergent, such as Softly, with one teaspoon of white vinegar, in a litre of warm water. This is also recommended for removing cream, egg, milk and mustard, as well as faeces and vomit. You may want to follow by rinsing with a clear household disinfectant for the last two.

Oily stains from butter, grease, oil, chocolate, lipstick, shoe polish, furniture polish, floor wax, lipstick and felt tip pens should be cleaned with a dry cleaning solvent, such as white spirits. Only do this if the carpet is dry, though. If it's not, you'll need professional assistance. Cover the

stain with layers of paper towel and phone the Carpet Cleaning Institute of New Zealand on 0800 422 269 or contact your local carpet stockist for advice. They will be able to give you the contact details for your closest, most qualified carpet cleaning technician.

Wood, laminated, vinyl, concrete and tiled floors are somewhat easier to keep stain free – your average household floor cleaner will remove most marks. Stubborn scuffmarks, tar and asphalt can be removed using white spirits, while methylated spirits will take care of inks, dyes and lipstick.

Stains on natural stone surfaces, whether a sandstone floor, a granite benchtop, or a marble table, can also be treated with products found in the supermarket. Once again, the sooner you attend to the spill, the less chance of permanent damage – especially with acidic drinks, such as wine, citrus juice and soft drinks, which can etch into alkaline stones such as limestone and marble.

- Resene Lusty
- Resene Spinnaker

Coffee, juice, blood and ink stains can be removed with baking soda or bleach. Bleach should also work on tea stains, mustard, lipstick and dyes. Use white vinegar for water and mineral marks. Fats, grease and vegetable can be removed using detergent, while motor oil responds to Plaster of Paris. Use ammonia, baking soda, or bleach for mildew, baking soda or scouring powder for rust, and oxalic acid for tough stains.

SCE Stone & Design warns that caution is paramount when attempting to remove any stains from natural stone. In some cases, the cleaning process can irreparably damage the surface itself. It recommends always testing your method on a small, inconspicuous area first – especially when using abrasives such as scouring powders, or acids such as vinegar, both of which can attack the polished stone surface.

Walls are another area prone to marks. Once again, however, a speedy reaction to a spill will ensure the best chance of removal. Do not vigorously scrub the surface, nor use an abrasive or strong cleaning agent, as you may burnish the paint and mar the finish.

Resene Interior Paintwork Cleaner is a non-dulling neutral cleaner designed for use on all interior painted surfaces. Available in concentrate or ready to use variants, it is ideal for tackling stains on walls and painted furniture. Using a soft cloth dipped in the solution, start from a radius wide of the mark and work in towards it. This will minimise any tide-lines that might develop.

Marks on wallpaper need very gentle care – damaged wallpaper is as unattractive as stained wallpaper. Washable wallpaper can be wiped using a damp cloth and a very mild detergent, but avoid getting the paper too wet. To remove grease marks, hold several white paper towels over the spot and press with a warm iron until the oil is absorbed. If the

mark remains, apply a paste spot remover and brush it off after it dries to a powder. This technique should also remove crayon, but scrape off as much as you can using a dull knife first. Fingermarks, smudges and pencil marks can be tackled with an art eraser. For ink marks and felt tip pens, dab carefully with neat liquid detergent or methylated spirits using a cotton wool bud.

Vinyl wallpapers can be cleaned with household cleaners, but don't use an abrasive, as it will scratch.

Some stains simply cannot be removed from wallpaper and the marked section will have to be replaced.

Stains in upholstery fabrics and curtains can often be treated in the same way as clothing. Use a spot laundry cleaner to remove stubborn marks and rinse well. For best results, treat the stain before it has the opportunity to dry. If your furnishing fabrics are not washable, seek the help of a professional drycleaner.

In the bathroom, the most persistent problem is watermarks on the shower door and walls. These are caused by alkaline build-up and can be difficult to remove. Use a concentrated bathroom cleaner, spray liberally and leave to soak. Wait until the mark can be shifted using your fingernail, then using a coarse cloth, gently scrub it away. To prevent having to go through this again, apply a clear car wax to the walls and doors, but not to the floor, as it will be too slippery. Both fibreglass and glass are porous, and the car wax seals the pores, making cleaning easier and preventing water spots. Reapply twice yearly.

Another stubborn bathroom stain is the ring in the toilet. This, too, is caused by alkaline deposits. Depending on the hardness of your water, one or two cups of white vinegar poured into the bowl once a month should eliminate the problem. **H**



See the Resene Caring for your paint finish brochure for tips on keeping your interior and exterior paintwork looking its best. Available from Resene ColorShops or the Resene website www.resene.co.nz/caringforpaintfinish.htm.

handy tips

Act quickly to stop the stain from spreading, by scraping up solids with a spoon or palette knife. Always scrape towards the centre of a spillage to prevent spreading the stain.

Never rub a stain, you will only spread it further. Instead, blot it with a clean cloth or paper towel.

Red wine spills and other drink accidents are best treated by blotting the spill then rinsing the carpet or fabric with cold water and blotting dry.

Nail polish can be removed from carpet and upholstery using nail polish remover. For spills on synthetic fabric and painted or varnished surfaces, rub with methylated spirits.

Remove chewing gum from fabric (and hair) by freezing it with ice cubes and then scraping it with a dull knife.

For spilled wax on carpets and upholstery, place several paper towels over the dried wax and run a hot iron over it. The paper will absorb the hot wax. Dried wax on wood floors can be removed by softening the wax using a hair dryer, then wiping with paper towels.