

**DON'T
PANIC!**

**OAK HILL DRY
CLEANER'S
ULTIMATE GUIDE TO
STAIN REMOVAL**

oakhill
dry cleaners



Oops! You did IT again!

And by "IT" we mean spilling the wine or coffee all over yourself or something else; somehow transferring the mud/grass/other unmentionable material at your feet to your clothing; dumping that gravy or sauce all over the tablecloth...yeah, the snow-white tablecloth; seeing that pen leaked its entire contents in your shirt pocket...or many other similar tragedies.

Why do such things ALWAYS happen?

And WHY do they happen to you?

We have no idea.

Maybe you're a slob? Maybe you're unlucky?
Maybe there is a curse upon your house?

For whatever reason, you've gotten yourself into this mess...now, how do you get out?

First Rule: Don't Panic!

And by panic we mean:

- Scrub at the spill as if you might erase it with friction and elbow grease;
- Pour salt, lemon juice, peanut butter or some other rumored treatment all over it;

- Dunk the entire item into a vat of soapy water;
- Run the thing through a washing machine cycle; OR
- Anything OTHER than halting for a moment to consider your next best options.

So.... red light!

Now, just stop for a second.

Stains are persnickety things, and almost any step you take runs the risk of making it worse, or even more shocking, making that nasty rascal PERMANENT.

Oak Hill Dry Cleaners has been around for more than 30 years. We have seen what panic does to stains, and so we are passing on our gathered wisdom about what you should and SHOULD NOT do immediately after "IT" has struck again.

So, as noted – Do NOT PANIC.

You've got this.

Seriously, you do.

And if you don't...well, there's always us over at the dry cleaners.

We're like wizards.

We love the tough stuff and are ready to enter the fray.



items are “Dry Clean Only,” or “spot treat” only, or even deemed for “professional cleaning only. Still, we also like to see you hail victorious over stains, too.

Because of that, we are going to supply you with crucial information that lets you tackle the job, or at least give it your best effort.

If the stains persist, then it’s time to throw in the towel (or blouse, pants, bedding, or what have you) and bring it to us. So... after not panicking, ask yourself *what did I do?!!!!*

Stain Removal Fun Fact #1

Stain removal...fun? Yes, when you are an officially proud dry-cleaning nerd, um, we mean enthusiast, there are some fun facts regarding stain removal.

For example, the good old *Reader’s Digest** says that artificial sweetener can be used to remove a spot or stain, as an emergency treatment anyway.

“If you are out to dinner at a restaurant, or even if grease splatters on you while you are cooking, use artificial sweetener immediately to blot the stain. The fine powder will absorb the oil. You may have to keep blotting and using more sweetener, but it really works! And artificial sweetener is always handy at any eatery.”

Does it work? We don’t know, but it may be yet another tactic to add to your arsenal! Just blame *them* if it fails to deliver!

*Reader’s Digest Editors August 12, 2021.

<https://www.rd.com/list/8-weird-things-that-can-remove-stains/>



Second Rule: Start with Basics

What caused the stain?

Yes, it may have been a bad case of butterfingers. It may have been poor hand to eye coordination. It could have been a toddler's hands slick with mud, paint, and who knows what all.

What we want you to think about when answering the question, though, is this:

What is the root of the stain? Is it:

- Fat/oil/grease
- Tannin (i.e., coffee, tea, tomato...you get the picture)
- Protein (i.e., blood, egg, et al)
- Wax or gum
- Ink or pigment (i.e., marker, grass, makeup and all the rest)

Understanding the makeup of the stain is necessary for the next step. And before we move on to that, we want you to consider something important:

Any stain may have *multiple sources*.

For example, a mud stain is often paired with grass stains. Why? Because that less-than-graceful slide along your front path may have caused dirt and mud, as well as grass to combine into a modernist design all along a pant leg, sleeve, and so on.

That, dear reader, is what is known as a combination stain. And THAT is a royal pain.

However, understanding that you will be dealing with natural pigments from the grass as well as stains from the soil will help you develop a good stain-fighting strategy.

Will stain removal always require a nuanced or multi-phase approach? No, but it's important to look at the stain as having layers – onion-like, or even Shrek-like, if you will.

Approaching layered stains or single-source stains, though, always begins with the same process...making battle plans.

Stain Removal Fun Fact #2

One of the most challenging stains to eliminate is deodorant. It bonds to the fabric, and even professionals find it tough to get out the truly tough deodorant stains.

That's why we always suggest men wear t-shirts as undergarments if they worry about a costly shirt being stained. Women can wear specially designed shields with expensive blouses or formal wear, too.

The truth is some stains can be difficult to impossible to remedy and prevention may be better than stain treatment!



Step Three: Formulating a Battle Plan

Here comes the fun part, because formulating a battle plan means a lot of different things.

We can't make any assumptions about what you already know, or what you might remain blissfully unaware of where stains are concerned.

So, we must break this step down even further.

- **Step 3.1: Will You Be Scraping, Flushing, Tamping, Spraying, or Something Else?**
- **Step 3.2: What Tools Will be Needed to Effect Step 3.1?**
- **Step 3.3: What Compounds Might be Needed in Your Overall Plans?**

You already know that stains may require removal of one material *before* properly addressing another. There is no real magic to determining the order of events.

Lipstick, for example, requires any remnants of the material to be scraped away (we use the back of a butter knife – high-tech, we know). We then address the fatty base of the

lipstick, tamping it with our favorite sturdy brush and the proper compound. Then we flush the stain and repeat to it is all eliminated. It is then air dried and treated with a special cleansing solution before facing the final enzyme wash to grab the remaining pigments or fats.

That means we scraped, tamped, flushed, and washed. We used a dull knife or scraper, a tamping brush, and a short list of our favorite formulas – including a dry-cleaner’s spotting solution, a gentle soap, and an enzyme solution along with the final washing agent.

Look back at the three steps (3.1 – 3.3). You’ll now see that those questions require us to provide you with a list of tactics, tools, and compounds. Let’s call it your Stain Fighter’s Tool Kit. We know, we know, what an edgy name for this section. Seriously, though, would you take the time to read a Glossary? No, we didn’t think so.

Stain Removal Fun Fact #3

Stains can disappear only to reappear. How? Some sugary drinks, oily substances (including body oils, ick, right?), and food stains will disappear when they dry.

So, you might *think* you saw a stain, but it vanished. You put the garment away, only to bring it out to wear and discover a truly ugly stain has “bloomed.”

What to do? First try to do a bit of gentle at-home care, and if that spot persists, come and see us.



Let's first look at the terms used to physically fight the stains.

Technically, we could offer a list of life tips that might help avoid stains altogether.

For instance, we could tell you to put those clear vinyl covers on all your furniture. Wear a bib whenever eating or drinking. Avoid white clothing when eating or doing anything outdoors...or just generally avoid white clothing. Don't do anything that might allow sauce, grease, ink, or other materials to touch anything.

Realistic plan? That's a big NO, which means it's back to formulating a battle plan. This is, as we already mentioned, a three-prong method.

You need to know the techniques, tools, and specific compounds to have on hand. That way, you can face down even the ugliest stains.

So, let's just dive right in...



The Techniques

Act Fast – The longer stains sit without any treatment, the more likely they will become permanent. Even a brief flush with cold water (from back to front) can help remedy even the worst stains, including blood, wine, or coffee.

Backwards – An often-overlooked technique is to work from the back of the item. This effectively forces the materials back out of the fabric, rather than driving them in further. Always flip things to the reverse when flushing or spraying.

Blot – Typically, this is done from the OUTSIDE perimeter of the stain, working inwards. Why? You will stop a stain from spreading outward. It is done by gently dabbing at a stain with a dry or damp cloth. Never blot anything that has not already been scooped or scraped. For example, if you spilled ketchup on a tablecloth. Scoop or gently scrape up all of the solids. THEN, and only then, blot from the outside of the remaining stain, in towards the center.

Brush – This, as it sounds, means using a brush. We keep a handy supply of brushes of many sizes at the shop. We use soft and small brushes when treating things like sweat

stains, and larger brushes when we use a dabbing technique on heavily stained collars and cuffs. A soft-bristle brush, or even a range of soft to hard bristled toothbrushes may be ideal for at-home stain fighting.

Dab – This is a term also used instead of blotting. It is never a hard rub or press. It is just as it sounds, gentle and light touching of your clean cloth to the stained area, always from the outside in.

Damming – No, this is not a curse placed on a stain (though, it is tempting to do this from time to time). It is a technique used to lock in a stain that might bleed out into the rest of the unstained areas of the item. It is done with petroleum jelly or mineral oil and will be used only with materials that can then be cleaned to remove the oily dam.

Flush – This always means gently flowing water (typically cold or lukewarm) through the stained area, usually from back to front. You might, for example, flush a wine stain with cold water as your initial treatment.

Ice – This is just as it sounds and involves the use of an ice cube that you rub against a stain (from front or back). You will always have a clean cloth behind the material when rubbing with ice, as it helps to absorb whatever the garment releases.

Rub – Different from blotting and dabbing, it usually involves the use of a material like ice. It must be done in small and controlled movements, and often with a clean towel behind or against the stain to help absorb the materials.

Scrape – This can be gently done with your fingernail or a soft brush. We also use the back or dull side of a butterknife. Typically, scraping is followed up by dabbing or blotting

Spray – You will be building a small assortment of compounds in your stain-fighting arsenal. Some will be gently sprayed directly on the stain. You may want to invest in a few basic spray bottles in which to keep your stain-fighting formulas ready.

Sprinkle – Some stains will need to be sprinkled with a compound that absorbs its oils. This is left to absorb stains then gently scraped away before further treatment.

Tamp – Picture holding a small brush or toothbrush loosely in your hand – with the bristles pointing downward. Then, bounce the bristles off the stain with a gentle up and down movement. We think of it as a drumming movement. You don't squeeze the handle tightly and bang the bristles against the garment. Instead, your goal is to use a formula sprayed or applied to the stain and then mix it into the fibers by tamping the bristles lightly. So, bouncing it against the stain is one way to envision the technique. We use this when stain treating wedding gown hems heavily soiled as well as delicate materials in need of spot treatments. You noticed that there is no scrubbing, grinding or even rubbing fabric together here, right? The key is to use as gentle a hand as possible.

Technique should always focus on:

- Containing the stain and doing nothing that spreads it farther outward

- Avoiding any grinding of the material into the fiber of the garment or item
- Skipping guesswork and using only the most proven techniques (i.e. "my friends told me lemon juice and salt would erase red wine, but look at that...the white tablecloth is now yellow and purple!")

Your battle plans also need those proper tools.



"YOU GOT RID OF THE SPOTS? BUT THIS WAS A POLKA DOT SHIRT!"



The Tools

Blotting Cloth – The ideal blotting cloth is a fabric diaper. That is due to its easy to manage size and remarkable ability to absorb stains and the compounds used to treat them. Rolled up behind a stain, it catches everything and can be easily washed. A colorfast towel is also a good choice as a blotting cloth.

Brushes – As we said, invest in a soft bristle toothbrush, a firm bristle toothbrush, or an array of laundry brushes. You will put them to use constantly. Remember to always keep them clean and rinse well to remove any compounds you have applied to previous stains.

Cotton Swab – This is a great tool for targeted spot treating. Soak it in a solution to apply directly to a very small area, use it to build a dam around a stain, or put it to work for just about anything that needs controlled application.

Eyedropper – This is an essential for dropping stain-fighting solutions directly on to materials. It lets you know exactly how much and where you are applying the treatment.

Lint Roller – You will be mightily surprised at the way lint rollers help eliminate stuff causing stains. Crusted materials can be gently scraped and then lint rolled to quickly remove them and prevent further issues. Powdery materials are often erased by lint rolling, too.

Scraper, i.e. Butterknife, Fingernails, etc. – These are tools used for scooping away solids that might cause stains, but you will also find yourself gently scraping at dried materials that haven't yet budged. The key with any sort of scraping or scooping is to be gentle. Don't grind things even farther into the material.

Small Measuring Cups – You will always want to follow manufacturer directions on the stain-removing formulas and solutions used. This means carefully measuring out the cleansers or stain treatments into the precise amount of water. Invest in some cups and spoons NOT also used in the kitchen.

Soaking Bucket – We keep a 5-gallon pail, an old-fashioned wash tub, and a smaller bucket for soaking. Be sure to fully clean the buckets after any soak and be sure you know exactly how much water they hold. We used permanent marker outside our soaking buckets to indicate ounces and cup measures.

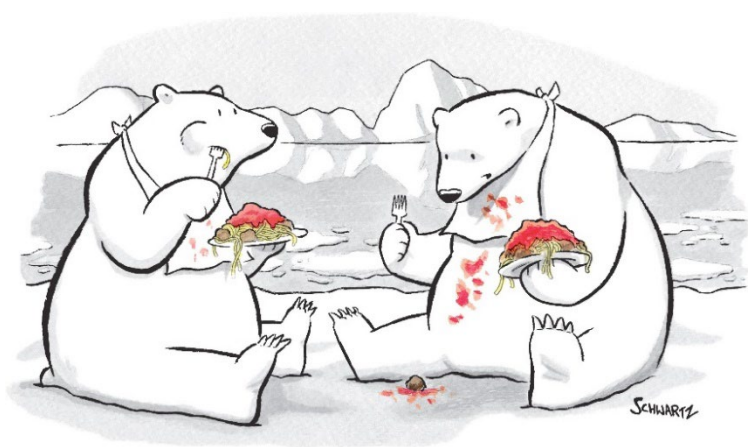
Spray Bottles – We suggest several spray bottles with pre-mixed treatments. Buy only well-made bottles that have adjustable spray heads that let you blast in a stream or mist over larger areas.

Stain Stick – We cannot overestimate the value of a stain removing stick. Whether it is

a waxy Shout stick or an Oxi variety, having one in a handbag or in the car can save the day. Keeping one in the laundry kit can also help pre-treat stains with amazing ease.

That only looks like a lot of items. We run a commercial establishment, and our stain-treating equipment is limited to a small space in the center of the shop. We have just a few bottles and a work area where the tools are kept. A home cleaning kit can be stored in a soaking bucket and kept near the laundry machines.

So, you know what you can do, and what tools are necessary to do the right things. That leaves the compounds that serve as your stain-fighting foot soldiers.



"Aw, man, that's never coming out."



The Compounds

Absorbents – We always use cornstarch or unscented talcum on a fresh grease stain at home, and so should you (if applicable). Sprinkle it on the grease, let it sit 15 minutes, scrape gently and then use the right stain treatment.

Combination solvent – We rely on good old Shout to apply as a first step in many stains. This is great for a greasy stain.

Diluted Soap – This is made with 1 tbsp of fragrance and dye-free liquid soap and 9.5 ounces water.

Dry Solvent – Mineral spirits is the right choice, and it will help with heavy duty, greasy stains like tar. You **MUST** air out the items after you have used a dry solvent for stain removal.

Enzyme Detergent – Also known as a digestant, it includes Wisk and Era Plus. They are good for protein-based stains like blood, egg, milk and grass. You can apply directly or soak an item in a dilution. Always use cold water for protein stains. **NOTE:** Never use this on protein fibers like angora, cashmere, wool or silk.

Hydrogen Peroxide - Ideal for rinsing away some treatments, such as a soap or gentle detergent treatment. It is harsher than vinegar or alcohol, and can help get remaining pigment or protein stains, such as difficult blood stains.

Isopropyl Alcohol – Denatured alcohol can break down some stains without leaving a residue behind.

Mineral Oil or Petroleum Jelly – We use this to build dams around stains at risk for spreading out. It gives us a space to focus our efforts, without worrying about damage to other areas of the garment.

Powdered Non-Chlorinated Color-Safe Bleach – We are not big fans of bleach of any kind. However, when you are attacking a stubborn pigment stain, such as a wine or berry stain, your last “best” option could be to apply a bit of this, then rewash the garment on its own.

White Vinegar – Ideal for rinsing away some treatments, such as a soap or gentle detergent treatment.

And just HOW do you use these techniques, tools, and compounds? Well, that’s the whole point of this little booklet, and the focus of the last section.



The Ultimate Guide to Stain Removal

You made it! You've plodded your way through all the techniques, tools, and formulas. You've probably put this booklet down a few times or even chucked it aside out of boredom.

But, if you are like us and just skipped to the end to get to the good stuff, guess what? You'll still have to flip back to one or more of the charts to learn how to use the stain removal methods below.

That's fine, you didn't hurt our feelings. Really, we'll be okay. Seriously, it was just something in our eye.

Anyway, below are some of the worst stains and how you can try to eliminate them at

home. Just remember, your assignment (if you should choose to accept it) includes the following:

- Don't panic!
- Ask yourself what caused the stain (typically, you'll have oil/grease, tannin, pigment, etc.)
- Act fast
- Use only the Oak Hill Dry Cleaning approved methods
- Bring it to us ASAP if the garment is "Dry Clean Only" OR likely to be harmed by any stain treatment. That means silk and wool should come to us, and some cashmere, alpaca, and more delicate materials.

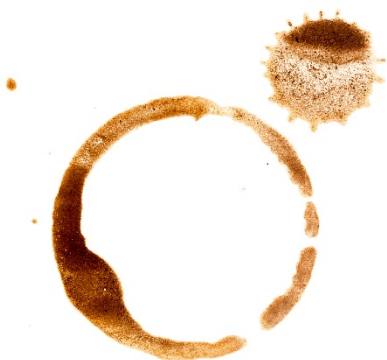
Keep in mind that, like major crimes, the first 48 hours are critical to resolving the case. If you leave the stain in place for days on end, even Travis Bartlett may be unable to do much for you.

With being said, here are the most common culprits, and what you should do to eliminate them from your garments or household items.



Chocolate – Carefully remove any excess chocolate. With your spray bottle of diluted

soap solution, soak the area. After saturating it, use your enzyme detergent to eliminate any remaining residue. Only then can you launder the item.



Coffee or tea – If you drink your coffee or tea with dairy and sugar, first spray the area with your diluted soap solution and then an enzyme detergent rinse. Otherwise, flush the stained area with white vinegar. If the stain doesn't budge, DON'T launder. Bring it to us.



Dirt or Mud – Is it a combination of grass and mud? If so, first remove the grass (see below) and then hit the dirt stain. Scrape or shake the item, pretreat with your diluted soap, and let it really soak. Then apply the enzyme detergent and wash.



Dressings, such as vinaigrette – Start with the grease (see below). Flush with white vinegar to eliminate any lingering spots and finish up with your enzyme detergent before laundering.



Grass – Remove the excess debris by shaking and lightly brushing. Treat the grass stain with your dry solvent (mineral spirits). Press with a clean cloth and then tamp with your soft brush. Repeat to keep reducing the amount of pigment. When it is as good as it will get, flush with alcohol, and tamp some more. Allow to dry and apply the enzyme detergent before washing.



Grease and Oil – This can be grease from a car as well as butter or mayo. Address it with your dry solvent (mineral spirits), tamping it gently. Rinse with an eyedropper full of isopropyl alcohol. Let the item dry completely. Spray it with the diluted soap to get rid of remaining residues and then soak some more. Soak it in your enzyme detergent, and only then launder it.



Gum or wax – Use an ice cube to freeze the gum or the wax, or even place the garment in your freezer. This will allow you to crack and peel off as much of the material as possible. Remove the residue with mineral spirits. Rinse it out with isopropyl alcohol and allow it to dry. Treat any stains with your enzyme detergent and then launder.



Lipstick – Use your chosen tool to gently scrape the excess lipstick from the garment. With an eyedropper, apply the mineral spirits and then tamp with your soft brush. Flush the stain with isopropyl alcohol and tamp again. Repeat this until the lipstick disappears or fades. Let the garment dry and then spray with diluted soap. Treat with the enzyme detergent and only then launder it.

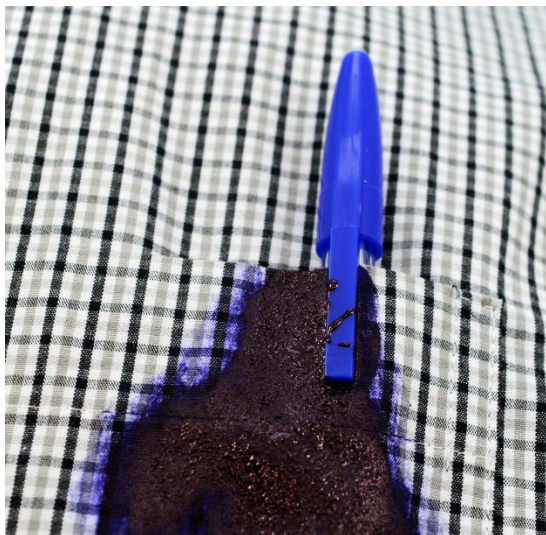


Marker Ink – Build up a dam around the stain using mineral oil or petroleum jelly. Work only inside of the dam. You'll have to "test" the ink first with a cotton swab soaked in plain water. If this doesn't cause the ink to run, move on to isopropyl alcohol to figure out if you've got a water or oil-based ink. If water based, apply some diluted soap and flush with cold water until it is eliminated. If it is oil based, use an eyedropper of isopropyl alcohol to remove as much as you can. Then,

apply a bit of mineral spirits to get what remains. Let dry and then use diluted soap and the enzyme detergent to tackle the rest before laundering.



Mustard – This is a pigment stain and you'll do best if you flush with white vinegar and then rinse with diluted soap before laundering.



Pen Ink – Build up a dam of mineral oil or petroleum jelly and work only within the space of the dam. Use an eye dropper of isopropyl alcohol to soak away the ink. Remove the rest of the pigment with your mineral spirits. Allow the item to dry and then rinse in diluted soap, then your enzyme detergent (warm water rinsing is best), and only then launder.



Protein – This means blood, eggs, and so on. Spray first with diluted soap directly on the stain and allow to sit. Rinse in cool to tepid water to see if the stain remains. If so, use an enzyme detergent to soak the stain longer. Then, rinse and launder.



Red sauces – Whether it is a hearty marinara, spice BBQ or everyday ketchup, these are tough. Scrape away any remaining sauce and then spray heavily with diluted soap. Soak it in tepid water. If there is color remaining, use the eyedropper to apply white vinegar to the stain. Then treat it with the enzyme detergent. Wash the item. If the stain persists, you can apply some hydrogen peroxide and allow to sit. Rinse and treat with enzyme detergent before laundering.



Red wine, fruits, and vegetables – Spray the diluted soap on the stain to get at the sugars. Tamp with a soft brush and flush with water. Use the eyedropper with white vinegar to address the pigments. Tamp and then allow to stand for a few minutes before flushing again. If the stains remain, apply hydrogen peroxide with the eyedropper and allow to stand. Flush and treat with an enzyme detergent before washing.



Soy Sauce – Use a spray bottle of diluted soap and your soft brush to tamp out the stain. Flush with cool water and apply white vinegar, tamping that and letting it stand for a short time. Rinse, and if the stain remains, use hydrogen peroxide, and allow to stand. If there are still stains remaining, treat with the enzyme detergent and rinse before laundering.



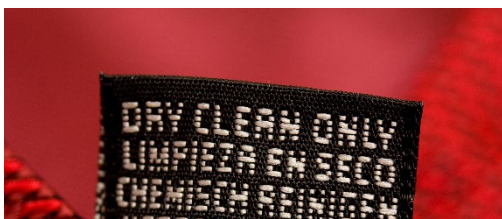
White wine – This also works on sugary, lightly colored drinks like ginger ale, Sprite, and so on. Flush with cold water and spray with diluted soap. Treat with the enzyme detergent and then wash.

Now That You Know...

Are these the ONLY things that cause stains and need treatments? No, the list is endless. However, these tips form the basis on which you can build your stain fighting technique.

Remember, we looked at protein stains, tanning stains, oil stains, dye stains, and those dreaded combo stains. Each stain needs that quick evaluation and a proper plan of attack. With all you know now, you can make effective plans.

You can tackle beer or tomato juice stains with the knowledge you gleaned here. You can deal with beet juice stains as well as the after-effects of a bloody nose. Dog soiled something. That's a combination stain. You can use protein and tannin stain solutions to remedy the issue.



Read Labels and Know When to Seek Help

Just keep in mind that NONE of the methods here are a real match to the compounds and machinery that a place like Oak Hill Dry Cleaners offers.

Oak Hill has an impressive arsenal of eco-friendly solvents that cater to the type of fabrics and stains and will maximize results.

Additionally, even the best tips are not comparable to the 30+ years that owner Travis Bartlett offers where stain fighting, and garment or household item care is concerned.

We cannot emphasize enough that certain fabrics can be destroyed by many stain treatments. Home remedies can often make things much worse. There are no “universal” stain fighters. That lime juice and club soda someone swore by can destroy that silk dress or that linen tablecloth. Grinding corn powder into something may create a pasty mess.

ALWAYS read care labels and do not ignore a Dry Clean Only tag. If it reads “Spot Treat,” it is another sign to seek help.

As corny as it may sound, stain fighting is equal parts art and science, knowledge, and skill. It may be best to leave the real challenges to experts. Experts like Oak Hill Dry Cleaner!

Meet YOUR Local Dry Cleaning and Stain Fighting Expert – Travis Bartlett



In his 30+ years as a garment specialist, Travis Bartlett has come to know instantly if he can use his special skills and expertise to remedy a stain situation.

As the sole operator and owner at Oak Hill Dry Cleaners in Scarborough, Maine, Travis has seen it all. He has worked on haute couture garments from the world's leading design houses. He also helps clients restore old and weathered military uniforms, gorgeous antique linens, and more.

He spends his workdays pressing suits and blouses, preparing luxury linens for seasonal residents, tackling hundreds of button-down shirts in need of pressing, preparing wedding garments, caring for delicate cashmere and silk items, and more.

Travis knows that a family-owned and operated business is a crucial part of the local economy, and he runs his small and friendly shop with a "mom and pop" attitude. He greets customers by name, makes a point of keeping up with their news and needs, and even donating hundreds of man hours each year to local charities.

This guide is yet another way for him to give back to his clients, helping them save their garments and household items, and ensuring the best results. We hope you use it well but remember too that you can always get in touch with questions about stain issues or just bring that item in for a dedicated, skilled treatment from Travis himself.

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