

# Stains and spills on fine garments: 4 do's and (mostly) don'ts



Picture yourself in a restaurant, in the office, on a flight, or at a social event. And oh no! Something just spilt, splashed or splattered on your favorite outfit or suit.

Before you can say "Where's the club soda," everyone around you is volunteering an opinion on a quick-fix miracle cure.

Here's a word of caution: Before you take the "advice" of those around you, or before you do something you'll later regret, consider this...

Family members, friends, business associates, restaurant waiters and airline personnel are not skilled stain removal technicians.

Specifically, they know absolutely nothing about how to treat your specific combination of

- stain (e.g., steak sauce, mustard or red wine)
- stain type (e.g., oil-based, water-based or combination)
- fabric color (e.g., black, tan or white)
- fabric type (e.g., silk, wool or linen)
- dye type (e.g., solvent soluble dye, water soluble dye, solvent fast dye, water fast dye, or some combination thereof)

Their "advice" may sound plausible because it often involves "stuff" you've heard about: ammonia, baby wipes, baking soda, club soda, coca cola, corn starch, dishwashing liquid, hairspray, hand soap, hydrogen peroxide, hot or cold water, laundry detergent, lemon juice, lighter fluid, meat tenderizer, salt, vinegar, WD-40 ® or white wine.

Or commercial products such as Oxiclean ®, Urine Gone ® and Wine Away ®.

And let's not forget those "guaranteed" spot removers promoted on late night TV, at supermarket check outs, and in TV guides and tabloid newspapers.

**Truth is, their "advice" is probably nothing more than a mixture of folklore, old wives tales, home remedies, and hazy memories about something they'd heard from someone a few years back.**

**So what do you do?**

Here's our best advice ...

## 1. Ignore the advice of those around you

Clearly, those around you are just trying to be helpful in an awkward situation.

Unfortunately, they're not skilled stain removal technicians, and don't have the technical knowledge, tools, chemical agents, and specialized equipment necessary to "treat" the garment.

This last comment applies to restaurant servers in particular. As soon as you see any restaurant server rushing over to your side with the **club soda**, thank the server for their concern with a polite "No thanks".

## 2. Count to 30. Slowly.

Hopefully, this "cool off" period will

- Refresh your memory on our advice for stain emergencies (including “Ignore the advice of those around you”)
- Prevent you from doing something impulsive (“I’ve got to do something. Anything. Now!”)
- Delay your search for a quick-fix miracle cure (“Get me some water or club soda. Quick!”)

Here’s a sobering thought: By attempting to “treat” the stain yourself, **you’ve got a 50:50 chance of ruining the garment.**

In other words, if the quick-fix miracle cure works, you’re just plain lucky. If it doesn’t work, you’ve possibly ruined the garment.

### 3. Avoid quick fix “miracle cures”

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Most of these quick-fix miracle cures just spread the stain, create “rings”, bleed the dyes, and “pull” the color out of the fabric.

Furthermore – and most importantly – they make future removal or restoration by a skilled stain removal technician a difficult (and occasionally) impossible task.

Here’s another thought: Many of these spills, splashes or splatters are **oil-based stains**.

**The indiscriminate application of a water-based solution (such as club soda) to an oil-based stain is futile.**

Most water-based solutions won’t dissolve an oil-based stain. It’ll merely spread the stain around and make the stain more difficult to remove.

We can’t begin to recall the number of ruined garments we’ve seen accompanied by the comment: “I know I should have heeded your advise but someone suggested.....”

Our advise: Gently blot the spill, splash or splatter with a white cotton napkin or towel.

**Never wipe. Never rub. Never scrub.**

Let’s repeat that: Never wipe. Never rub. Never scrub. Just gently blot the fabric to absorb as much of the spill, splash or splatter as possible.

Then leave it alone.

### 4. Take or send the garment to a reputable dry cleaner

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- Select a true quality dry cleaner who is recognized for their stain removal and restoration skills.
- Take or send in the garment within a reasonable period of time (if the stain occurred at dinner, that doesn’t mean that you have to rush over to a cleaner the next morning at opening time).
- Give the dry cleaner enough time – at least a week – to achieve the best possible result (true quality cleaning cannot be accomplished in 1 or 2 hours or in 1 or 2 days).
- Point out the location of the spill, splash or splatter, especially if the spill, splash or splatter has dried clear (while this is useful, you shouldn’t have to point out every stain to a dry cleaner; at a true quality cleaner, their stain technicians will examine every square inch of every garment for visible and invisible stains).
- Inform the dry cleaner of the nature of the spill, splash or splatter, if known.
- And, if you didn’t heed our advise to refrain from using any quick-fix miracle cures, tell them about the DIY miracle cure you applied.

### The takeaway

The next time a spill, splash or splatter occurs remember our advice: ignore the advice of others, and do nothing you’ll later regret.

You could say that knowing **what NOT to do** is more important than knowing **what to do**.



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RAVE FabriCARE, based in Scottsdale, Arizona, cares for fine garments, household textiles and accessories and serves clients in the USA and Canada and in other selected countries throughout the world. Stu is the author of various Position Papers, White Papers and Ebooks on these subjects, all of which are available from [ravefabricare/downloads/free-stuff](http://ravefabricare/downloads/free-stuff). He is an evangelist for true quality cleaning and is a contributor to and editor of True Quality Cleaning, RAVE FabriCARE's blog.



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