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The Best Way to Remove Butter Stains from Anything

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The only problem with [buttery movie-style popcorn](#) at home? The fact that it has a tendency to lead to greasy fingerprints on the sofa. Warm, crusty bread spread with a creamy pat of butter? There's almost always a glob that falls off the knife onto your shirt. And tender lobster dunked into melted butter? A tablecloth's worst nightmare.

The points is, that buttery deliciousness we love almost always come as a stain-removal cost. "With butter, it's the oil aspect that makes it so tough," says Meg Roberts, president of [Molly Maid](#). "It seeps in and sticks pretty quickly, and seems like an instant stain."

But act fast and use the right tools, and you'll save your clothing and home furnishings from evidence of your decadent eating habits.

The first step is always to scrape off any lingering globs of butter with a spoon or butter knife. What comes next depends on the surface in question.

For clothing that can get wet (basically anything but silk) ...

Grab a white cloth napkin (or paper in a pinch), dip a corner of it into your water glass, and coat the corner liberally with salt from the table. Holding a second (dry) napkin behind the stained fabric, press the salted napkin right on top.

"Put pressure on both sides, but don't rub," says Roberts. "The salt will absorb and break down the oily nature of the stain."

Hold it there for a minute or so, then dampen another spot on your napkin to dust off the salt. Leave it be until you can launder it.

Tip: So what about your favorite silk shirt? If you've got greasy butter stains on anything that's super valuable or delicate, that's a job for a pro.

For upholstery or a tablecloth that you can't remove yet ...

Place a piece of a brown paper bag or parchment paper right on top of the stain, pressing it down with something heavy (a water pitcher, a book, etc.). Let it sit until your guests leave, then get out a warm iron and press over the paper.

"The paper will start to absorb the oil, and adding heat will pull it up even more," Roberts says.

For unfinished wood (like a table or butcher-block counter) ...

The parchment- or brown-paper-plus-iron trick is a great one here, too, to coax out oil that may have soaked in.

"Use a warm, not hot, setting on the iron so you don't scorch the wood," says Roberts. "After that stain is lifted, you can treat the whole table with oil to normalize the discoloration."

For an area rug that can be water-washed ...

The secret weapon here is cornstarch. Shake some onto the stain and press — don't rub! — it in. Leave it alone for a bit, then come back and work in some undiluted, clear-colored, grease-cutting dish soap using a spare toothbrush.

"You want to brush lightly so you don't fray the fibers," says Roberts.

Pour on some warm water to rinse out the cornstarch and soap: "It's going to get soaked, but don't be afraid of a water stain," she says.

Clean up by firmly pressing with a dry white towel (a colored towel could leave its dye behind), then place a new dry white towel on top, weighted down with something heavy to suck up the rest of the moisture and stain.

For anything that was stained a long time ago ...

Where was this story when you needed it a month ago? Sorry, guys, you need to call in a pro. "Once it's set, it's much harder to remove," Roberts says.