

HOME ECONOMICS

GUIDE



*Published by the University of Missouri-Columbia
Extension Division
School of Home Economics*

Care of Valuable Possessions

China, Earthenware, Glass, and Marble

*Alice Mae Alexander
State Home Management Specialist*

China and Earthenware

Ceramics are breakable, but they do not deteriorate as quickly as many other valuable possessions. The main effect of age on ceramics is wear. The glaze may partially wear off and crazing, a fine network of cracks, may result. If these cracks look stained and unsightly their appearance can be minimized by soaking for a day or two in a strong bleach solution.

Chipped and broken china has little antique value unless it is a very rare piece. Experts can grind out a crack, fill it in, and return the broken porcelain to a kiln—but this is an expensive and risky operation. Very few home repairs are as satisfactory as those done by expert china restorers. If the repair involves only a clean break on a shelf piece, the problem is fairly simple. The pieces can be cemented together.

In mending china, cleanliness of the surfaces to be joined is important. If the surfaces are dirty, or the break is an old one, wash in hot water and soap and scrub with a clean toothbrush. Rinse and dry. Most of the good adhesives do not set quickly, so brace with rubber bands, tape, or string. Wipe off excess adhesive immediately.

Some foods will injure china if allowed to remain in it for an extended period. Do not store food in good china. Extreme heat or cold is hard on china.

Careful handling in washing is a must. Fine china should be stacked with some protection between plates—use a paper napkin or piece of soft material—so that the unglazed underside of one will not scratch the glaze of the plate beneath. Cups should not be hung from hooks since this is a principal cause of broken handles. When china is stored, cover with plastic or a material to protect it from dust. Avoid using wire hangers for plates or platters since this often results in damaged rims.

Because earthenware is porous it is more likely to chip and crack. In spite of its sturdy look, it is no stronger than delicate china and stoneware.

Glass

A few simple rules for the care of glass are good for all types and kinds. Keep glass clean and sparkling. In order to preserve the sparkle, glass should be washed several times a year in warm, not hot, water using a mild detergent. Rinse

in warm water and dry with a lint-free cloth. A small amount of bluing or ammonia added to the rinse water will give a high sparkle.

If a film or stain appears on glass try some home remedies. A simple one is to rub the glass with vinegar or lemon juice, rinse, and dry. Or fill the glass with distilled water and allow it to stand for several days and then scrub it with a soft brush, being careful not to scratch the glass. Another solution commonly used is warm water with a teaspoon or two of ammonia. Let stand in the glass a few hours or overnight. Wash and rinse. Vases and bottles can be cleaned on the inside by shaking them with hot water to which a few tea leaves have been added. Cloudiness and mineral deposits in a bottle or decanter may be remedied by using warm soapy water and about two tablespoons of small steel shot. Never use lead shot. It takes patience, but by shaking the bottle most of the foreign matter can be dislodged. Rice or clean gravel may be substituted for the shot.

Some stains or cloudiness (often called sick glass) indicate a basic change in the composition of the glass itself and can neither be checked nor removed.

Do not use fine glass for storing liquids. Fill decanters only when they are to be used and for a short period of time. Stoppers should never be too tight because two pieces of glass in close contact under pressure will cement together. The same thing may occur when several pieces are nested in storage.

Glass may be polished by using a chamois with jeweler's rouge and rubbing fairly hard. A silver polish or other metal polish can be used to clean glass effectively.

Whether removing scratches from glass will add to or detract from its value must be determined by an expert. Antique glass is naturally going to look old and many of the signs of age are attractive. If, unfortunately, a fine old piece of glass is broken there are specialists who can repair it. They can grind away nicks and mend broken pieces.

Glass is not injured by strong light unless the alkali content is excessive. In that case, prolonged exposure will give clear glass a purplish tinge. Do not subject glass to extreme changes in temperature since this may produce partial cracks, known as heat checks. Aside from breakage, moisture is the

worst enemy of glass. Do not store valuable glass in a damp place since it may cause a cloudiness that is impossible to remove.

In caring for art glass, use a mild soap with warm water for cleaning and a soft towel for drying. Never use harsh abrasives or strong detergents on gold, silver, enamel, or luster colors which have been applied to glassware. Do not place this type of glass ware in dishwashers—the high temperature of the water may cause melting of the decoration.

Marble

There are excellent marble cleaners on the market, as well as special sealers and waxes to aid in its preservation. However, the secret of nice marble is merely keeping it clean.

Just through use marble may become dull in appearance, but this can be easily remedied. Wash marble with a clean cloth and luke warm water. Twice a year wash it with a mild detergent to remove any dirt which might become ingrained. Rinse well. Restore the luster by going over the entire surface with putty powder (described later).

Marble surfaces should be treated like any other valuable piece of furniture. Use coasters under glasses, wipe up spilled liquids and foods immediately and wash the area. In case of unfortunate accidents, stains and scratches can be removed. First-aid kits include simple materials often found in supplies used for ordinary household cleaning plus a few that may be obtained from a drug store or a chemical supply distributor. Include sand paper in both 400 and 600 grit.

The intensity of the stain is somewhat proportionate to the length of time it has been on and the hardness of the marble. Most stains will require the application of a poultice. Use white blotting paper, white paper napkins, or white cleansing tissue for the poultice. Soak in the required solution (see chart) and keep poultice from drying out while it is on the marble by covering with a piece of glass or a bit of plastic.

Once the stain has been removed, the area may require polishing with putty powder applied with a damp cloth. Keep the putty powder damp and rub the area persistently but not vigorously for about a minute. Remove the putty powder with a damp cloth, polishing all the while, folding and re-folding the cloth to fresh damp areas until the marble is clean and the surface shines.

Stain and Etch Removal

Stains

Tea, coffee, and soft drinks that don't contain citric acid.

Wash with clear water (Sometimes a little ammonia helps). Bleach with a poultice of hydrogen peroxide and a few drops of ammonia.

Etchings

Iodine, beer, fruit juices, jellies, wines, vinegar, tomato products, horseradish, mustard, worcestershire sauce.

Wash, sand if necessary, and polish with putty powder.

Stain-and-etch

Ink, grape juice, colored vinegar, soft drinks containing citric acid.

Wash, bleach, sand if necessary, and polish with putty powder.

Oil Stains

Hand creams, salad oil, milk, cream, butter, margarine, peanut butter, modeling clay.

Wipe stain with cloth dampened with ammonia. Poultice with equal parts amyl acetate and acetone. Follow with poultice of hydrogen peroxide and ammonia.

Oil-and-etch

Salad dressing, French and Russian dressings, mayonnaise.

Same as oil stains. After stain is reduced, polish with putty powder.

Sanding

Sanding flattens out the depression and makes it less noticeable as it smooths the surface of the etching. Use a piece of 400-grit sandpaper (wet or dry) to do the cutting and follow with 600-grit for smoothing. Bevel the perimeter of the depression so that it slants gradually into the surrounding marble.

Putty Powder

A commercial product may be used or a satisfactory powder consisting of three parts chemically pure tin oxide to one part oxalic acid can be made. Unless a large area is to be covered, mix $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. tin oxide to $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. oxalic acid. Mix the powders in a glass or porcelain container. Wrap a bit of cloth around your finger, dampen it in water, dip it in the putty powder, and rub the etching. If the powder starts to dry, dampen the cloth again. Rub the spot for about a minute. Removing the powder is a combination of wiping and polishing.

Removing Age or Fire Marks

Usually both aging and fire stains have a dull gray look and frequently a few yellow spots show. Remove the surface dirt by scrubbing with water and a detergent or with ammonia and a brush. This may be sufficient. If not, make a thick paste of an alkaline cleaner and water and spread it on with a trowel. Leave it on until it dries. Remove by wetting it. A second application may be needed. When no more stain comes out, restore the surface by sanding if necessary, and then polish. An electric drill with a felt buffer will save time and energy.

Issued in furtherance of cooperative extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. Carl N. Scheneman, Vice-President for Extension, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Missouri, Columbia, Mo. 65201.