



Utrecht Art Supplies Removing Paint from Clothes



"The Laundress" (detail) Jean-Baptiste Greuze, 1761

Most artists wear old clothes, coveralls or a smock to paint, because it's practically impossible to avoid getting stains. Sooner or later, however, every artist gets paint on something they want to keep nice. Quick action with the right materials and techniques just might save your favorite shirt or pair of jeans!

Act Fast

The best chance for removing paint is while it's still wet. Oil paint dries slowly, but acrylic paint sets up almost immediately on clothes so wetting it right away is essential. If it's not

possible to wash the article of clothing right away, moisten the spot and place it in a zip lock bag, taking care not to spread the stain.

Acrylic Paint

Acrylic paint stains should be kept wet and hand-washed right away. If there is a large amount of excess paint, scrape away the bulk with a palette knife and apply water immediately. Pre-treat with denatured rubbing alcohol or Retarder Gel to slow formation of a solid film, then wash with detergent and cold water. Use a toothbrush or nail brush to scrub. If a residual acrylic stain remains after thorough hand washing, machine laundering might remove the remainder. Keep the spot wet, pre-treat with alcohol and full-strength detergent, and wash with old towels or any items where color transfer won't be an issue. Heat from a clothes dryer will permanently set acrylics, so avoid drying affected clothes until you're sure stains are completely gone.

Oil Paint

Oil paint and oil-based ink stains can be particularly challenging, because even after pigment has been removed, a stain from the oil vehicle can remain. Small spots can be pre-treated with a stain remover stick, then hand-washed. Larger amounts of paint should be scraped away with a palette knife. Use paper towels to blot as much oil vehicle as possible. Full-strength, concentrated dish liquid is usually very effective for smaller oil stains.

As a last resort, a very small amount of citrus-based brush cleaner may be used to spot-clean a stain, but it's essential to follow up with hand-washing to remove all residue. Thinners might remove dye from fabrics, so make sure to test for colorfastness in an area that won't show.

Large stains involving painting medium or varnish may not be removable without solvents. If that happens, it may be time to just replace the garment. Never machine-wash or tumble dry any garment that has absorbed a significant amount of oil or solvent.

Marker Ink

Most designer's markers are dye-based in an alcohol carrier. Some colors stain powerfully, but denatured rubbing alcohol usually dilutes the spot enough that it can be laundered out.

Bleaching

One pigment, Ultramarine Blue, can be bleached with lemon juice, but many pigments are very durable and are unaffected or minimally affected by bleaches and oxygen whiteners. Since chlorine bleach is destructive to clothing, it should be used only as a last resort.



Stain remover stick

Assemble a First Aid Kit for Stains

Every painter should keep a few supplies on hand for removing paint stains on clothes. Your kit might include:

- Stain Stick
- Spot remover wipes (individually packaged)
- Alcohol prep pads
- Detergent pen
- Small bottle of concentrated dish liquid
- Bottled water
- Denatured rubbing alcohol
- Clean cotton rags
- Paper towels
- Gallon zip lock bags

Questions? [Ask the Expert](#)

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