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# Handle With Care

Westchester experts tell you how to maintain, clean, repair, and store your treasures.

BY: SUSAN HODORA PUBLISHED OCTOBER 2, 2007 AT 12:00 AM

*Afraid if you use i-em, youi-ll lose i-em? Westchester pros tell how to maintain, clean, repair, and store your treasures.*

## How To: fine china

**Maintain:** When stacking dishes, place a paper towel or a napkin between plates to prevent scratching.



If there is no metallic luster, china (made from high-fired porcelain and fine clay) can be cleaned in the dishwasher, but a cool temperature setting is advised. i°But if it has any luster, never put it in the dishwasher,i± warns Pamela Goldman, owner of Grand Concourse Antiques in Mount Kisco. i°Luster has a low melting point. Heat will damage it.i±

**Clean:** When hand washing, line the sink with a soft towel or rubber mat to prevent scratching the dishes and hand dry rather than air dry to prevent water spots. Instead of abrasive pads or dishwasher detergent, use a mild soap such as Ultra Ivory Dish Liquid. And never scour the metal trim.

**Repair:** Gently rub stains with a dab of baking soda or a bit of cream of tartar on a damp sponge. Graying can be remedied with a drop of toothpaste on a soft cloth. Clean teacups using a solution of one part hydrogen peroxide, three parts water, and a drop of household ammonia. Soak china overnight in warm water with lemon, grapefruit, or orange rinds to remove hard-water stains.

Once broken, a fine china dinner plate will never be the same. Placing the china in a pan of warm milk for

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a half hour, however, can repair fine spidery surface cracks.

**Store:** To avoid scratching, place a paper towel, napkin, paper coffee filter, or rubber jar ring between plates that are stacked, and don't stack too many in a pile. Goldman recommends placing the stack in a plastic zip container to protect from dust. Do not stack or hang fine china cups. Instead, place them singly on a shelf. And don't store china in extreme temperatures (avoid a cold basement or hot attic).

**Do:** Use a rubber spatula, not metal silverware, to scrape off leftover food.

• Rinse off acidic foods such as spaghetti sauce before they have the chance to harden and leave stains.

• When stacking china in a dishwasher, be sure pieces do not touch each other.

**Don't:** Never stack china in the sink. Wash one piece at a time, and don't slide dishes against one another.

• Don't use hot water, especially for china with metal trim. It can cause metal to flake and extreme temperature change can crack the pieces.

• Never expose china to direct flames.

### How To: **oriental rugs**



**Maintain:** Vacuum your rug once a week with the beater bar (the rotating brush that sweeps dirt into the vacuum) raised to suction only. If the beater bar is low enough to hit the carpet, it can cause damage and break off the fringe, says Mike McRee, president of the Caravan Connection in Bedford Hills, purveyors of handmade Oriental and antique rugs. Once a year, vacuum the rug's back side, as well as the padding. If the rug is too large to move, flip over as much as possible on each side and vacuum the back, pad, and floor. Every four to five years, have the rug deep cleaned by an Oriental rug specialist.

**Clean:** The best way to remove a fresh stain made by even the worst offenders is by absorbing it from the carpet. You can use a damp sponge. You can sprinkle table salt over the spot and then vacuum it off, which works well with wine spills, according to McRee. To reach deeper into the pile, you can pour a modest amount of club soda or a solution of white vinegar and water over the area and then blot with a sponge. Any of these procedures may have to be repeated three or four times, and, warns McRee, blot, don't rub. If none of that works, stop. Once a stain has dried and gone into the pile, all bets are off, he says. Don't use a cleaning solution because it can set the stain. Call a professional instead.

**Repair:** If you see a pull, don't just snip it off, McRee says. It could be the result of something more serious, so phone a professional before you do anything. The same holds true for moth damage. Clothes moths do not eat rugs, but their larvae do. If you notice bare spots or broken piles in the rug, cocoons, sand-like particles in the pile (the larvae's excrement), or small moths flying around the room, call a professional immediately, urges McRee. Don't try to spray the top because that won't help. It won't kill eggs that are inside the pile. The carpet has to be entirely immersed in moth-proofing solution.

**Store:** Don't store a valuable rug in a moist area, McRee advises. Never keep it in the basement or near an air conditioner. You'll get mildew. If storage time is more than six months, the rug should be rolled; for shorter periods, it can be folded in halves or thirds.

**Do:** A rug in a basement room must have a padding barrier between the floor and the carpet.

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- Turn your rug 180 degrees every six months. This allows for even wear.
- Sprinkle a handful of moth flakes under edges to discourage cats and dogs from chewing and scratching.

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**Don't:** Never have someone come into your home to clean your rug. This usually gets out only a third of the dust, McRee says. And the dust that's left behind rubs like sandpaper. Plus the soap that is left in the carpet is highly acidic. It will dry out the wool and make it brittle.

Never put a potted plant on your carpet. Even if the plant is in a closed container, you will inevitably spill water on the carpet.

When moving a rug, don't yank it. Instead wave the rug's edge up and down while pulling gently, which sends a cushion of air under the rug to help it move.

## How To: antique furniture



**Maintain:** Don't expose antique furniture to direct sunlight; it can damage wood and cause colors to fade. Also, don't place near heating or air-conditioning vents, radiators, fireplaces, or stoves (heat can cause the wood to shrink and humidity to expand and contract or get moldy). Dust antique pieces periodically with a lint-free tack rag. A vacuum cleaner with a soft nozzle attachment can also be used.

**Clean:** Do not use furniture polish, says Rick Carone, owner of R.D. Carone & Company, a Bedford Hills business that designs, builds, and restores fine furniture. Sprays that claim to increase luster will probably affect the finish in a way that the original craftsman wouldn't want. Do use a thin coat of paste wax a couple of times a year. It makes the wood more slippery so it's less likely to get scratched, Carone says, and it also creates a bit of a UV barrier.

**Repair:** When something starts to get loose, have it repaired immediately before it gets worse, Carone says. Use hot or liquid hide glue for simple repairs. Don't use screws or mending plates because they constrain the movement of the wood and can lead to cracking. Pest infestation requires professional help.

**Store:** Cover and store antique furniture in temperature- and humidity-controlled conditions where there is no bright light. Store mirrors and glass vertically.

**Do:** When moving antique furniture, lift the piece rather than drag it. Remove any jewelry, belts, and buckles you're wearing beforehand to avoid scratching the surface. Carry tables by the legs, not the top, and chairs by the seat rails, not the back, top rail, or arms. Large items should be transported on their back, while marble and glass should be carried vertically.

To protect the surface, use trivets and coasters under hot dishes and drinks. Some people choose to

cover the entire surface with a glass top. When doing so, use felt or rubber tabs between the glass and the tabletop.

• During home renovations, cover the piece of furniture with a shipping blanket topped with a piece of Masonite to protect it from tools and falling plastic. One of the most common sources of damage to dining-room tables involves the chandelier, Carone says. When you're installing it or changing it, things get dropped onto the table from above.

**Don't:** To retain the historic value of an antique piece, do not strip or alter its original finish.

Patterns of wear tell the life story of the piece. When in doubt, consult a professional conservator.

• Do not use tung oil or silicone-based polishes on antique furniture. They age poorly and can darken or dull the finish.

• Never water any plants or flowers on the furniture's surface.

## How To: **fine art**



**Maintain:** Artwork is most often damaged by handling—moving, cleaning, dusting, says Madelyn Jordan, owner of the Madelyn Jordan Fine Art Gallery in Scarsdale. The less you touch your paintings, the better. She also advises: Be mindful of where you hang a work of art. Oil paint is fairly stable, but pastels, drawings, photographs, and works on paper are all susceptible to permanent damage from too much exposure to light. Also, hang artwork where temperature and humidity are moderate. Excess moisture and humidity can cause mold, and an abundance of aridness can dry out the pigments and more quickly age the work. Jordan says that ideal conditions are 60 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit during the winter and 70 to 75 degrees Fahrenheit in summer.

**Clean:** Avoid dusting paintings. If you do dust, lift the piece off the wall and lay it on a solid, flat surface beforehand so the dust doesn't fall onto the work, then dust slowly and gently in one direction with a natural hair artist's brush. If you are cleaning a glass-covered piece with a dusting product, spray the cloth, not the glass.

**Repair:** For cracked or flaking paint, mold, warping, or the presence of insects (such as carpet beetles that feed off protein-based materials), call a professional conservator rather than try to fix it yourself. Jordan recommends contacting Marina Yashina of Cold Spring, New York (914-476-0178), or, for works on paper, Scott Krawitz of Alvarez Fine Art Service, 29 West 36th Street in New York City (212-244-5255).

**Store:** Art should be stored in an environment in which there are no extremes of heat or cold, dryness or humidity. Never stack artwork and, when possible, keep it off the floor. Cover each piece with bubble wrap to create a dust barrier, but be sure the bubble wrap does not touch the surface of the work.

**Do:** When moving artwork, remove all jewelry, including your watch, to avoid scraping the piece. Lay the piece flat to transport it.

• Carry artwork by handling only the outside of the frame.

• Check hanging artwork periodically to make sure the hooks are secure and the wire hasn't weakened.

• Hooks can loosen over time, Jordan says. I've had paintings suddenly crash to the floor.

**Don't:** iñ Never hang artwork over a fireplace or furnace vent. The heat will dry out the surface, and soot and smoke will soil it.

iñ Do not use a feather duster or cloth to clean the surface of a painting.

iñ In no way touch the surface of a painting.

### How To: **brass fixtures**



**Maintain:** Dust brass with an old undershirt or other soft cloth, and polish with a designated metal polish, such as Brasso.

**Clean:** Rub very lightly with superfine steel wool, then polish with a metal polish, such as Brasso.

**Repair:** Many brass pieces are treated with a clear, electrostatically applied coating for protection and durability, which can crack over time, allowing water vapor to corrode, spot, or peel the brass. To restore, the coating must be removed, the damage repaired, and a new coat of lacquer applied. Remove the overcoat with a methylene chloride-based stripper, which is toxic and should not be applied indoors. Before applying, disassemble the piece and remove non-brass parts. After stripping, clean the surface with superfine steel wool, then apply brass cleaner to remove tarnish. To protect non-food pieces from further corrosion, spray with four or five coats of a clear lacquer such as Krylon. Over-spraying will result in drips, so use light coats and wait a few minutes between applications.

**Store:** Cover pieces with an old sheet or soft cloth, then wrap in plastic and store in a dry place.

**Do:** iñ Handle brass carefully to prevent denting and scratching.

iñ When buying an antique brass object, check for surface pitting. The more pitting, the less valuable the piece.

iñ Keep pieces away from sharp objects that can scratch the surface.

**Don't:** iñ Never get brass wet, whether it is coated or not. Moisture causes pitting and other damage.

iñ Do not apply furniture or silicone oil to brass.

iñ Never use abrasive cleansers.

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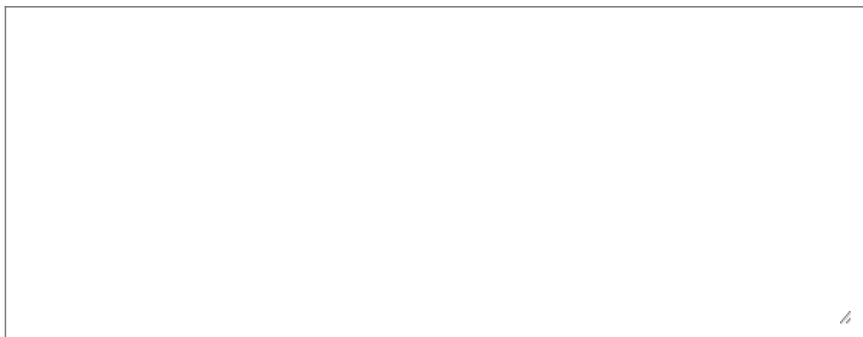
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