

# Consumer Reports®

FEATURING  
**STAIN  
REMOVAL  
CHARTS**



# How to Clean *Practically* Anything



**Hundreds of  
timesaving solutions  
for all around  
the house**



THE EDITORS OF CONSUMER REPORTS

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Today's cleaning challenges and how this book can help you.

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brush and allow it to dry, or vacuum it with an attachment nozzle covered with an old nylon stocking.

### Answering machines

An answering machine requires only an occasional dusting. If the housing is grimy, wipe the machine with a soft, lint-free cloth dampened with rubbing alcohol. Dust around the keys or buttons and inside the machine, if necessary, with a soft synthetic artist's paintbrush, or use compressed air to dislodge dust caught in nooks or crannies.

### Artificial flowers

Dusting frequently with a hair dryer set on low prevents buildup that can become hard to remove. To clean safely (and this means without using water), pour some salt into a plastic bag, put the flower heads down into the bag, and shake. Place a nylon stocking over a vacuum nozzle and gently remove the salt, which will have absorbed the dirt from the flowers.

### Audio equipment

Frequently wipe audio equipment—CD players, audiocassette players, and record players—with an anti-static dust cloth. Use a cloth dampened with rubbing alcohol to remove fingerprints. Keep audiotape and CD-player compartments and record-player lids closed to prevent dust from collecting. Follow manufacturers' instructions to remove dust that might accumulate. For audiocassette players, use a head-cleaning cassette as directed. To clean a phonograph stylus, flick off dust or dirt with a soft watercolor brush dipped in rubbing alcohol, wiping from back to front.

### Automobiles

**Cleaning the exterior.** Wash your car regularly. Avoid abrasive substances or brushes. Warm water will help dissolve hard deposits. Never wash a car in direct sunlight or when the finish is hot to the touch. That is when the finish is softer and more vulnerable to scratching.

Start by cleaning the wheels or hubcaps, using a specially formulated spray detergent. Most wheel cleaners work best when applied to a dry surface. For alloy wheels, be sure the

### Cleaning Caveat

Failure to properly care for an answering machine may invalidate the warranty. Read the manufacturer's instructions carefully.

# B

## **Bakeware**

Be sure to follow the care instructions that come with most bakeware. As a rule of thumb, avoid steel wool and abrasive cleaners. It's usually best simply to rinse bakeware with a damp sponge. Soak in a solution of water and a little baking soda to loosen stubborn deposits; if they remain, remove them with a plastic-edged scraper, not a knife.

Season uncoated metal bakeware to prevent rusting. Brush with unflavored vegetable oil and heat in the oven at a low temperature for an hour. Remove, let cool, and wipe away any excess oil with a paper towel. Spread a little vegetable oil onto the sides and bottom with a paper towel after each use.

For information on cleaning **Cookware**, see page 34.

## **Bamboo furniture**

Vacuum with an upholstery attachment or dust thoroughly with a soft brush. If the piece is still dirty, use a brush to scrub it with a solution of  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of borax and 1 tablespoon of liquid detergent mixed in 1 quart of warm water. Rinse, wipe lightly, and allow to air-dry. To prevent bamboo furniture from drying out and cracking, apply lemon oil or a little furniture cream once a year.

For bamboo blinds, see **Blinds**, page 20.

## **Bamboo steamers**

Don't clean with a detergent because the bamboo will absorb it and transfer the taste to the food. Instead, simply rinse a bamboo steamer with water after use. Occasionally oil it with a neutral-tasting vegetable oil to keep the bamboo resilient and prevent splintering.

## **Barbecue grills**

Keep the grill covered when you're not using it. For routine cleaning, get the grill very hot and stroke a long-handled metal brush dipped in water over the grates. Once the grates cool, use a paper towel to wipe them clean with hot water. Brush away powdered charcoal and other debris that has gathered beneath the grates. Remove any rust spots from the grates with the wire wheel attachment of an electric drill (wear gloves and goggles while doing this). To make future cleanups

A to Z

# Cleaning Agents

