



How to Remove Oil Stains From Clothes

Accidents happen to the best of us. You can be eating some pizza and a bit of errant grease drips onto your pants. Or perhaps you've noticed some lotion has stained your shirt's collar.

The thing that makes these unique is that they're oil-based, rather than the sort of water-based stains that happen with soda or sweat. Whereas water-based stains can come out in the wash, oil-based ones can set if you throw your garment into the laundry. Which means they require dry cleaning.

Frankly, most local dry cleaners aren't terribly great. They almost always send your stuff to the same mass-cleaning plant, where clothes are often treated indiscriminately without pre-

treatments. If you have a garment you really care about, it's worth sending your stuff to [RAVE FabriCARE](#) in Arizona. [RAVE](#)'s prices are reasonable for their service, but shipping back and forth will naturally add to your cost. If you're looking for a cheap and simple at-home solution, I've been happily surprised by how well diatomaceous earth works.

Diatomaceous earth is a soft, siliceous rock that crumbles into fine, white powder. I recently got some vegetable oil on a tan suede leather jacket – suede being one of the hardest materials to clean – and diatomaceous earth took care the problem within twelve hours. Just sprinkle some on, let it sit overnight, and brush it out the next morning. You should see all the oil lifted out.

Some tips on making this stuff work:

- **Buy diatomaceous earth before you need it.** It's cheap and easily available at places such as Home Depot, although you can also get it on Amazon. You want to treat a stain quickly, so it's good to have this stuff on-hand. One pound is much more than you need, but that's about the smallest quantity you can buy.
- **Make sure it's food grade.** There are a bunch of different varieties. You want to stick with food grade diatomaceous earth, as that will be safe on something you'll later put near your skin.
- **Always brush.** Diatomaceous earth is an incredibly fine powder, which means it can clog vacuums. So, always brush the powder off with a stiff-bristled clothing brush. Our advertiser The Hanger Project sells some exquisite ones, although you can find more affordable varieties from Kent.
- **Be careful with other solutions.** Again, oil-based stains can be incredibly tricky. Don't rub, scrub, or try to wash the stain out with water., as you can end up just spreading it. Try diatomaceous earth first to see how far you get.
- **Other powder alternatives.** If you don't have diatomaceous earth on-hand, try baby powder or baking soda. Chris Despos, a well-recognized bespoke tailor in Chicago, got amazing results in the photos above using some simple Johnson's baby powder. Same concept, just different material.
- **Caution on smooth leather.** Diatomaceous earth can be a little scratchy, so be careful about applying too much on something like smooth calfskin or shell cordovan. If you use it, apply some leather conditioner afterwards to keep the leather supple.

If all else fails and you still don't want to shell out for a speciality cleaner, try pre-soaking the garment in Oxiclean before washing. America's Test Kitchen got impressive results across a range of food stains, including oil-based ones such as hot bacon grease.