



REMOVING STICKERS AND LABELS

Removing stickers and labels from household items is sometimes a frustrating chore. Often the removal process is a matter of "trial and error." If one procedure doesn't work, it may be necessary to try the next one.

Avoid using strong abrasives or solutions that will soften, scratch, discolor or harm the household item. If a manufacturer or retailer has used an adhesive that cannot be easily removed, some suggestions are given below. Follow these precautions as you work:

CAUTIONS:

1. Test the cleaning material first to be sure it will not harm the surface of the item.
2. Remember that some items, such as lighter fluid, are flammable. Use with caution.
3. Provide good air ventilation when working with cleaning products such as ammonia and cleaning fluids.
4. Use caution when working with various cleaning chemicals. Rinse thoroughly after removing stickers and adhesives. Avoid mixing ammonia and chlorine bleach because this combination results in a poisonous gas!

STICKERS WITH PRESSURE-SENSITIVE ADHESIVE

1. Stickers, labels and tapes with pressure-sensitive adhesive (those that are peeled from a backing or roll, then pressed in place) often can be peeled off. The remaining adhesive can then be rubbed off with your fingers much the same way you "thumb-roll" rubber cement into small pieces. If the adhesive is old or has been exposed to high temperatures and/or humidity, this method may not work.
2. Attempt to remove as much of the label or tape as possible with your fingernail or the dull edge of a knife. The next procedure will depend on the surface of the item. It is important to pretest the surface of some items to avoid damage.
3. Sometimes the adhesive can be removed with a solution of warm water, liquid dishwashing detergent and vinegar or ammonia. Other suggestions include salad oil, fingernail polish remover and acetone.
4. Depending on the surface, it may be possible to apply a generous amount of a commercial pre-wash spot remover on the adhesive. Strive to get the solution under the film to work on the adhesive. Remove any remaining residue with a lubricant such as WD-40, lacquer thinner or rubber cement thinner. (Remember to test in an inconspicuous place first. Other alternatives include gentle use of nylon netting, a stiff brush, or a single edged razor held at a right angle to the surface. On wood surfaces use rubbing alcohol or heat with a hair dryer before peeling off.

5. Cleaning fluid will remove some adhesives; however, cleaning fluid can soften some kinds of plastic if left in contact with the plastic surface for a period of time. Spot test first in an inconspicuous area.

To use cleaning fluid saturate a folded cloth or paper towel with the cleaning fluid and place over the label or the tape. After several minutes, when the adhesive softens, rub with the cloth or towel until all traces of the label and adhesive have been removed.

STICKERS WITH WATER-SOLUBLE GLUE

Often the labels with water-soluble glue (the kind that must be dampened before it will stick) need only be soaked in water until the label loosens and the glue dissolves. Saturate several layers of white paper towels with warm water and place over the label.

It's sometimes difficult to tell the type of adhesive that has been used. As a rule of thumb, remember that water-soluble glue is often applied only to part of the label and is generally used on larger labels. The soaking method with warm water will usually remove the water soluble adhesive, but it can make the pressure-sensitive label more difficult to remove.

PURPLE PRICE MARKS

Purple price marks that so easily transfer to kitchen counter tops can be removed with a cloth dampened in a solution of half chlorine bleach and half water.

REMOVING LABELS INTACT

Coupon refunds often require a label as proof of purchase. To remove a label intact from a jar, bottle or can, soak the container in hot water for approximately 30 minutes and then dry with a towel. Next apply clear cellophane tape to the label. Leave strips at both ends of the tape to use as "handles" to lift the label off. Place label on a card or piece of paper.

Another method is to cover the label on a glass or plastic container with a wet paper or cloth towel and microwave on high for two minutes. **Caution:** Remove metal lids from bottles or jars before placing in microwave oven.

BATHROOM DECALS

Old decals can present a challenge. First, try to pry up the edges with a sharp-edged plastic scraper and apply a pre-wash spray, such as Shout or Spray 'n Wash. Or apply baby oil or WD-40 and let sit for a couple of hours. Any residue can be removed with salad oil, lighter fluid or a commercial adhesive remover.

References:

University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service information.
Pinkham, Mary Ellen, Mary Ellen's Clean House. Crown Publishers, Inc. New York, 1993

Note: The use of brand names in this publication in no way recommends or endorses the product but identifies examples of items found in the marketplace.
