

How to care for upholstered furniture

There are several steps you can take to preserve your upholstered furniture. The first is to clean the furniture on a weekly basis vacuuming both the cushions and under them. To prevent upholstery from becoming wrinkled or flattened you should fluff and rotate the cushions regularly to help slow wear and to ensure that any wear is uniform.

Keep upholstered items out of direct sunlight when possible to avoid fading. If the upholstery is near a window then use window treatments (curtains or blinds) to keep the sun's damaging rays off your furniture. IT is also important to keep your upholstery away from extreme heat or cold. Heat is especially bad for upholstery because it causes the fabric to become brittle and more prone to wear and tear. Extreme humidity or dryness can also be harmful to fabrics because of the damage it can do to the upholstery.

When cleaning upholstery you should follow the instructions on the manufacturer's tag. The tag uses codes to tell you what cleaning methods are recommended. As with most spills it is important to clean them as soon as possible to prevent the stain from setting. Listed below are the codes currently used by the upholstery industry:

W	Vacuuming and light dusting recommended. You can spot-clean by using only the foam from a water-based cleaner (mild detergents or non-solvent upholstery shampoo). Spot test in an unobtrusive area; apply foam with a circular motion and a soft brush.
S	Vacuuming and light dusting recommended. You can spot-clean with water-free solvent or dry-cleaning solution. Must clean in a well-ventilated room and avoid any cleaning product with carbon tetrachloride. Spot test in an unobtrusive area. Should be cleaned by professional furniture cleaning service.
W-S	Vacuuming and light dusting recommended. You can spot-clean with a mild solvent, upholstery shampoo or with the foam from a water-based cleaner. If using a solvent or dry-cleaning product, follow the directions carefully and use only in a well-ventilated room. Avoid any cleaning product with carbon tetrachloride. Spot test in an unobtrusive area.
X	<i>Clean only by vacuuming and light dusting.</i> Water and solvent cleaners may cause extreme shrinking, stains or disrupt the surface appearance.

One of the best ways to take care of your upholstered furniture is to purchase a protection plan, like Protection 1st. It picks up where the manufacturer's warranty leaves off. Manufacturers warranty against defects, but a protection plan can help you take care of accidental stains and damage. Stains caused by food, pets, cosmetics or ink are covered for cleaning when a plan is purchased. Damage in the form of punctures, tears or burns can also be repaired under such a plan. Some exclusions may apply, but a protection plan will help ensure the value of your investment nonetheless.