



## ODORS: What's That Smell?

Removing odors may be as simple as removing a spoiled vegetable from the refrigerator or it may be much more complicated. There are many commercial odor removers, some of which are especially formulated to remove certain odors, such as skunk or pet accidents. However, there are many home remedies that are quick and simple to do.

There are several common household items that have excellent odor-removing characteristics. Try them before going to the grocery store or hardware store to purchase a commercial product. Some of these products are:

- Activated charcoal (from the hardware store)
- Baking soda
- Cat box filler
- Crushed newspapers
- Coffee grounds (new or used and then dried)
- Fabric softener sheets or liquid fabric softener
- Tomato juice
- Vanilla extract
- Vinegar
- Lemon or lemon juice
- Some spices

Other odor-chasing remedies include using Listerine or douching solution for removing the smell of urine and other unpleasant strong odors. Another effective odor-removing mixture can be made by adding two tablespoons of citronella oil (purchase from drug store) and ½ cup rubbing alcohol in a gallon of water. Test these products in an inconspicuous area before using since some finishes might be damaged.

Here are a few common odor problems that are often found in households. Suggested remedies use household products often found on shelves and in cupboards. Commercial odor neutralizers and sprays can also be used in many cases.

| PROBLEM AREA    | SUGGESTED REMEDIES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
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| Ashtrays        | Use cat box filler to extinguish cigarettes and absorb the odor.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Bedding         | Sprinkle baking soda, borax or a mixture of spices on the bedding, futon or mattress. Leave overnight and then vacuum. Or sprinkle baking soda between the mattress and box springs and leave. Vacuum occasionally. For an old, musty mattress, sprinkle with cat box filler on top and leave for a week. Or wipe with a sponge dampened with vinegar. Deep cleaning with an extraction machine may be necessary.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Baby Bottles    | Fill the bottles with warm water and add one teaspoon of baking soda. Shake well and let set overnight. Wash thoroughly.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Car Interior    | <p>Carpet freshener or baking soda, sprinkled on carpet in the interior and in the trunk vacuumed off, is a good car freshener. Or poke pinholes in a pack of potpourri and allow the heat in the car to release the fragrance.</p> <p>Activated charcoal, containers of coffee or cat box filler will absorb odors in the trunk.</p> <p>Ashtrays can be filled with baking soda or cat box filler to remove stale cigarette odors.</p> <p>To remove skunk odors from a car, saturate a cloth with vanilla extract and place it in an open container in the back seat. Another remedy is to dissolve a cup of dry mustard in a bucket of water and wash the wheels and underbody of the car.</p> |
| Cigarette Smoke | <p>For smoke odors in rooms dampen a dish towel with vinegar and wave it around the room for a minute or two. Or set small bowls of vinegar around the room. Fill the ashtrays with cat box filler.</p> <p>If a small item is full of the odor of cigarette smoke, place it in a bag with a couple of fabric softener sheets. Seal it and leave for several days.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Stale Closets   | Make sachets of cat box filler or hang activated charcoal in mesh bags or old panty hose. Use potpourri or cedar chips in mesh bags.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Dishwasher      | Place an open bowl of baking soda inside and leave the dishwasher sealed overnight to help eliminate unpleasant odors.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

| PROBLEM AREA                      | SUGGESTED REMEDIES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
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| Dresser Drawers, Trunks, Suitcase | Make sachets of cat box filler or line with fabric softener paper. Place wrapped bars of soap in drawer. (The small travel size bars that are available in drug stores or when staying at motels and hotels work great. They also keep stored suitcases smelling fragrant.)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Garbage Pail                      | Pour a layer of cat box filler in the bottom. Also, spray with a deodorizing, disinfecting spray after each cleaning.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Garbage Disposal                  | Toss citrus rinds down the garbage disposal periodically. Or sprinkle baking soda over a few ice cubes and run through the unit.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Hand Odors from Cooking           | Remove fish, garlic and onion odors by rubbing your hands with coffee grounds. Or try rubbing with toothpaste, adding salt to soap lather or washing with vinegar.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Laundry Hamper                    | Sprinkle some baking soda into the hamper if the items to be laundered must wait for 2 or 3 days.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Microwave                         | Clean oven and check inside vent to be sure food hasn't collected there. Leave bowl of baking soda in microwave when not in use. Or mix a cup of water with 2 tablespoons of lemon juice or baking soda and bring it to a boil inside the oven. Boil for about 5 minutes and then let stand about 5 minutes more. Finish by wiping dry the walls, ceiling, floor, door and door seals.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Oven Cleaner                      | Bake citrus rinds in oven at 350 degrees F.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Paint                             | Place a couple of drops of vanilla extract in the can to help eliminate the paint odor.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Refrigerator and Freezer Odors    | <p>Fill with crumpled newspapers or leave baking soda, an open can of coffee grounds or a cotton ball saturated with vanilla in the refrigerator. Baking soda can also be left in the freezer.</p> <p>Check for food spoiling in the refrigerator or the vegetable crisper. Also, check the drip pan underneath. Wash the drip pan with baking soda and water or let it soak for a while.</p> <p>Check that spoiled meat or fish has not dripped into insulation. (This may require serving by a professional if the odor gets into the insulation.) If meat has spoiled, try rinsing with vinegar or baking soda or even tomato juice.</p> <p>If nothing else works, clean everything out, fill the shelves with crumpled newspapers or with large shallow pans spread with ground coffee or activated charcoal. Shut the door and leave for 2 or 3 days. Repeat as necessary.</p> |

| PROBLEM AREA                                 | SUGGESTED REMEDIES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
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| Small Items                                  | Place books, wallets and other small items in a plastic bag with one of the dry household deodorizers listed at the beginning of this fact sheet. Seal the bag and leave it for a week. Repeat this process as necessary.                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Small Storage Containers, Canisters, Thermos | Fill with crumbled newspaper or coffee grounds and leave for 2 or 3 days. Or fill with a half-and -half mixture of baking soda and water.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Stale Rooms                                  | <p>Simmer stick cinnamon, orange peel and whole cloves in water. Or place small bowls of vinegar around the room.</p> <p>Place favorite spice blends into panty hose (tied at both ends) and place inside a heating vent. The heat releases the fragrance throughout the house.</p> <p>Sprinkle some cinnamon on a pan and warm it on the range.</p> <p>Burn candles to add a romantic, fragrance-filled atmosphere.</p> |

Sources:

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 Moore, Alma Chesnut. How To Clean Everything. Simon and Schuster, New York.  
 Pinkham, Mary Ellen. Mary Ellen's Clean House. Crown Publisher's, Inc., New York.1993.

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