



Wipe out tablecloth stains, not great memories

Are you looking to create a festive table setting this holiday season? For an instant upgrade, add some table linens. These may include tablecloths, decorative placemats, cloth napkins, or a simple cloth runner down the center of the table.

If you are worried that you will stain or ruin any cloth on the table, don't worry. The good news is there are reasonably priced options that are treated to resist stains that you can easily launder. You can usually find these labeled "stain resistant," and they will have a high polyester fiber content.

Doesn't it seem that spills or accidents happen regardless of the fiber content or style of table linens? Never fear. With a few cleaning supplies and a little effort, stains will have no place at your table.

For best results, treat stains as soon as possible. If you need to begin treating a spill while your tablecloth is still on the table, place a towel under the spot to prevent damage to the table. The American Cleaning Institute offers these cleaning tips:

- **Turkey, gravy, butter, and salad dressing** (oil-based stains): Treat with a prewash stain remover or liquid laundry detergent. Launder in the hottest water that's safe for the fabric.
- **Cranberry sauce, apple cider, and pumpkin pie** (fruit-based stains): Remove excess fruit and run the fabric under cold water. Wash the item as soon as possible using the warmest water and bleach that are safe for the fabric.
- **Coffee, tea, wine, and soft drinks** (beverage stains): Soak or sponge the stain in cool water. Treat with a prewash stain remover or liquid laundry detergent. Launder using oxygen bleach or chlorine bleach, if safe for fabric.
- **Colorful cakes and desserts** (food-coloring stains): Sponge the stain promptly with cool water. If this doesn't remove the stain, soak it in cool water for at least 30 minutes. After soaking, treat with a prewash stain remover or liquid laundry detergent, then launder.
- **Candle wax stains**: After the wax has cooled, use a dull knife to scrape off surface wax. Remove linens from the table, and place the stained area between paper towels and press with a warm iron, transferring the wax to the towels. Continue, using clean towels until the wax no longer transfers. Then, place the stain facedown on another clean paper towel and sponge with a prewash stain remover; blot with paper towels. Let dry, then launder.

Whether you opt for casual table linens or some with an upscale look made of fancy fibers that are at risk for staining, *enjoy* your table linens, and *use* them. If you don't want to use table linens, that's OK – you can skip them all together! Table linens should add joy, not stress. The most important detail is sitting around your table with family and friends. Your holiday table doesn't have to look perfect in order to create special memories. Memories matter more than stains. And you make some of the best holiday memories while eating off paper plates!

Holiday hint: Make sure your table linens are clean before putting them away. Table linens made with actual linen fibers are best stored rolled as opposed to folded. Folds and creases in linen fabrics can weaken the fabric, leading to tears or holes.

References

<https://www.cleaninginstitute.org/cleaning-tips/holiday-cleaning/holiday-stains>

Stain Removal for Washable Fabrics

<http://www2.ca.uky.edu/agcomm/pubs/FCS2/FCS2840/FCS2840.pdf>

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