



Cleaning of Glass – Advice and Instructions

This information is offered as a general guide only. Specific advice on the cleaning of glass should always be sought from a reputable glazier or professional window cleaner before any glass cleaning is undertaken.

Professional Cleaners

Professional glass cleaners have significant experience and access to equipment, materials and methods which the general public may not. As professional glass cleaners are acknowledged experts in the cleaning of glass. Melbourne Safety Glass offers the information on this page as general advice only for the professional glass cleaner to consider as part of the development of their own cleaning processes.

Instructions to all trades and individuals

Always follow the manufacturer's installation and cleaning instructions. It is recommended that glass be protected from contamination caused by building materials and methods during construction as this will greatly simplify the glass cleaning task at the end of the project. If the glass is not protected during construction then the glass and frames should be cleaned frequently during construction. Construction dust, leachate from concrete and rusting from steel can contribute to the formation of mild chemicals. These may stain or otherwise damage the glass. Glass should be cleaned using only cleaning materials which are free of grit and debris (to avoid scratching and marking of the glass surface). Only detergents and cleaning solutions which are recommended for cleaning glass should be used. Mild detergents are preferable. Extra care is necessary where high performance reflective glass is installed. The coated surface can be susceptible to stains and scratches and therefore requires vigilance during the full construction process. Temporary screens should be installed if welding, sandblasting, floor sanding, cutting or other potentially damaging construction practices take place near the glass. Glass installations which are adjacent to concrete (e.g. concrete slab floors) require extra care and cleaning due to the abrasive nature of concrete dust. All tradespeople should be advised to be aware of damaging glass and windows and to leave in place any materials protecting the window or glass.

Toughened Glass

The cleaning of toughened glass requires special care. The glass surface opposite the standards compliance stamp may, as a consequence of the manufacturing process, have 'pickup' on the surface. 'Pickup' is a deposit of very small particles of glass which are fused to the glass surface. A cleaning method which does not dislodge these particles should be employed otherwise scratching of the glass surface may result. Blades or scrapers have been known to dislodge 'pickup' from the glass surface. A soft cloth, which will not dislodge 'pickup', should be used. It is suggested that professional cleaners consult with their suppliers as to the suitability of available cleaning equipment, materials and methods.

Solar Control Glass with special coatings

These type of specialty glass products (like Comfort Plus/ Etech / Solarguard) have a very thin coating on the interior glass surface. It is this hard and durable coating which gives the product improved thermal insulation and solar control performance compared to ordinary clear glass. The coated surface glass does clean differently to ordinary glass and the following guidelines are recommended for the most appropriate hand cleaning results.



Routine Cleaning:

Hand cleaning of the coated (interior) surface, to visibly remove accumulated dust or fingerprints, can be accomplished using a number of different glass cleaning products. The exterior surface of the glass is not coated so can be cleaned in the same fashion as ordinary glass.

Recommended Routine Cleaning Products:

- Windex® Multi-Surface Cleaner (colourless liquid) (Australia)
- Mr Muscle® Surface and Glass (New Zealand) (clear liquid available from Supermarket), produced by SC Johnson & Son Pty Ltd; or
- A mixture of one part vinegar with ten parts water.

In addition to the above products, commercially available vinegar-based glass cleaners have generally demonstrated an ability to provide a clean, streak free glass surface. Melbourne Safety Glass does not recommend the use of ammonia-base and alcohol-base glass cleaners because these products tend to leave visible streaks.

Routine Cleaning Procedure:

- While cleaning ensure jewellery and watches are removed and gloves should be worn.
- Flood the glass surface with the spray-on cleaning solution or with a cloth saturated with the cleaning solution. Be generous with the amount of solution applied.
- Scrub the wetted surface with a clean, lint free towel or cloth.
- Wipe dry with a dry, clean, lint free towel or cloth. Do not use a squeegee on the coated (interior) surface.
- To prevent streaking, stop wiping when the glass is almost dry and there is a uniform film of moisture left on the glass surface. The film will quickly evaporate leaving a clean surface.

Spot Cleaning:

Occasionally spot cleaning may be required to remove stubborn dirt or foreign materials which adhere to the surface. Spot cleaning products work to remove markings from grease, oil, tape adhesive, and crayons or other waxy materials as well as paint and rub-off marks from plastics.

Recommended Spot Cleaning Products:

Acetone (solvent available from hardware store) and must be used strictly in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations and warnings.

Spot Cleaning Procedure:

- While cleaning ensure jewellery and watches are removed and gloves should be worn.
- Apply a small quantity of the cleaner listed above to a clean, wet cloth or towel.
- Rub on areas of glass needing spot cleaning.
- Wipe clean using a dry, clean, lint free towel or cloth followed by a routine cleaning procedure.



Specialised Cleaning:

Do not use razor blades, steel wool, scouring bristles or other metallic or abrasive objects on the coated surface. If metallic objects contact the coated surface, a thin layer of metal removed from the object may be deposited onto the surface which results in a discoloured stain which is difficult to remove using normal cleaning procedures.

Recommended Specialised Cleaning Products:

- Hydrochloric Acid (available from hardware store).

Specialised Cleaning Procedure:

- While cleaning ensure jewellery and watches are removed and gloves should be worn.
- Carefully follow the chemical manufacturers' use and safety instructions. If there are none, pick a brand that has instructions and safety precautions or contact the manufacturer before use or application.
- Apply a small quantity of the specialised cleaning product listed above to a wet, clean cloth or towel. A cotton bud may be used for thin line type marks.
- Rub on areas of glass needing cleaning.
- Wipe clean using a dry, clean, lint free towel or cloth followed by a routine cleaning procedure.
- Ensure that the cleaner does not come into contact with framing materials.

About This Cleaning Advice:

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What Not to Do

- Do not use cleaners which contain Hydrofluoric or Phosphoric acid as they are corrosive to the glass surface.
- Do not clean the glass when the glass is hot or in direct sunlight.
- Do not allow cleaning solutions to contact the edges of Laminated glass, Insulating Glass Units or Mirrors.
- Do not store or place other material in contact with the glass. (This can damage the glass or create a heat trap leading to thermal breakage).
- Abrasive cleaners, powder based cleaners, scouring pads or other harsh materials should not be used to clean windows or other glass products.
- Avoid causing extreme temperature changes to the glass as this may lead to thermal fracture of the glass, i.e. do not splash hot water on cold glass or freezing water on hot glass.



- Some tapes or adhesives can stain or damage glass surfaces. Avoid using such materials unless they are known to be easily removed.

Care of mirrors

Mirrors require special cleaning care. To clean mirrors, simply wipe over the surface with a few drops of methylated spirits on a damp cloth. Polish surface dry with a lint free cloth. Some proprietary glass cleaners, if used to excess, can cause damage to the silvering as can excessive amounts of water. Make certain when cleaning the face of the mirror that there is no contact with the silver backing, particularly at the edge of the glass and be careful to keep any moisture away from the paint backing of the mirror. Do everything possible to ensure that the cleaning cloths used are free of any abrasives.

If damage occurs

If glass is damaged or broken on-site, ensure that experienced glaziers are engaged to rectify the situation. Glass can be a safety hazard if not handled properly. In the case a scratch does occur if it is felt by the hand to be raised it will not be able to be buffed out and will have to be replaced. Try rubbing toothpaste over the scratch if it's very small.

Note to the painter

Paint spots have been traditionally removed using a sharp razor blade. The use of a blade can in some cases cause damage to the glass. As an alternative, investigate solvents or graffiti removal materials, ensuring that they will not damage the glass. If a blade or scraper is used then the risk of damage can be reduced by using a scraper which has a clean edge and is held at an angle of 30° to the glass. Consult the supplier of the blade or scraper as to how it is best used to clean glass. However, surface coated, modified or tinted glass requires special care. Seek cleaning advice from your local glass merchant.

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