

# Graffiti Removal Tips

If you become a victim of graffiti vandalism, the City asks that you please remove it within 24 - 48 hours - - - *Why???* Studies have shown the best strategy for prevention of graffiti is immediate removal. The longer graffiti lingers only invites more graffiti. Also, the longer graffiti is exposed to the elements, the harder it will be to remove it.

## Following are some TIPS to remove graffiti from various different types of surfaces:

### **Metal Surfaces:**

- Try wiping the graffiti with any common paint thinner (mineral spirits, lacquer thinner, acetone). You can also try using a “graffiti removal” product, or wiping the graffiti with a light penetrating oil. Using a sponge with light-weight scouring pad may also help to remove the graffiti.
- If the graffiti remains, try to remove it by rubbing with steel wool or light sandpaper.
- If the graffiti still remains, try power-washing it with a 3000 psi pressure washer.
- If none of these methods work, paint over the graffiti.

### **Wood Surfaces:**

- If the wood is *not* weathered or sealed with paint, stain or sealer, try to remove the graffiti by wiping it with mineral spirits. If the wood is weathered, do not use this technique, as the chemicals will be absorbed by the wood, driving the graffiti down into the wood.
- Power-washing with a 3000 psi pressure washer can be used, but be careful not to drive the paint deeper into the wood.
- If none of these methods work, paint over the graffiti.

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## Plastic Surfaces:

- Try wiping the graffiti with a light, penetrating oil. Do *not* use paint thinners, as they often soften the plastic and can cause clouding or permanent tackiness on the surface.
- Use an ultra-fine steel wool and lightly rub the paint.
- If none of these methods work, paint over the graffiti.

## Masonry Surfaces:

- The best option for removal of graffiti from brick or stone surfaces is to use a 3000psi pressure washer (be sure to *not* use a narrow tip, as it will etch the masonry surface and leave an outline of the graffiti).
- Sand-blasting is another option. Keep the tip moving over the graffiti-painted area to avoid permanently marking the surface.
- If none of these methods work, paint over the graffiti.

## Glass Surfaces:

- A razor blade is 99% effective at scraping off graffiti. Use the razor blade in a holder and scrape at a 30-degree angle.
- Use an ultra-fine bronze wool with water to remove any lingering paint, if the razor blade does not remove all of the graffiti.
- Paint thinner can also be used to remove some graffiti from glass surfaces.

## Adhesive Removal:

- Scrape away as much of the adhesive as possible.
- Use nail polish remover, or an acetone-base cleaner to remove the remaining residue. Be careful, as acetone-based solvents can soften plastics).

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## Other Surfaces:

- Aluminum Siding/Fiberglass: Try using paint remover (sparingly), and rinse the area with water.
- Pavement: Use a power washer to clean the area.
- Street Signs: Use a chemical remover and be careful to not remove the reflective coating.
- Stucco: Use paint remover and/or a chemical remover and rinse with a pressure washer (careful to not use a fine tip).
- Utility Boxes: Use a chemical remover and a cloth or scrubbing sponge.
- Vinyl Siding: Use chemical solvents sparingly, as they may remove the vinyl coating. If repainting, use a primer first to cover the graffiti.

*(\*) whenever using any kind of chemical remover, be careful nothing runs into and pollutes the storm drain(s).*

## Precautions and Safety Information:

- Always read all product labels and carefully follow manufacturer instructions and recommendations. Most chemical products available for graffiti removal are flammable and toxic.
- Try a small “test” area before proceeding with application of any product.
- Always use caution and follow all product safety recommendations.
- Always wear proper safety clothing (cover all exposed skin) and use protective equipment including goggles, gloves, face masks, etc.
- Many of chemicals products used for removing graffiti are toxic. Always store them away and out of reach of small children and pets. Limit the amount of time anyone is exposed to them during use, and be sure to properly dispose of all left-over materials afterward.