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# Nurture your furniture



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Follow these tips to protect, clean and care for what's in your home, no matter the material.

**Megan Patsavas, CTW Features**

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Vintage, distressed, shabby chic whatever you call it, there's no denying that well-worn furniture is in style in homes today. Just because some of your décor is trendily tattered, doesn't mean it's all right to beat up the furniture you bought new. Follow these tips to protect, clean and care for what's in your home, no matter the material.

## Fabric Upholstery

One of the most important things to remember when caring for fabric upholstery – or really any type of furniture – is to keep it clean. If you don't, the dirt inside the fabric can cause it to deteriorate, warns Daniel Danforth, vice president of education for Fibrenew, a Black Diamond, Alberta-based company that specializes in the restoration of leather, plastic and more.

Danforth recommends having your upholstered furniture cleaned about once a year by professionals who can identify the particular fabric and the appropriate cleaner for it, and also says people should "put a fabric protector on there after they've had it cleaned."

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Fabric protector is available at most hardware, home improvement or furniture stores, but make sure to check the label that it is safe for the type of upholstery you are protecting.

### Leather

“Think of [leather furniture] like the skin on your hands,” says Geoff Shadman, owner of the Portland, Maine-based Furniture Repair Services of Maine. “If you allow it to dry out and you don’t keep it conditioned, it cracks, it peels, it flakes up.”

To prevent damage to your leather, Shadman suggests using a leather conditioner/cleaner every four to six months.

Between treatments, Danforth says people should wipe down their leather furniture with a damp rag or mild leather cleaner to prevent buildup of dust and body oils. He also recommends a leather protector instead of a conditioner, and says people should “stay away from wives’ tales products,” like mink oil.

### Plastic

Care for plastic furniture is simple. “Wipe it down,” Danforth says, and don’t keep it under the sun. Direct heat and sunlight, which can also dry out leather furniture, will make plastic more brittle.

### Wood

“Water and wood – unless it’s a boat – doesn’t mix,” Shadman says. When cleaning your wood furniture with a water-based product, “dry it immediately so it doesn’t soak into the wood and expand the wood grain and cause flaking, separation, things like that,” he adds.

Danforth also suggests using a furniture polish, which can “create a barrier between the finish of the wood” and the outside world.

Other wood protection tips from Shadman and Danforth include using coasters and mats to prevent water and heat damage, or getting a glass (but not plastic) overlay for a table.

“Plastic is not a good idea because plastic sweats and it can hold moisture,” Danforth says, which will damage the wood.

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