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How To Remove Stains from Concrete

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Garage floors take a lot of abuse. Dirt, oil and grease are just some of the troublesome items that can leave their mark. As with all floors in your house, the best way to avoid serious staining is with regular cleaning. When that fails, however, it is important to take action as soon as possible to remove the stain.



Photo © Jeff Beneke

Here are some suggestions that will work on most garage floor stains.

Difficulty: Average

Time Required: 30-60 minutes

Here's How:

1. **Act now.** Concrete is a porous material. Liquid spills are much easier to remove before they've had a chance to soak in. The quicker you act, the easier it will be to remove the stain.
2. **Choose the right cleaner.** Garage floor stains are usually caused by dirt, oil or grease—or some unpleasant combination of all three. Most concrete cleaners are suitable for these stains, and they can be found at paint or hardware stores or at your local home improvement store. If you are removing paint, rust, mildew or some other type of stain, you will need to look for a more appropriate product. Just be sure to read the labels carefully.
3. **Spot test the cleaner.** Some concrete cleaners can create stains of their own, especially on concrete that has been painted or coated with a tinted stain finish. Before tackling the bigger job, mix a little cleaner and apply it to a small, out of sight location. If it seems to cause as many problems as it was supposed to solve, try another cleaner.
4. **Prepare the surface.** If the stain is still wet, soak up as much as possible with paper towels. Sweep the area, and then remove any items near the stain so that they won't get wet when you rinse the floor.
5. **Prepare the cleaner.** Mix the cleaner as instructed on the label, or use it full strength for particularly old or troublesome stains. Be sure to wear eye and skin protection (gloves, long sleeves). Some products recommend that you wear chemical-resistant gloves.

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6. **Apply the cleaner.** Pour the cleaner onto the stain. Scrub the area with a stiff broom or brush, working the cleaning solution into the stain as best as you can. Allow the cleaner to rest in place as directed (typically 10 to 15 minutes).
7. **Rinse the floor.** Thoroughly rinse the floor with a hose, if possible, or buckets of water. Use a squeegee or push broom to remove as much water as possible from the floor. Finally, dry mop the floor.
8. **Repeat, if necessary.** It is not unusual, especially with old stains, to have to clean the surface several times. If you aren't satisfied with the results, repeat the process. But this time, consider adding less water to the cleaner and leaving it on the stain a little longer.

Tips:

1. Keep the floor clean at all times. Regular sweeping and quick action on liquid spills will reduce your need for a concrete cleaner.
2. Soak up liquid spills as soon as you notice them. Lay a paper towel on the spill and let it absorb. Don't rub the surface, as this will only push some of the spilled liquid into the concrete.
3. Use kitty litter to absorb larger liquid spills. Simply cover the spill with the kitty litter, let it rest for 24 hours, then sweep. Keep a small bag of kitty litter in the garage at all times so that you can act fast. In a pinch, you can also use cornmeal to soak up the spill.
4. Stains that are still fairly new can often be removed without resorting to special concrete cleaners. Instead, first scrub the area with a common household cleaner and brush.
5. Don't let water sit on a concrete stain. The water will only allow the stain to soak deeper into the concrete.

What You Need:

- Paper towel.
- Kitty litter.
- Common household cleaner.
- Stiff broom or brush.
- Concrete cleaner.
- Eye goggles.
- Protective gloves.
- Hose.
- Bucket.
- Mop.

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