

GOT TAGGED?

You have options - ignoring the graffiti is **not** one of them!

GRAFFITI **STOPS** WITH YOU!

- ✓ **Remove it.** Call 3-1-1 or 720-913-1311, or visit www.denvergov.org/graffiti and request free paint. See the “How To” tips below.
- ✓ **Report it for free assistance.** If you’re unable to remove it yourself, authorize the City to remove it free of charge. For **free removal assistance**, call 3-1-1, 720-913-1311, or report it online at www.denvergov.org/graffiti. **AND report it to the police non-emergency number (720-913-2000).**
- ✓ **Prevent it.** Make your property difficult and less desirable to tag.

Page 1 - 2	Removal tips
Page 2	Prevention tips
Page 3	Removing graffiti – surface types
Page 3 - 5	Removing graffiti – removal methods
Page 6	Graffiti Removal Chart

REMOVAL TIPS

1. Attempt to minimize the appearance of the vandalism and the cleanup.
2. Clean it up as soon as possible - preferably before the paint dries.
3. Identify the surface to be cleaned and select the best removal method, such as painting, hand cleaning or power washing.
4. Use the safest and most environmentally-friendly method possible.
5. Place drop cloths on ground to catch drips and spills.
6. Do not paint unpainted masonry surfaces (e.g. brick, stucco, marble, etc).
7. When painting, match the paint color to the surface.
8. If neighbors have been tagged, consider sharing the rental cost for power wash equipment.
9. When using solvents purchase and use the minimum amount to avoid disposing of excess quantities which could contaminate the environment and harm pets and animals.
10. Use proper cleanup, storage, and disposal methods.
11. Carefully follow **all** safety and use guidelines for all products and equipment.
12. If you are unable to remove the graffiti, or if the area to be cleaned is very large, authorize the City to provide [free graffiti removal assistance](#) or hire a contractor (look for “graffiti removal” online or in the phone directory).
13. Do not get discouraged. By consistently and promptly removing the graffiti, you are sending the message that graffiti is not tolerated in this area or on this property!

PREVENTION TIPS

Make your property less attractive and accessible to graffiti vandals

- Promptly remove graffiti *every time it appears!*
 - This discourages the vandals who want their tags to be seen.
 - This sends the message that the people who live in this area care, and it's not ok to do graffiti here.
 - It's the law. [City Ordinance](#) requires cleanup within 48 hours (on non-residential property) and 72 hours (on residential property).
- Plant short shrubs and plants with needles and thorns to create a barrier around your property.
- Plant vines and climbing plants along fences and walls to eliminate bare surfaces.
- Trim existing shrubs and weeds - remove items that might create hiding places.
- Secure gates, repair fences, & relocate items (e.g., dumpsters, storage sheds) that intruders can use to scale fences and walls.
- Install outdoor lighting - consider lights that come on when they sense movement.
- Make graffiti cleanup quick & easy. Apply a **coating or protective sealer** to the surface to. [Sign up to receive a discount on purchases.](#)
 - ✓ Sacrificial coatings are protective, but come off when graffiti is removed and must be reapplied.
 - ✓ Non-sacrificial or permanent anti-graffiti coatings are unaffected by the graffiti removal process and remain on the surface, however, they are more hazardous and may be more difficult to apply.
 - ✓ Wood stain applied to wooden fences causes graffiti to wash off with water.
- When installing or replacing wooden fences, avoid creating a solid surface by spacing the vertical posts or alternating every other vertical post on either side of the horizontal posts (see examples below).



REMOVING GRAFFITI

SURFACE

GLASS - Note: 1st determine if the graffiti was applied with an acid compound or scratched or cut into the glass, if not - scrape

PAINTED surfaces: chemical removers, paint, pressure/power wash

UNPAINTED surfaces: chemical removers, hand clean, pressure/power wash

In ALL cases: if the area to be cleaned is very large, difficult to access, or if the graffiti does not cover or clean well, consider hiring a professional or authorizing the City to provide [free graffiti removal assistance](#)

METHOD

- ✓ **Chemical removers:** Chemical removers vary, but typically the stronger the solvent, the faster it will dissolve or remove paint. Using a scrub brush or wire brush, **attempt to clean the surface by using the least [toxic cleaner](#)** possible, beginning with warm, sudsy water or a *citrus cleaner*. If this method is not effective, test WD-40, methylated spirits, turpentine, white spirit or acetone on a small area to be cleaned. These products are available at paint, hardware, and home improvement stores where many commercial graffiti-removal products can also be purchased. A solvent or cleaner that is poorly matched to a particular construction material may create aesthetically unappealing results and may damage the surface. Successful product selection is critical.
 - Stronger solvents may require an increased focus on safety and personal protection.
 - Obtain *material safety data sheet* (MSDS) from the distributor and follow all manufacturers' warnings. The MSDS will show the chemical make-up and any health and safety risks associated with use.
 - Keep in mind who will be using the product, the safety precautions to follow and any training required for the product user.
 - Observe proper [care, cleanup, and storage](#) methods when using toxic substances.
 - Purchase and use the minimum amount to avoid [disposing of excess quantities](#) which could contaminate the environment and harm pets and animals.
 - When finished wipe surface with clean rag. Avoid washing hazardous chemicals into the storm drain system.

REMOVING GRAFFITI - METHOD (continued)

- ✓ **Hand cleaning**: Rub the area to be cleaned with fine sandpaper or steel or bronze wool. Wipe with clean rag frequently throughout cleaning.
- ✓ **Painting**: Paint can be easy to apply and a relatively safe product compared to [chemical solvents](#) used to remove graffiti. Contact 3-1-1 to obtain [free paint](#) in several standard colors or [vouchers for discounts](#) on custom-colored paint.
 - [Match the paint color](#) to the surface.
 - Prepare the surface to minimize "bleed through"
 - Clean the surface of dust, dirt, grease & oils.
 - Apply paint to a dull surface. To achieve this, sanding the surface may be necessary.
 - Ensure the surface is sound before painting over it. Check for cracks, rust, water damage, or other signs that indicate the surface is in poor condition.
 - Apply paint only to a dry surface.
 - Paint the entire surface or as much of the surface as possible. (For example, if the tag is on the lower half of the wall, paint the entire bottom half of the wall instead of only painting squares large enough to cover the graffiti.)
 - Avoid creating a "patchwork" effect. If you are unable to repaint most, or the entire surface, square off the area to be painted. Do not "trace" or outline the graffiti.
 - Keep some paint on hand for quick touch-ups, if needed.
 - Ensure that the process is safe and [environmentally friendly](#), including the [clean-up and storage](#) of paint and brushes and [disposal of paint](#).
- ✓ **Pressure washing**: Pressure washing equipment uses water or water in combination with a solvent to remove graffiti from a surface. A solvent may first be applied and then the surface is washed with pressurized water. Sometimes a blasting media, such as baking soda or sand, is used to remove graffiti. While pressure washing is effective, it can wear down or damage the surface being treated. To rent power/pressure washing equipment check with local home improvement and hardware stores.
- ✓ **Scraping (glass)**: **Note: 1st determine if the graffiti was applied with an acid compound or scratched or cut into the glass.**
 - Do not touch the glass with bare hands.
 - Wearing **protective gloves and eyewear**, wash the area well with sudsy water.
 - After thoroughly washing the area, use a **new**, 1" razor blade in a safety handle and attempt to scrape off the graffiti.

REMOVING GRAFFITI - METHOD - continued

✓ Scraping (glass) - continued:

- **Important** -- avoid scratching the glass, by **scraping the surface at an angle and using a new blade**.

If the graffiti does not scrape off, it was probably not applied with paint. Contact a professional glass repair or replacement company (on the internet or in the telephone directory under "glass repair/replacement") to assess the damage.

After determining that the graffiti **was painted on** (not scratched or cut into the surface nor applied with an acid compound), select one of the following cleanup methods:

- **Carefully** scrape off the graffiti using a **new** razor blade. Use a razor blade in a holder and scrape at a 30-degree angle to the glass.
- Use ultra-fine steel or bronze wool with water to gently rub the paint off. You can also use this method to remove any remaining paint after using the scraping method above.
- Rub the area with paint thinner and a clean rag. **Note:** the razor blade and bronze wool methods are more environmentally friendly.

In all cases, if the surface to be cleaned is very large or difficult to access, consider hiring a professional or authorizing the City to provide [free removal assistance](#).

Don't give up! The best way to prevent graffiti is to remove it as quickly as possible (preferably within 24 hours) - every time it appears. City [ordinance](#) requires graffiti to be cleaned off non-residential property within 48 and residential property within 72 hours.

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Graffiti Removal Chart

Etching – see Graffiti on GLASS, above.

Adhesives - Scrape away as much of the adhesive as possible; use nail polish remover or acetone-based cleaner to remove remaining residue. Be aware that acetone-based solvents can soften plastics.

Surface Type	Suggested Removal Methods for Spray Paint and Similar Materials (markers, shoe polish, lip stick, stencils, etc.). 1-choose the least toxic, hazardous, difficult method; 2-test on small area
Aluminum Siding, Fiberglass	Paint remover (sparingly); rinse with water
Dumpsters: city-owned & private	Contact 3-1-1 or 720-913-1311
Glass	See Method – Scraping, above
Historic Masonry or Other Valuable Structures	Consult a professional; get the National Park Service Brief on removing graffiti from historic masonry
Masonry (includes brick, marble, stone, tile, granite, and concrete)	Power washing with low pressure; sand or soda blasting (may create a shadow); paint remover or chemical graffiti remover/solvent applied with brush and rinse with water; paint over
Metal	Paint thinner or chemical graffiti remover/solvent and rub with steel wool or sandpaper and rinse; power washing; paint over
Pavement, concrete	Cover with quick mix cement; grey paint; chemical remover and power washing; soda blasting
Plastic Surfaces	Ordinary household cleaners, (e.g., detergent or dishwashing liquid). If unsuccessful, try rubbing alcohol, WD-40, turpentine, or mineral spirits.
Public property & property/fixtures in public right-of-way	Report it: By phone to 3-1-1 or 720-913-1311 or online – www.denvergov.org/graffiti
Street Signs	Report it: By phone to 3-1-1 or 720-913-1311 or online – www.denvergov.org/graffiti
Stucco	Paint remover/chemical remover and rinse with pressure wash; paint over
Utility Boxes	Report it: By phone to 3-1-1 or 720-913-1311 or online – www.denvergov.org/graffiti
Vehicles	Contact your automobile insurance carrier
Vinyl Siding	Chemical solvents sparingly as they may remove the vinyl coating; repaint with primer first
Wood	On painted, un-weathered wood try mineral spirits; power washing with low pressure; sanding; repainting

For a complete, easy to follow guide, check out the [Graffiti Hurts](http://www.graffitihurts.org) website - www.graffitihurts.org/community_resources/removal.cfm. *Graffiti Hurts* is a program of Keep America Beautiful, Inc.

Denver Partners Against Graffiti gratefully acknowledges that in order to compile this document, information was gathered from many sources (e.g., vendors, contractors, other cities, [Keep American Beautiful](#) and Keep America Beautiful affiliates' websites)