

NOTICE: This is a simple, general purpose manual for handling library materials based on our experience at the National Diet Library. When you handle rare books or severely damaged materials, we recommend you to consult an expert in conservation treatment.

Dry Cleaning with Brushes

The accumulation of dust and dirt can cause soiling and deterioration of books. Damage from mold and insects are a particular concern. The term “dry cleaning” refers to any cleaning method that uses brushes, cloth, sponges, and erasers but does not require water or other liquid. Here is an introduction to the dry-cleaning of books using brushes.

Tools:

- Choose a brush with soft, natural bristles that will not leave scratch marks. Brushes should be of a size that fits the materials to be cleaned. To avoid spreading dirt from other sources, never use brushes that have already been used for other purposes.



<Different types of brushes used for dry cleaning>

- Choose a dry cloth with soft fibers, such as microfiber, and that is free of chemicals. To avoid spreading dirt from other sources, never use cloth that has already been used for other purposes.
- Vacuum cleaners commonly used for housecleaning are useful. Use a brush attachment or cover the attachment mouth with coarse cloth so that it will not suck up pages.

- Dust masks

Procedures:

Be sure to wear a dust mask to avoid inhaling mold and dust while dry-cleaning library materials. Cleaning should be performed in a well-ventilated environment, away from people and other library materials. It is particularly important to be careful not to contaminate other library materials when cleaning mold.

- (1) Remove large particles of dust and dirt using a vacuum cleaner set to low suction. Start by cleaning the head, the fore edge, the tail, the spine, and then the front and back faces. Hold the front edge firmly with one hand. Keep the book closed to prevent dust and dirt from getting inside. Give special attention to materials with damaged covers and pages. Do not use a vacuum cleaner on badly damaged books, as it may exacerbate the damage.



< Removing dust with a vacuum cleaner >

- (2) Brush off the dust from the head, the fore edge, and the tail.
 - Hold the front edge firmly with one hand. Keep the book closed to prevent dust and dirt from getting inside. Brush in one direction, from the spine to the front edge.
 - Next, hold the head and brush the front edge from the head to the tail.
 - Finally, hold the front edge and brush the tail from the spine to the front edge.



< Brushing the head >



< Brushing the front edge >

- (3) Open the book and brush the front and back end paper gutters, then the gutters of the first few leaves and the final few leaves. Gutters of the first and final leaves tend to collect dirt.



<Brushing dirt off the end paper gutter >

- (4) Brush dirt off the cover front or wipe clean with dry cloth. Clean the cover by gently brushing or wiping first from the center to the head and then from the center to the tail.



< Wiping the cover with a dry cloth >

<Important tips>

- Books are often stored vertically on shelves, which causes dust to accumulate on the head.
- To avoid spreading dirt, brush cleaner parts first and dirtier parts last.
- Handle fragile library materials with care to avoid further damage to the book cover and pages.
- Although it would be ideal to brush every page, forcing a book open will only cause further damage, especially library materials with a loose back or a tight gutter. So think carefully before deciding to dry clean a particular book.
- Folding plates and dog-ears tend to collect dust inside. Open the folded parts and brush off the dust.