

How to remove a pen ink stain from a limestone countertop?

Q. I have a limestone countertop and I have a pen ink stain that I am trying to remove. I've removed a lot of it, but there is still remaining. How should I proceed in removing the stain completely? Thank you!

A. Ink stains are no fun, especially on a limestone countertop. Older ink stains can sometimes be impossible to remove completely. It's great that you've acted quickly and already managed to remove some of it. That means the stain is still responsive, which gives you a better chance of getting the rest of it out. Ink can be one of a stubborn type of stain on natural stone. Your early progress is encouraging.

Pen ink is designed to penetrate and bond with paper, which is a very porous surface. Limestone, although not nearly as absorbent as paper, is also porous. The tiny pores in limestone give ink plenty of places to settle below the surface.

Now, there's something important to understand about stain removal. It's always best to start with the gentlest methods first and only take a more aggressive approach if needed. Why? To protect the limestone and to avoid unnecessary handling of harsher chemicals.

Begin by cleaning the area thoroughly with pure acetone and a soft, clean white cloth.

NOTE: Follow the manufacturer's safety precautions for chemicals.

Don't use nail polish remover, which often contains additional ingredients and may contain no acetone at all, sometimes. Blot in small areas to prevent spreading the ink around. Acetone is safe for limestone and effective at

dissolving surface-level ink. Sometimes repeated acetone blotting alone can continue pulling ink up, so it's worth giving this step more than one try if you are seeing good results. Use a new clean cloth with each attempt.

If acetone doesn't fully remove the stain, the next step is to use a poultice. A poultice draws the stain out of the stone over time. For detailed, step-by-step instructions on how to mix and apply a poultice correctly, check out our free [Stain Management App](#). For your poultice chemical ingredient you'll want a solvent such as mineral spirits or a commercial paint remover, combined with a poultice powder or diatomaceous earth. You can expect to repeat poultice applications more than once, since deep ink stains rarely lift in a single attempt.

If you've done about five poultice attempts with no noticeable improvement, it usually means the ink has penetrated too deeply and the stain may be permanent. Your remaining options would be grinding, honing, and polishing, that is, "refinishing" the limestone, which would require the services of a stone restoration professional. To find a vetted PRO in your area, visit www.surfacecarepros.com and click on **Find a PRO**.

We also recommend you have your countertops sealed by a PRO to inhibit future staining.

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