

How to Get Permanent Marker Off Photographs

You decided on a quiet afternoon of leafing through old photographs, only to discover that your five-year-old beat you to it--with permanent marker. Now your parents' vacation in Ireland features a googly-eyed stick figure standing on your father's head and your wedding picture has you sporting a mustache? Chances are the pictures haven't been ruined. There are ways to repair the damage and restore the photographs.

Cleaning the Photograph

Place photograph on flat, clean surface. Wipe down surface beforehand and ensure that it is dry.

Test the dry-erase marker. Apply no more than a short stroke in a place covered by permanent-marker.

Wait 30 seconds, then take a soft cloth and gently wipe the dry-erase marks away.

If the permanent-marker came away with the dry-erase marker, then reapply dry-erase marker over a larger area, no more than a square inch.

Quickly wipe away the new dry-erase marks. Keep applying and wiping the marks, one square inch at a time, until all traces of the permanent-marker are gone.

Tip

This is the simplest, cheapest method for removing permanent marker. If it fails to remove every trace of your child's graffiti, all is not lost. There remain other options. Photographers sometimes use high-grade alcohol, such as methanol. Another remedy is Sol-U-Mel, a non-caustic cleaning solvent, produced by Melaleuca. Either one of these things, applied carefully, should do the trick. If even after all this you find some

lingering marks, we live in the digital age and software, like Photoshop, can restore the image to its perfection, or even enhance it. Unfortunately, you'll have to relinquish the original photo. If it's an antique picture...consider sending your kid to the grandparents for a bit.

Warning

Remember: use light, gentle strokes when cleaning the photograph(s) and do not wipe in a circular motion, particularly on glossy finishes. It wouldn't do to wipe away the "mustache" your child gave you only to lose a nose in the process.