

Wren ★ Feathers

Cleaning and Restoring vinyl play dolls

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With the warm weather, garage sale season is upon us. And let's say you spot a fabulous doll, at a fabulous price... who's covered with filth, nail polish, ball point pen, and other mysterious stains.

Yes! You should buy her! And here's what you need to fix her up:

First, scrub the doll all over with a **washcloth using dish soap and warm water**. You may be lucky and some of the things you thought were stains will come off. If not, read on.

A little **baking soda**, sprinkled onto a damp washcloth is a great gentle abrasive for removing deep layers of accumulated grime. It can also help with mild shiny spots on a doll whose vinyl should be matte.

Shiny spots on the doll's vinyl that are not helped by baking soda can be removed with gentle rubbing with **steel wool**. Note that that will take off paint, so avoid that on the face area unless you're planning to repaint it.

Isopropyl (rubbing) alcohol is good for taking off adhesive residue (from Band-Aids, stickers, tape, etc.). In many cases it will also remove a lot of **ballpoint pen and sharpie** marks. I have never had a doll whose face paint was damaged by isopropyl alcohol, but it's good to be careful around the face just in case.

Oh dear, if you've gotten this far, you have some serious stains! Time to pull out the big guns: **nail polish remover**. This will almost definitely take off face paint, but will also remove **nail polish** and many types of other **paint** residue

Deeper stains, like marker that has been sitting on the doll for ages, or **stains caused by clothing**, can be removed with **acne cream that contains benzoyl peroxide**. Get the highest percentage of benzoyl peroxide zit cream you can find, smear it on the stain, cover it up with plastic wrap to keep it moist (it's only active when wet) and set the doll in the sun, covering her hair with a towel to prevent sun damage. You should see a noticeable improvement within 3 to 5 days, although the older and deeper the stain, the longer it will take to remove it. Wash off and **reapply the zit cream every day** until the stains are gone.

What about hair? Shampoo and condition it. Air dry. Comb out and trim if it's uneven/frizzy. Can you live with it like that? If not, can you braid it? Ponytail it? The last resort is to pull off the wig/chop off the hair and order a new wig. Lots of play dolls had low-quality hair to begin with, so you're really doing the doll a favor. Once the old hair is off, measure her head in inches and that's the wig size. For example, a doll with a 6"-6.75" head needs a wig size 6-7, although some companies may size differently, so make sure to check before ordering. The new wig can be glued on with a bit of tacky glue, or if she's small you can get a silicone BJD wig cap to hold it on, with the bonus that it's easily removable. With two of my Sashas, I've left "bristles" sticking up of their old hair and it actually holds the new wigs on nicely. ☺

