

WASHING SNEAKERS

Most shoe manufactures discourage machine washing sneakers. Detergents and the machine's agitation may damage many leathers and adhesives. But then, there are still some that can take machine washing. The key to successful sneaker cleaning is the shoe itself.

First, see if there are care instructions inside your shoe. If so, follow those instructions. If not, use a specially designated cleaning kit for athletic shoes. Kits are most effective on leather and nylon uppers, foam midsoles and liners and inserts. When in doubt, follow the kit instructions.

Here are some basic instructions for cleaning most canvas and nylon sneakers:

1. Remove the laces and inserts.
2. Rinse shoes with clean water.
3. Use a neutral cleaner and a soft brush to scrub your shoes. Do NOT use bleach, solvents, harsh chemicals or abrasives.
4. Use a white, nylon-backed scrub pad for scuff marks.
5. Rinse entire shoe well with clean water.
6. Drip dry. Stuff with absorbent white paper to keep the shape.

Additional Tips:

- Throw laces in with your regular laundry.
- Don't place in direct sunlight or use the dryer (or any other heat source) to speed the drying process.
- Don't use newspaper to stuff your shoes; it will transfer to most fabrics.
- Don't put liners back in or wear your shoes until they are completely dry.

Want an unconventional solution for cleaning canvas sneakers?

Try shaving cream. Some folks swear it as an effective cleaner for canvas athletic shoes. Either cover your shoes with the cream, leave it on until dry, then brush off with a soft, clean brush. Or cover your shoes with the cream and remove with a damp cloth, then let dry naturally. Make sure you check with your sneaker manufacturer before trying this.

Some people also polish, protect and condition their shoes on an ongoing basis. Look for paste or liquid polish, water repellents and leather lotions (for your specific type of shoe) from your shoe manufacturer.

Sometimes you don't need to clean your sneakers as much as you need to refresh them. Try placing a sheet of fabric softener in each shoe overnight or a spray fabric softener in the fabric soles to clean away odors caused by germs, mold and mildew and to keep them fresh and new smelling.