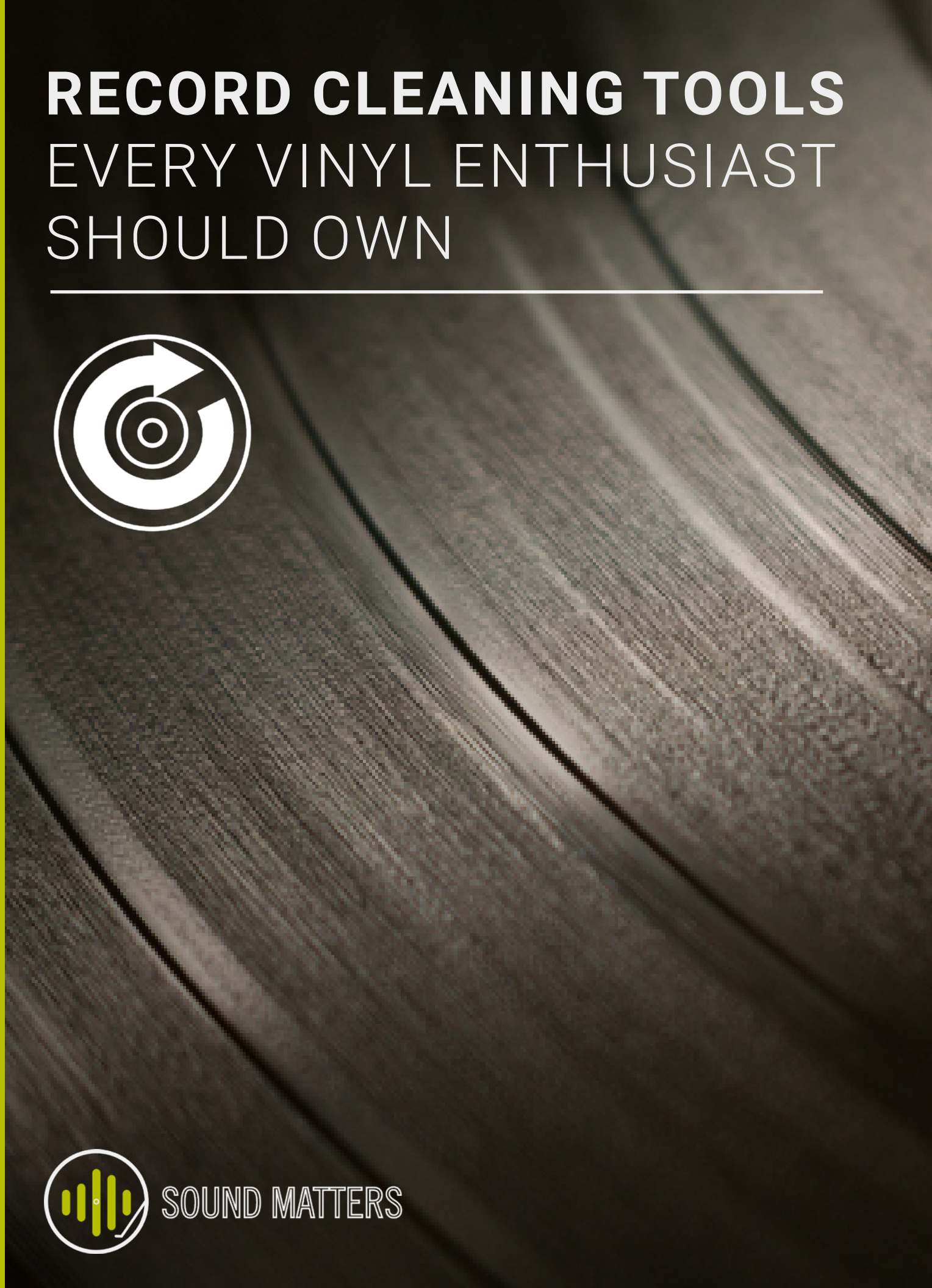
RECORD CLEANING TOOLS EVERY VINYL ENTHUSIAST SHOULD OWN



SOUND MATTERS

VOL 4: YOURSOUNDMATTERS.COM

TOP RECORD CLEANING TOOLS

Welcome to Sound Matters. We help you get the most amazing sound and experience from your vinyl records. No jargon. No snobbery. Just the best tips, tricks, and vinyl community features to enhance your love of the best music format.

Keeping your vinyl records clean is one of the most important aspects of collecting music on wax. It not only ensures that your records will sound great, but it also affects how long they will last....

...and, how long your stylus will last. Like any process in life, you'll need the right tools for the job.

Keep reading for the best kit we know for eliminating pesky pops, clicks, dust, and grime so you can get back to what matters most — enjoying the sweet, sweet sound of music on vinyl.

PLUS: *Watch out for our bonus cleaning tips at the end!*



1. AUDIO QUEST CARBON FIBER BRUSH



The humble carbon fiber brush is an essential accessory for any turntable. If you don't already own one, we recommend starting to incorporate one into your daily playback routine. The Audio Quest record brush is perhaps the best-known option on the market.

There are many others like it, but this is the one that's been a mainstay of the industry for decades. Recently, however, Audio Quest went to work in an attempt to improve their original design, and the result is a brand new design that is said to improve the conductivity of static electricity and facilitate better cleaning of micro-dirt particles through the use of smaller fibers in a greater quantity.

2. GROOVEWASHER RECORD CLEANING KIT



A carbon fiber brush will remove loose dust and help control static, but it will not remove stubborn grime, fingerprint oils, and entrenched dust.

For real deep cleaning of your records, you need the very best record cleaning fluid.

We highly-recommend GrooveWasher as our go-to record cleaning solution. When cleaning vinyl records by hand, this meticulously designed record cleaning fluid goes to work quickly on vinyl records and leaves no discernible residue behind. Unlike some record cleaners, GrooveWasher G2 fluid achieves excellent results without the use of high-alcohol content. Gentle, but highly effective.

SUBSCRIBER DISCOUNT: *As a Sound Matters reader, you can grab* **your record cleaning kit for 10% less.** *Simply use the code* **SOUNDMATTERS10** *at* groovewasher.com



4. MILTY ZERO STAT



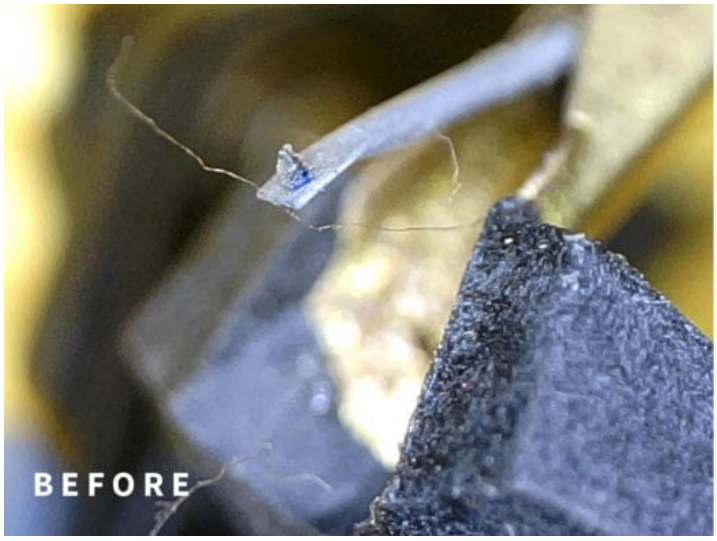
These might look like an overpriced kids toy, but it's actually a serious bit of kit. The Milty Zerostat works by releasing positive ions when you squeeze the trigger (slowly) and then negative ions when releasing the handle. The result works on the record surface to neutralize static. I know, it sounds like witchcraft, but it works. *(Check out our full review with video demonstration to see the results).*

The Zerostat is a one-time purchase that can extend the life of your records. They're well worth the investment up front – particularly if you live in a dry climate where the humidity is low.

4. STYLUS CLEANING KIT

No matter how meticulous you are with your record cleaning rituals, some dust and grime will inevitably build on the stylus and cantilever over time.

Occasional stylus cleaning using a brush and purpose made stylus cleaning solution will help to prevent further contamination across records, and promote stylus longevity.





5. PROJECT VINYL CLEANER VC-E2



Ok, so record cleaning machines are expensive, there are no two ways about it. But if you're cleaning records in bulk, they're indispensable.

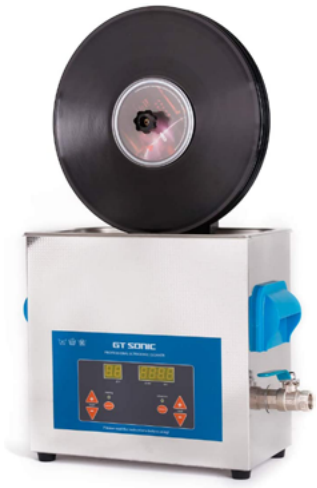
Cleaning vinyl records by hand is effective, but also time-consuming – especially if the record is very dirty and requires multiple cleans to clear the gunk fully. If you have an extensive record collection, or just want to save time, investing up front in a record cleaning machine is well worth the expense.

Devices like the Vinyl Cleanaaer VC-E from ProJect are vacuum-based, which essentially sucks up the cleaning solution, taking away dirt and grime in the process.

6. ULTRASONIC CLEANER





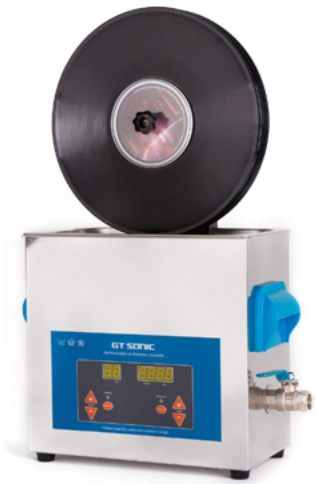


A highly effective alternative to vacuum-based cleaners is an ultrasonic record cleaner. These devices aggravate a bath of distilled water using ultra-high frequency sound to produce lots of tiny cavitation bubbles, which go to work gently cleaning deep in the grooves.

Many vinyl record enthusiasts swear by this technique as one of the best ways to clean vinyl. Once again, like vacuum record cleaners, the downside is the expense; some purpose-built ultrasonic record cleaners could set you back nearly $5000.

Thankfully, in recent years, there's been an attempt by many manufacturers to bring the cost down and make ultrasonic record cleaning more accessible.

The most affordable route into Ultrasonic cleaning is to pick up a standard 6 Liter ultrasonic tank for a few hundred dollars. Some manufacturers have started shipping these with adaptors that spin multiple records at once. It's not pretty, but it's the lowest bar of entry to cavitation record cleaning.



The Degritter all-in-one ultrasonic machine is by far the best record cleaning machine on the market I've tested for both cleaning results and ease of use. The downside is that it will set you back over $3000.



A middle ground is to consider a more affordable all-in-one ultrasonic record cleaning machine, such as the HumminGuru, which is priced at a much more accessible price of $499.

The results are good, although to acheive the same or similar results to the Degritter, you may need to do more pre-cleaning of the record first.

Much of it depends on the record condition, but by pre-cleaning your records first with something like GrooveWasher's G2 cleaning fluid, and then following it up with a cylce in the HumminGuru, I've managed to get some very impressive results on many used record.



7. SPIN CLEAN

Need to clean a lot of records but can't afford a fancy machine? The Spin Clean record washer is a great affordable option for batch cleaning records on a budget.

The unit requires no power; simply fill the record bath with distilled water, and apply the supplied alcohol-free record cleaning solution directly onto the pads.

Three spins clockwise and then counter-clockwise is enough to allow the pads to do the heavy lifting, draining dirt and dust to the bottom of the distilled water bath.



8. A MECHANICAL RECORD CLEANING BRUSH



Microfiber towels are the standard go-to material for cleaning records by hand. They're a popular choice as they're soft and very absorbent.

When using a record cleaner to clean vinyl by hand, you need a highly absorbent material to help take away the contaminated cleaning fluid.

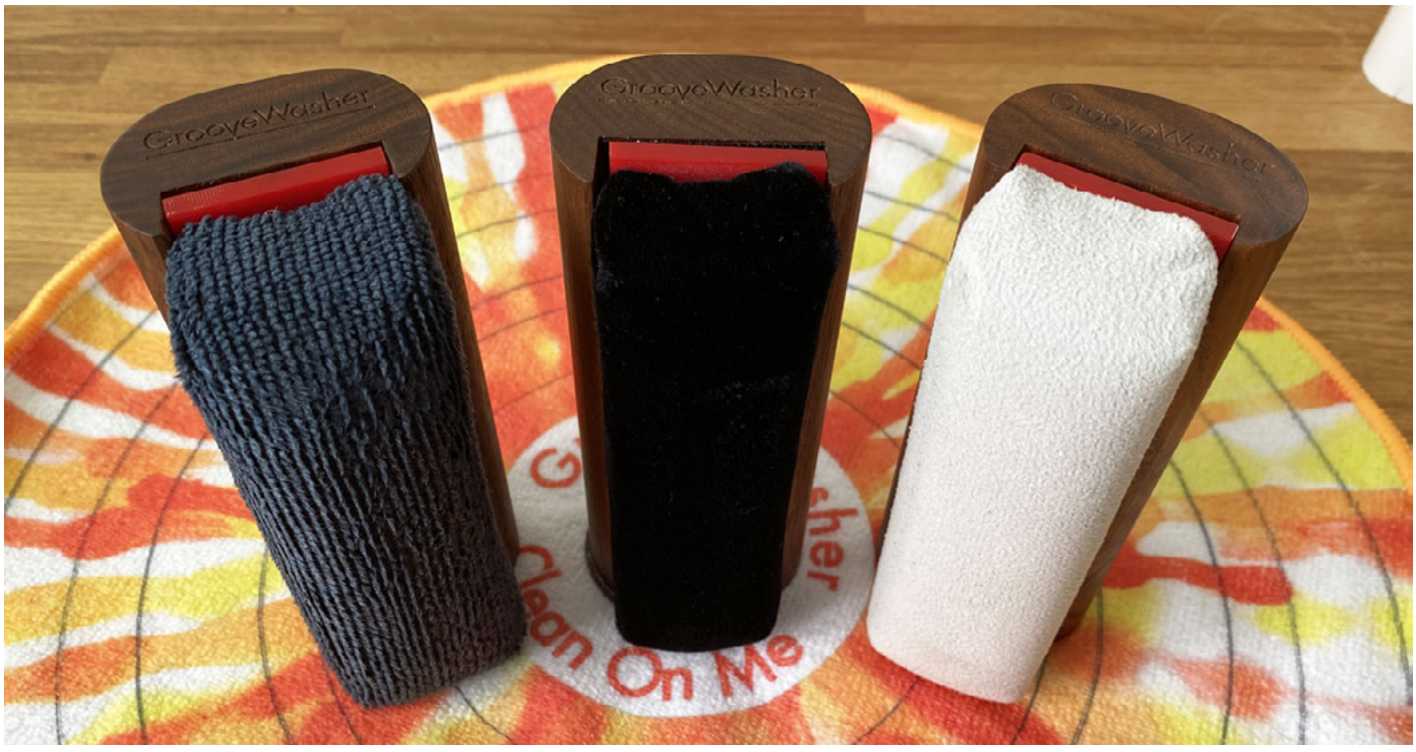
Active surfactant and emulsifiers in your record cleaning fluid help to dissolve fingerprints and hold the grime in suspension. When you apply the pad, you're aiming to take away as much of the contaminated fluid as possible.

That said, some stubborn dirt can benefit from a more mechanical cleaning process, and by this I mean a pad that is designed to (gently) scrub the record grooves.

To do this, we need a soft pad with fibers capable of getting into the groove as we clean the record in a circular motion.

The aptly named Black Magic Cleaning Pad is much finer than a standard microfiber pad, allowing the very soft, but firm fibers to dig deep for dust and grime.

When applying this pad, you can feel the fibers lock into the record groove, which is perfect for spot cleaning or cleaning very dirty vintage vinyl by hand.



9. NEW INNER-SLEEVES

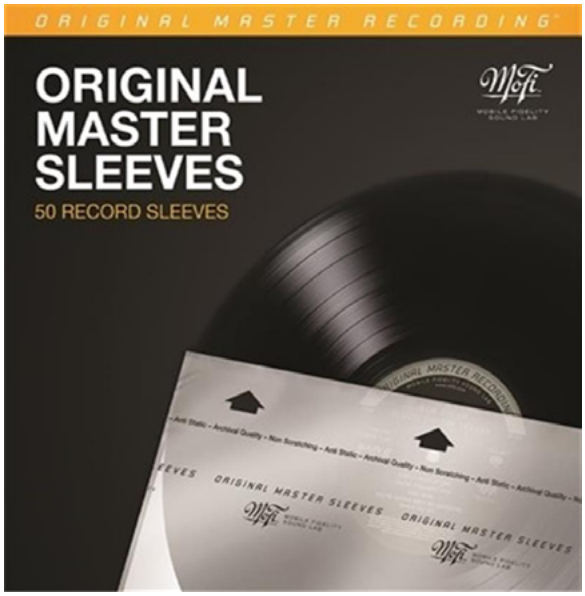
Ok, so technically not a cleaning tool, but this step is essential. Once you're finished cleaning and the record is dry, place the record in a new sleeve.

This step is particularly important if you're cleaning used records, as you don't want to recontaminate your freshly cleaned record with dirt from an old sleeve. I highly recommend the Vinyl Storage Solutions (VSS) Sleeves.

They make a version of the popular original MoFi Sleeves that is twice as thick, giving them a more premium feel.

Note: You can pick some up from vinylstoragesolutions.ca for 10% less by using the code SOUNDMATTERS10





BONUS DISCOUNT



As a Sound Matters reader, you can grab your record cleaning kit for 10% less. Simply use the code **SOUNDMATTERS10** at groovewasher.com

PRODUCT LINKS:

Amazon:

Audio Quest Record Brush

GrooveWasher Cleaning Kit

Stylus Cleaning kit

ProJect Record Cleaner HumminGuru

Ultrasonic Cleaning Kit

Spin Clean Record Washer

New Record Sleeves

Milty Zero Stat

Turntable Lab & Direct:

Audio Quest Record Brush

GrooveWasher Cleaning Kit

Stylus Cleaning kit

ProJect Record Cleaning Machine

HumminGuru Ultrasonic

Spin Clean Record Washer

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NEXT PAGE: FURTHER PRO-TIPS FOR BETTER CLEANING RESULTS

TIP 1: CLEAN YOUR MICROFIBER CLOTH OR REPLACE IT REGULARLY

When cleaning vinyl by hand, it's important to keep your microfiber cloth clean to avoid spreading dirt from one record to another. You can use distilled water and a little dish detergent to gently clean microfiber cloths or a microfiber cleaning pad, such as the GrooveWasher option mentioned in this article. Thoroughly rinse the pad or cloth, followed by squeezing it to remove moisture. Allow to air-dry overnight. Avoid putting microfiber cloths in the washing machine if you can, as this may pick up unwanted lint, which could contaminate—or even damage—your records.

TIP 2: AVOID USING TAP WATER, DISH SOAP OR OTHER HOUSEHOLD CLEANERS SUCH AS WINDEX.

Tap water should be avoided at all costs – particularly if you live in a hard water area. The reason is, regular tap water contains impurities, such as mineral deposits, which can contaminate and damage records.
As for dish soap and household cleaners, it's safer to use a purpose-made record cleaning fluid than other cleaners, which may contain damaging ingredients.



TIP 3: AVOID “ALTERNATIVE” CLEANING METHODS, SUCH AS WOOD GLUE

The wood glue vinyl cleaning method is popular among some collectors, and while it’s ultimately each to their own when it comes to record cleaning methods, it’s not an approach we advocate at Sound Matters.

The process involves spreading a solid layer of wood glue over the record surface (avoiding the label). When left to dry overnight, the glue dries clear – picking up dirt and dust deep inside the grooves. The idea is, all the grime is removed when peeling back the glue.

I wouldn’t like to take the risk on a rare or expensive record; what if the glue doesn’t peel off in one piece!? Not to mention the risk of residue contaminating your records and stylus. It’s also very time-consuming, and at one side per night, it would take you a long time to complete your entire collection. Why take the risk when record cleaning solutions are relatively inexpensive?

TIP 4: AVOID CLEANING FLUIDS WITH HIGH AMOUNTS OF ISOPROPYL ALCOHOL

There is much debate in the audio industry as to whether or not it’s safe to use alcohol when cleaning vinyl.

Firstly, you should NEVER use isopropyl alcohol on shellac records as it will dissolve the surface. But also on modern PVC vinyl, it is thought by many to cause the leaching of plasticizers, making them brittle and subject to excess wear.

Many record cleaners contain some isopropyl alcohol as part of the mix, but as a rule, we recommend steering clear of any fluid that contains a high amount of alcohol. If you can smell alcohol in your record cleaner, chances are, it’s using far too much. Our motto is: why use a sledge hammer to kill a fly.



TIP 5: ALLOW RECORD CLEANING FLUID TO SIT

When cleaning records manually by hand, it can be tempting to spread the fluid around and immediately wipe it off. While this may be enough for records that are in pretty good shape, it’s unlikely to work well on very dirty old records.

You can often improve the results by allowing the fluid to sit on the record surface for a long time before mopping it up. This allows the emulsifiers and surfactants present in record cleaning fluids like GrooveWasher more time to work on unwanted dust, dirt, and grime. With more time to work, the grime can be held in suspension by the fluid before being taken away by your cleaning pad.



TIP 6: PRE-CLEAN RECORDS BEFORE USING AN ULTRASONIC

While ultrasonic record cleaning is extremely powerful and effective, the results often improve on very dirty records if you pre-clean them either by hand or using a record cleaning machine.

Firstly, this can help soak a dirty record and loosen up all the dust and grime, allowing the ultrasonic cavitation more chance to do the heavy lifting and effectively remove the unwanted contaminants.

Secondly, ultrasonic record cleaning is less effective with aspects such as fingerprints, where using a cleaning pad can often be more effective in removing this kind of contamination.

As mentioned earlier in this guide, I've had great results with the very affordable HumminGuru ultrasonic when pre-cleaning by hand before allowing the HumminGuru to finish off and do the heavy lifting/final rinsing.



THE END

We hope you found this guide helpful. For more tips and tricks on achieving the best possible listening experience from your records, visit yoursoundmatters.com

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