

How to brush vacuum an object

Is it dirt or data?

Dust is abrasive, traps moisture and harbours insects, causing damage to objects. Mould spores and dust mites are also harmful to humans.

Removing dust and dirt by brush vacuuming (surface cleaning) can be very beneficial for many material types. However, removing dust and residues from objects should be carefully considered as they may provide clues about where and how an object was made, even who used it. Before you surface clean an object, ask yourself if the dirt is actually an important part of the item's history. Do not brush vacuum if the surface of an object will be damaged, eg flaking paint.

You will need

- vacuum cleaner preferably with a HEPA filter (traps fine particles)
- soft natural-bristle brush or brushes
- piece of nylon netting or tulle
- rubber band
- 20–30 cm of soft plastic tubing (1 cm diameter)
- masking tape



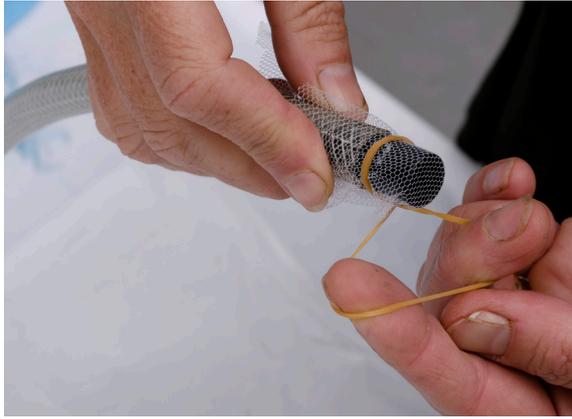
(Top) Materials for brush vacuuming. (Bottom) Small attachments for cleaning computer keyboards can be bought for vacuum cleaners.



1&2. The suction from the nozzle of a vacuum cleaner is too strong to place near an item so it needs to be reduced. To do this, attach plastic tubing to the nozzle using masking tape.



2.



3. Secure the netting over the plastic tube with a rubber band. This will stop the object or any decorative elements from being sucked inside the vacuum nozzle.



4. Use a soft natural-bristle brush to push the dirt, lint or dust towards the suction of the vacuum. Do not place the vacuum nozzle on the surface of the object itself.

You may need to use a clean, smooth-surfaced, heavy weight to help hold a textile in position.



5. If the object has decorative elements such as beading or fringing or is large, such as a bedspread, you can use a screen. This will allow you to vacuum the surface without detaching the decorations or sucking up the fabric into the nozzle.

You can make a screen from clean flyscreen material. Stitch cotton tape around the edges to prevent the screen from catching on the object.



6. Although particularly suited to textiles, brush vacuuming can be carried out on many objects using the same basic techniques.