

How can I clean my crown and sash?

Crown - Your crown is, essentially, jewelry. You'll want to clean it in a similar fashion. A great item to keep in your crown case is a jewelry cleaning cloth. One side cleans, the other polishes to quickly bring back that just-crowned sparkle. Some queens swear by glass cleaner, aka Windex, or gentle toothpaste applied with a soft toothbrush. Don't spray the glass cleaner directly on your crown. Dip the brush in the cleaner, scrub gently and wipe off with a lint-free cloth. A jewelry cleaning kit also works and includes the solution and a brush. Always spot test by applying to a single stone at the base first, where it's not as noticeable. You'll want to make sure the product you're using doesn't etch the stones. We don't really recommend using toothpaste, because you'll have to rinse it off and you don't want water to get trapped underneath the stones. Water may also leave spots on the metal. If you want a professional job, many jewelers offer steam cleaning.

Here are some tips to keep the crown clean to start with.

- Always finish your hair before putting on your crown.
- Never spray your hair with your crown on. Never handle your crown with lotion on your hands. Hairspray and lotion will leave a dulling film on the stones.
- When not wearing your crown, store it in an airtight container to prevent tarnishing. A Ziploc-type bag does the trick. You can even throw in some of those anti-tarnish paper strips that come with new jewelry.

Sash – Local sash: Use a plastic storage tub with some water and one cup of Oxi-Clean. Let it sit for an hour or two, then rinse it and put it on a hanger to dry in your bathroom. You will likely see it "whitened" right away and it will look brand new the next time you wear it. If there are spots that are harder to remove remember to be very gentle with your sash. Often, your sash will be made of a delicate material, so you do not want to scrub too hard and damage the fabric. Spend some time and work slowly to ensure your sash stays in pristine condition.

State sash with rhinestones: When cleaning a sash with rhinestones (state titleholders), a bit more time and effort are needed. The Sash Company recommends using Shout, or a bleach pen if the sash is white, in order to remove any stains. Once you apply the solution, use a baby wipe to rub out the stain. If the stain isn't too dark, you can try using just a baby wipe to remove it. Spot treatments with Oxi-Clean work really well for white sashes to take out stains or areas of the sash that have started to look dirty.

Ironing your pageant sash

If necessary, when the pageant sash dries from cleaning it, you can iron it out, but I recommend using the iron on cool or a very low heat setting so that you don't destroy any of the details on the sash. Put a clean sheet over the ironing board so that you don't pick up any dirt or other stains that you might not realize are already present on the ironing board. Put the sheet over the board, check your iron for any stains or problems that might do further damage to your sash, and proceed carefully. Don't be distracted when you're working on this task since sashes

can be stained, ripped or burned easily. Some people get their sashes dry cleaned, but it is not recommended.

Cleaning your sash on the go

Tackling any spots on your sash as soon as they happen is the best way to prevent any lasting stains from forming. To clean your sash on the go, place a baby wipe in a small ziplock bag and take it with you on appearances. This way, you can remove any spots that appear on your sash promptly. Both baby wipes and Shout Wipe and Go packets are good to keep in your purse or crown box when you are out making appearances. You never know when you may spill your drink or a child with sticky fingers gives you a hug, so it is better to be prepared than walk around with a dirty sash! Keep a spot-treatment pen with you in your crown box so that you can quickly address sudden stains.

If you're able to carefully treat the stain and remove as much as possible early on, it will be easier when you do your full cleaning. As a titleholder, you're not only representing your community, but you're also representing your system. It's important to make sure your sash is always appearance ready. With these tips from The Sash Company, you can keep your sash clean at home and on the go!