Cleaning and Caring for Modern Lamps

Wick

- Cleaning is recommended every 10-15 hours, which amounts to every fill of fuel
- Use the provided wick cleaner to keep the top of the wick clean from excess carbon build-up

Mantle

- If it is covered with carbon or soot, it may be removed by turning the flame low and allowing the soot to slowly burn off
- This operation may be hastened by lightly sprinkling the mantle with table salt and alternately turn the flame up and down
- An old remedy was to sprinkle salt down the chimney – don't do this! It will cause the burner to corrode

Burner, Flame Spreader, Wick Raiser, Inner Wick Tube, Outer Wick Tube

- It is necessary that these parts be kept clean and free from dirt; soak in soap and water
- If the flame spreader or inner/outer wick tube become dirty or clogged, the airflow will be uneven and will affect the flame
    - Blow out any carbon particles; if a scale of carbon has built up, carefully brush with an old toothbrush
- If the upper or screen part of the flame spreader should become dented, it must be replaced buy a new one as a dented one will cause a streaky flame
- If the wick raiser becomes dented, it may become difficult to raise and lower the wick tube

Chimney

- Use soap (or a mild detergent) and warm water or newspaper
- Make sure chimney is thoroughly dried before fitting onto lamp—damp chimneys break more easily

Cleaning and Restoring Old/Antique Lamps

Wicks

- Wicks in lamps that have not been used for long periods of time will often become stuck in the burner and the wick raiser knob cannot be moved. It is important to not force the wick too hard, or the burner may become damaged and/or ruined.
- First, try using WD-40 (or similar penetrating oil or paint thinner) to try to loosen the gears.
- If the knob still won't turn and the wick won't move, try soaking the entire burner and wick in fresh kerosene to loosen the wick, wick raiser, and knob. If the burner is stuck in the font, turn the lamp upside down and stick the burner in kerosene.
    - Check the burner periodically and try to remove the wick; if there is resistance, stop and let it continue to soak
    - It could take up to a couple of days to loosen enough to get the wick out—patience is important!
    - If the wick still cannot be removed, it may need to be cut out to avoid damage to the gears in the burner.

Flame Spreaders, Wick Raisers, Outer Wick Tubes

- Metal parts may become corroded or stuck together by the leftover residue of old kerosene, making them very difficult to be removed without damage.
- First, try WD-40, and even soak the parts in WD-40 or Liquid Wrench for as long as 24 hours.
- If WD-40 does not work for metal parts (stuck flame spreader, stuck outer wick tube, etc.), use a hair dryer to heat up and help soften the parts; be careful and wear gloves heat parts evenly
    - If a burner is stuck in a glass font, be careful! Heat all parts evenly, as glass will crack or break when exposed to temperature changes
- Do not pry against the center draft tube—this may damage the burner and prevent it from functioning properly.
- On center-draft burners, a piece of doweling can be inserted in the bottom of the center draft tube to gently push the flame spreader out. This will only work for center-draft burners because the flame spreader must be removed from the top of side-draft burners.

Brass, Nickel-Plated Lamps and Burners

- Lamps made with a bronze or brass plating finish that is easily removed by cleaning, so be careful.
- First try using soap and water for a mild washing.
- To remove kerosene residue, many household cleaning agents like Formula 409, CLR, Oil Eater, or Desolv-it will work well.
- Using a metal polish with a conditioner like Wenol, Simichrome, Blue Magic Metal Polish, or Wright's Brass Polish after cleaning will prevent future tarnishing.

For badly tarnished brass or burners, a cleaning with a mild citrus solution (a packet of unsweetened Lemon Kool-Aid to 1 quart hot water) or undiluted distilled white vinegar will quickly remove discoloration.

- Submerge the entire part; be careful to limit exposure to 10-15 minutes at a time otherwise it can turn a pink or copper color.
- If lacquer is pitting or coming off (common with lamps over 20 years old), the lacquer can be removed with a stripper that can easily be found at Lowes or Home Depot. This will affect the brass finish, so a specialist who does that type of work will have to repolish the lamp.

For nickel-plating, use a spray type oven cleaner or also the citrus solution. (Very badly pitted or worn plating may not respond and may remain dull.)

- Spray on, leave in warm 200°F oven for 5-10 minutes and rinse thoroughly, or do outside on a warm day.
- Follow with a polish to shine.

Glass Lamps

- Glass is sensitive to temperature changes and can crack if the temperature changes too quickly. Be careful and watch your temperature when washing glass lamps, especially older lamps. Make sure your lamp and water are both at or around room temperature.
- If the lamp is simply dirty, you can use a general household cleaner like Windex.
- If the lamp has a light kerosene residue, some mild soap and water may work. However, if the kerosene is very old and sticky, try adding a few ounces of ammonia and lukewarm water in addition to the soap.
- Be careful with lamps that have a painted finish or metal components, as these may be ruined with some types of cleaners.
    - Try cleaning just a small, inconspicuous spot first and see what happens.
    - If in doubt contact a specialist for assistance.
- If the lamp has a metal connector or metal pedestal or base, do not soak the lamp for too long, as this may loosen the glue that holds the lamp together.