

How to get chewing gum out of clothes

From the sweeties.net wiki

Chewing gum clings to fabric because of what it is made of: long, stretchy polymers that stick to oily surfaces and stretch rather than break when you pull them. So pulling or rubbing only spreads it. The trick is to change its state.

Method 1: freeze it (the best one)

Cold makes gum hard and brittle, so instead of stretching it snaps.

1. Rub the gum with an ice cube until it is completely hard. You can hold a second ice cube against the back of the fabric to speed it up.
2. Or put the garment in a plastic bag in the freezer for a few hours. Fold it so the gum is on the outside and most exposed.
3. As soon as the gum is rock hard, scrape it off with a spoon, a blunt knife or a paint scraper. Work gently, so you do not damage the fabric.
4. Pick off any small bits left behind. On knitted or embroidered fabric, take care not to catch the threads.
5. Wash the garment as normal to deal with any mark.

Method 2: warm it

If freezing has not worked, gentle heat can soften gum enough to peel away.

- **Hairdryer:** warm the gum with a hairdryer until it is almost melting, then peel it off. Wear gloves or cover your hand with a plastic bag, as gum can get hot.
- **Iron:** put a piece of clean cardboard on the ironing board and lay the garment on it, gum side down. Iron the back of the fabric on a medium heat. As the gum softens, it should stick to the cardboard, and you can peel the garment away. Too hot and the gum melts into a mess; too cool and nothing happens.

Always check the care label first and do not use heat on fabrics that cannot take it.

Things to avoid

- Do not rub the gum: it pushes it deeper into the weave.
- Do not wash or tumble dry the garment with the gum still on: heat and tumbling spread it and can transfer it to other clothes.

Why gum is so stubborn

The polymers in gum base repel water but are attracted to oils, which is why gum bonds so well to skin, hair, shoe soles and pavements. Removing it from streets takes steam jets and scrapers: see [why gum is so hard to get off pavements](#). For gum in hair, which needs a gentler approach, see [how to get chewing gum out of hair](#).

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