

The Use of Disinfectant Wipes to Clean Whiteboards in Hospitals

By: Doug Creed, Manufacturer of custom printed whiteboards

www.murerase.com

Our company manufactures many custom printed whiteboards for use in hospitals as patient communication boards and tracking boards for ER, ICU, surgeries and various other applications. Although the boards are made for use with dry erase markers and dry erase cleaners, we get boards back that have been ruined as a result of practices that are not suitable for them. The issues are:

- What kind of markerboard will last in a heavy use environment?
- When do dry erase boards need cleaned?
- What kind of cleaners will work?
- What about disinfectant wipes?
- What actually happens to ruin whiteboards?

What kind of dry erase board will last in a heavy use environment?

All dry erase boards are not created equal. There are different types of dry erase surfaces such as melamine, painted surfaces and films of many types. It would take more space that is allotted here to define and evaluate all of them. The key for the consumer of boards that will be used heavily such as in a hospital, school or industry is to buy a whiteboard that is guaranteed by the manufacturer against ghosting and loss of the print image.

When do dry erase boards need cleaned?

Every type of whiteboard will need to be cleaned if the dry erase ink has been left on the board for more than a day or so. In addition, if a permanent marker (ie a Sharpie) is used on any dry erase board, the only way to get it off is with a cleaner. A trick to remove a small area of permanent marker is to completely blot the mark out with a dry erase pen. The solvent in the dry erase ink will remove the permanent marker ink. As soon as the dry erase ink dries, erase the whole mess. Some dry erase surfaces will permanently stain when marked with permanent ink. Stay away from them because sooner or later someone will use a Sharpie on the dry erase board. Another reason to use a cleaner is if someone tried to erase dry erase ink before it was dry. It smears and does not come clean without a suitable dry erase cleaner.

What kind of cleaners will work?

There are many cleaners that are made expressly for use on dry erase surfaces with dry erase markers. Most of them work very well, although some will leave a residue that makes the next erasing smear ink. If you get cleaner from the board manufacturer, it should be a good solution. We either supply cleaner or, on our whiteboards, we recommend isopropyl alcohol. If the alcohol you purchase is 90%, it can be cut by 50% with potable water. Actually, alcohol right out of the bottle will work with our boards, but be sure to check with the whiteboard manufacturer because some boards don't like alcohol at all. Alcohol out of the bottle will take permanent marker off our dry erase board surface and leave no residue. Alcohol wipes available in any drugstore will work equally well.

What about disinfectant wipes?

Since we supply whiteboards to many hospital applications, we have become familiar with a non-regulation dry erase cleaner – disinfectant wipes. Everything from Sani-Cloth, Clorox wipes, Huggies wipes and many others are handy and commonly used in medical environments. They clean dry erase very well, and in some cases do a good job with permanent markers as well. There are, however, a couple problems. Some whiteboard finishes will be rapidly eroded and lose their ability to function as a dry erase surface when disinfectant wipes are used on them. The other problem is that some of the wipes have ingredients that suds or foam when applied. This leaves a residue on the surface of the dry erase board. When the next person writes on the board and tries to erase, the ink smears all over the board in the residue and looks like the whiteboard is no longer functioning as a dry erase surface. The real trouble begins at this point.

What actually happens to ruin the boards?

100% of the boards that we get back as failed have two things in common. First, they have permanent marker ink on them. Second, they are covered with scratches. When the ink smeared and couldn't be removed someone used a 3M pad or an abrasive cleaner such as Comet or Soft Scrub. By the time we get them, the finish is off completely in the heavy use areas.

The solution is to keep dry erase pens available or give one to anyone who is expected to use the boards and make them hand over the Sharpies. Secondly, use a manufacturer supplied cleaner or isopropyl alcohol (check with the whiteboard manufacturer) if it is approved. If you need cleaner or want to send a problem board in for an examination, email me with your request.

www.murerase.com
dcreed@digistone.com

