

Glossary of Chemical Terms

TERM	DEFINITION
ACID	A water substance with pH less than 7 that reacts with and neutralizes an alkali.
ACRYLIC	Type of polymer popular for floor finishes. Also, a manmade synthetic fiber used in spun yarn to resemble wool in carpet.
AEROSOL	An extremely fine mist or fog consisting of solid or liquid particles suspended in air. Also, term used for products that mechanically produce such a mist.
ALKALI	A chemical substance with pH greater than 7 that reacts with and neutralizes an acid. Also called alkaline or base.
ALL PURPOSE CLEANER	A powder or liquid detergent suitable for both general house cleaning duties and laundry. These products may not be as effective for specific cleaning jobs as products specially formulated for the task.
ANTIBACTERIAL	Counteracting bacteria.
ANTIMICROBIAL	Agent that inhibits or destroys bacteria, fungi, protozoa or viruses that are pathogenic.
ANTISEPTIC	A chemical agent that prevents or inhibits the growth of microorganism microbes, particularly on the skin.
BACTERIA	Single cell microorganisms not containing chlorophyll. Germs.
BACTERICIDE	A chemical agent that destroys bacteria.
BACTERIOSTAT	A chemical agent that prevents bacteria from multiplying and growing (doesn't kill).
BIODEGRADABLE	Capability of organic matter to be decomposed by biological processes.
BLEACH	A product that cleans, whitens, removes stains and brightens fabrics. It also removes stains on some hard surfaces.
BRIGHTENERS	Optical or fluorescent enhancers found in carpet cleaning products and fabric cleaners.
BROAD SPECTRUM	Killing a wide variety of Gram — (Negative) and Gram + (Positive) organisms.
CAUSTIC	Strong base (alkaline) substance which irritates the skin. Corrosive. When the term is used alone it usually refers to caustic soda (sodium hydroxide), which is used in manufacturing hard soap. It also refers to caustic potash (potassium hydroxide), which is used in manufacturing soft soap.
CHLORINE	Powerful oxidizing agent sometimes used as a germicide.
CHLORINE BLEACH	A group of strong oxidizing agents commonly sold in an approximately 5% solution of sodium hypochlorite. As a laundry additive, liquid chlorine removes stains, aids in soil removal, whitens, disinfects, and deodorizes. Dry forms of chlorine bleach are frequently used in cleansers and automatic dishwasher detergents. Bleach should not be used with silk, woolens, dyes sensitive to hypochlorite, and on certain stains such as rust (which it can set). Chlorine bleach deactivates enzymes in laundry cleaners.
CIDAL OR "CIDE"	Generally refers to agents with the ability to kill micro-organisms.
CONCENTRATE	The undiluted form of a dilutable cleaning product.
CONTAMINATION	Entry of undesirable organisms into some material or object.
CORROSION	Process of gradual eating away by chemical action.
CROSS-CONTAMINATION	The process of transferring bacteria from one person or an object to another person or object. Similar term to cross-infection.
DEFOAMER	Substance used to reduce or eliminate foam.
DEGREASER	A product specifically formulated to remove grease, oil and greasy soils.
DEODORANT	A product for destroying, masking or eliminating offensive odors.

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DETERGENT	Synthetic cleaning agent (other than soap) which is useful in physical removal of soils.
DISINFECTANT	An agent that destroys harmful bacteria and/or viruses on inanimate surfaces (except spores). Most common types include Quaternary Ammonium Compounds, Phenolic Compounds, Pine Oil (at least 70%). Products making disinfectant claims must be registered with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and state it on the label with a registered EPA number.
DRAIN CLEANER	A chemically strong product formulated to clean plugs of solid grease and other varied materials embedded in drains.
DUSTING PRODUCT (FURNITURE)	An aerosol or pump spray that dispenses ingredients in a fine spray onto surface of dusting cloth. Some cloths come already impregnated with active ingredients. These products attract, pick up and retain light dust and soil.
EMULSION	A dispersion of small oil particles in a solution.
ENZYME	Proteins produced by living organisms that function as a biochemical catalyst.
E.P.A.	Environmental Protection Agency of the United States Government. Has responsibility to regulate the environment.
FLOOR FINISH	The top layer of protective floor coatings.
FOAM	A mass of bubbles formed on liquids by agitation.
FUNGICIDE	A chemical agent that destroys fungi.
FURNITURE CLEANER/POLISH	A liquid, paste or aerosol spray designed to remove dust and stains from wood surfaces, confer shine and protection against water spots, and is formulated to reduce wax buildup with continued use.
GERMICIDE	Any substance that kills germs. A disinfectant.
GROUT	Matrix between ceramic tile on walls and floors.
HAND CLEANSER	A cleaner designed to clean hands with an emphasis on removing oils, grease and other occupational soils.
HARD WATER	Water containing soluble salts of calcium and magnesium, and sometimes iron.
HAZARDOUS MATERIAL	Any substance having the properties capable of producing adverse effects on the health or safety of people.
HOSPITAL-TYPE DISINFECTANT	Kills most germs due to a special combination of disinfectant ingredients. More terminology than fact.
HYDROCHLORIC ACID (HCL)	Also known as muriatic acid. Used in toilet bowl cleaners in varying dilutions. Hydrogen Chloride.
LIME	An insoluble mineral deposit found in water.
LINOLEUM	A flooring material composed of binders, oxidized oil and resinous material that is mixed with ground cork or wood flour and pigment. The composition is applied to a backing of felt, fabric or burlap.
MILDEW	A growth, usually white, produced by a fungus.
MILK STONE	Calcium deposits on dairy or ice cream equipment.
MOLD	A woolly growth, produced by a fungus.
MURIATIC	Commercial name given to hydrochloric acid.
NEUTRAL CLEANER	Non-alkaline, non-acid cleaner. The pH of mild neutral cleaners may be as high as 10 and not contain harsh alkalis.
NEUTRALIZER	Chemical to change the pH of a surface so that residues will not interfere with floor coating adhesion.

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NON-CHLORINE BLEACH	A laundry product containing peroxygen compounds, which release active oxygen in wash water. This type product produces gentler bleaching action than chlorine bleach.
OPTICAL BRIGHTNER	Substance that makes color appear brighter in the presence of sunlight and ultraviolet light.
ORGANISM	Any individual animal, plant or bacterium.
OVEN CLEANER	Usually a liquid in an aerosol container or pump-actuated bottle. To clean a cold oven a strong chemical is necessary. Usually the product is thick or foamy to promote clinging to vertical surfaces.
OXIDATION	To combine with oxygen. Slow oxidation is typified by the rusting of a metal.
PATHOGEN	Any disease-producing organism.
PATHOGENIC	Disease-producing.
PESTICIDE	Agent which prevents, repels, destroys or mitigates pests. Types include insecticides, disinfectants and sanitizers, rodenticides, and herbicides.
PH	A simple chemical scale which expresses the degree of acidity or alkalinity of a solution. The pH scale runs from 0 to 14. Seven is the neutral point. Numbers below 7 indicate acidity, with 0 being 10 times more acidic than 1, 1 being 10 times more acidic than 2, etc. Zero-3 is strongly acidic, 4-6 moderately acidic. Above 7 is the alkaline side. Eight-10 is moderately alkaline, 11-14 is strongly alkaline. Alkalinity is 10 times greater at each full number rise along the scale.
PHOSPHORIC ACID	The most common acid based on phosphorus sometimes called orthophosphoric acid. Used as a mild bowl acid and in formulations of light-duty detergents.
PINE OIL	An oil processed from the gum of pine trees. Used in hard surface cleaning and disinfecting, and distinguished by a characteristic aroma. As a disinfectant it is inactive against staphylococci.
PINE OIL CLEANER	A liquid hard-surface cleaner containing detergents and pine oil. Used to dissolve oil, fatty acids, paints and tars while disinfecting and sanitizing, and deodorizing with a pine scent.
PORCELAIN ENAMEL	A coating of ceramic-type material that is fired or fused to a steel base and used in sinks, bathtubs, etc. This differs from the vitreous china used in toilets.
PRECAUTIONARY STATEMENT	Warnings on product labels to alert users to potential harmful hazards associated with using the product.
PRE-SOAK	A soaking operation, to remove stains, that precedes the regular laundering process.
PRE-SPOT	Removal of stains before more extensive carpet cleaning.
PROPELLANT	An agent used to expel contents from an aerosol under pressure.
QUATERNARY AMMONIUM COMPOUNDS	A class of chemicals used as disinfectant, antistat and softening agents (Quats).
REFINISHING	To apply a new coat of wax or floor finish to a floor.
RESILIENT TILE	Tile that will withstand shock without permanent damage; includes rubber, cork, asphalt, linoleum, vinyl, vinyl asbestos. This tile will give under impact and certain loads, and then return to its original form after the load is removed.
RINSE AGENT	A wetting agent used in the last rinse during dishwashing to improve the draining of the water from dishes and utensils.
RINSE AIDS	Surfactants that aid in the rinsing property of water by lowering its surface tension.
SANITIZER	An agent that reduces the number of bacteria to a safe level, but does not completely eliminate them, as judged by public health requirements. Usually in foodservice

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	areas.
SAPONIFICATION	The process of converting a fat into soap by treating it with an alkali. Also, the process used by some cleaners to remove grease and oil.
SCALE	Calcium or mineral deposits in steam boilers and in steam and water pipes.
SEALER	A coating designed to penetrate and provide the initial protection to a floor surface by filling the tiny holes. Also, a product which prevents color bleeding.
SOAP	A natural cleaning agent produced by the reaction of a fat or oil and an alkali.
SODIUM HYPOCHLORITE	Bleaching and disinfecting agent.
SPORE	A special hard, shell-like cell structure of a rod-shaped bacteria which has an inactive form, and is the most resistant of all living things to heat, chemicals and drying. Can only be destroyed by sterilization.
SPOTTER	A carpet stain remover.
SPRAY BUFF	An intermediate floor care procedure that cleans, removes black marks and shines the wear areas of a floor. Utilizes a sprayed solution, a floor machine and a synthetic floor pad.
STERILIZATION	The process of killing all forms of microbial life, including vegetative bacteria, fungi, viruses and spores.
STRIPPER	Specially formulated detergent that breaks the bond of floor wax and finish when used as directed, without damaging flooring material.
SURFACTANT	Surface-active agent that increases the emulsifying, foaming, dispersing, spreading and wetting properties of a product.
TERRAZZO	A non-resilient floor material composed of marble and Portland cement.
USE-DILUTION	The final concentration at which a product is used.
VIRUCIDE	A chemical agent that kills viruses.
WAREWASHING	Washing of dishes, utensils, glassware, pots, pans, etc. in the institutional market.
WATER CONDITIONER	A material that improves the quality of water for a given application or use.
WATER HARDNESS	A measure of the amount of metallic salts found in water. Hard water can inhibit the action of some surfactants and reduce the effectiveness of the cleaning process.
WATER SOFTENER	Substance that removes or counteracts the hardness of water.
WAX	A natural protective coating for hard surfaces.
WET MOPPING	Applying a liberal amount of cleaning solution. Used in disinfecting, thorough cleaning, scrubbing and stripping. Requires removing excess solution.
WETTING AGENT	A chemical that reduces surface tension of water, allowing it to spread more freely.