

Mold

Prevention

Mold spores are nearly everywhere, will grow in moist environments, and have structures like tiny trees. Spore roots that reach into an object are as big as the visible mold bloom. Keep relative humidity (RH) below 65%. Brief spikes pose little danger. For conditions lasting more than two days, use dehumidifiers or circulate air with fans to help prevent mold spores from settling on objects.

Recovery

Prioritize

- Remember that once an item has had mold, it is more likely to grow mold again. With high RH, microscopic remnants of mold **spores will reactivate**. Consider storing vulnerable items (such as leather) in plastic bins, along with silica gel packets, to stabilize RH.
- Try to recover only if things are **meaningful and cannot be replaced**.
- **Treatment** will take time, stains often remain, and mold exposure has health risks. Consider hiring a conservator to treat treasures damaged by mold. culturalheritage.org/about-conservation/find-a-conservator



Deactivate

- Although **ultraviolet (UV) light** can damage objects, it will also kill mold spores. This benefit may be worth the temporary risk to the object.
- **Air dry** objects several hours before cleaning.



Clean

Once mold is dry (no longer has a moist, smeary texture), you can begin to clean it. Work outside, preferably on a dry day, and use gloves, aprons, safety glasses, and particle masks to **protect yourself** from mold residues, which may trigger allergic reactions.



- Using a soft **brush**, direct residue toward a **vacuum** nozzle. Microfiber cloths can also be effective but will not trap mold as well as a HEPA vacuum.
- Soot **sponges** or make-up sponges (for more delicate items like paper) can be useful to wipe and pull out spore roots.
- Note that **rubbing alcohol** can damage some wood finishes and paints. If a test in an inconspicuous spot does not cause damage, wipe the object with a rag dampened with rubbing alcohol. Bottles typically contain a 70/30 proportion of water to alcohol, which is best to kill spore roots.