How to Clean a Bathtub and Remove Tub Stains

Everyday shine, soap-scum removal, and stain-by-stain fixes — without scratching the tub.

Everyday clean: ~10 minutes **Deep clean:** 20–30 minutes **Difficulty:** Easy **Cost:** Pantry basics

1. Know Your Tub First

Identify the material before you pick a cleaner — the wrong tool can scratch or dull the surface permanently.

Material	How to spot it	Tools to use
Acrylic / Fiberglass	Light, slightly flexible, warm to the touch	Soft cloths and soft sponges only — never abrasive pads or steel wool
Porcelain enamel (on steel or cast iron)	Heavy, hard, glossy, cool to the touch	Soft tools; never steel wool — it scratches the enamel

2. What You Will Need

- Baking soda
- Mild dish soap
- White vinegar in a spray bottle
- 3% hydrogen peroxide (for pink / mildew marks)
- Lemon and table salt (for rust marks)
- Soft sponge, soft cloths, and an old toothbrush for edges and grout lines
- Rubber gloves (optional, but recommended)

3. Everyday Clean

1. Rinse the tub with warm water to loosen loose dirt and hair.
2. Sprinkle about **1/2 cup baking soda** over the tub floor and sides.
3. Add a few drops of dish soap to a damp soft sponge and wipe the whole tub in small circles.
4. Rinse well with warm water and wipe dry with a soft cloth to prevent water spots.

Done after every few uses, this keeps soap scum from building up in the first place.

4. Deep Clean — Soap Scum

1. Make a paste: mix **1 cup baking soda with 2–3 tablespoons of water**.
2. Spread the paste over the soap scum and stained areas.
3. Spray lightly with vinegar and let it fizz for **10–15 minutes**.
4. Scrub gently with a soft sponge, working from the top down.
5. Rinse thoroughly and buff dry with a soft cloth.

Safety — read before you start:

- **Never mix cleaners.** In particular, never mix vinegar or any acid with bleach, and never mix hydrogen peroxide with vinegar in the same bottle.
- **Maximum acid contact time is 30 minutes.** Do not leave vinegar or lemon on the surface longer than this.
- **No boiling water on acrylic or fiberglass tubs** — sudden heat can warp or crack them. Use warm water only.
- Always test a new cleaner on a small hidden spot first, and ventilate the bathroom while you clean.

5. Stain-by-Stain Guide

Stain	Method	Time
Limescale / hard-water marks	Soak a cloth in vinegar, lay it on the mark, then wipe and rinse	30 minutes
Rust marks	Sprinkle salt over the mark, rub with half a lemon, then rinse	15–30 minutes
Pink / mildew marks	Spray with 3% hydrogen peroxide, leave, scrub lightly, then rinse	10–15 minutes
Soap scum	Baking soda paste (1 cup + 2–3 tbsp water) + vinegar spray, then scrub	10–15 minutes

6. Tick-Off Checklist

- ☐ Tub material identified before cleaning started
- ☐ Loose dirt and hair rinsed away
- ☐ Everyday clean done (1/2 cup baking soda + dish soap)
- ☐ Soap-scum paste applied and left 10–15 minutes
- ☐ Stains treated with the right method from the table above
- ☐ No cleaners mixed; acid left on for 30 minutes maximum
- ☐ Tub rinsed thoroughly — no cleaner residue left
- ☐ Tub wiped dry to prevent water spots
- ☐ Drain cover and plug wiped clean
- ☐ Taps and overflow plate wiped and polished

7. Keep It Clean Longer

- Rinse the tub after every use and wipe it dry once a week.
- Squeegee or wipe the walls after showers to slow soap-scum build-up.
- Fix slow drips — constant dripping causes limescale and rust marks.

Notes