

Unlacquered brass

Unlacquered brass is meant to darken. The patina is a protective layer, not a defect. The wrong cleaner strips it and forces uneven resets.

The Unlacquered Brass Protocol: Managing the Living Finish

A system for preserving patina without stripping the surface or creating uneven color.

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Living Finish

PATINA MANAGEMENT PROTOCOL

Unlacquered brass is meant to darken. The patina is a protective layer, not a defect. The wrong cleaner strips it and forces uneven resets.

This protocol protects the finish by controlling oxidation and cleaning gently across the entire surface.

Asset card

Baseline material data before any intervention.

MATERIAL	Solid unlacquered brass
VULNERABILITY	Oxidation stripping (removing the protective tarnish)
TOOLS REQUIRED	Mild dish soap, warm water, soft microfiber
TARGET AESTHETIC	"Golden Brown" patina (deep, non-reflective warmth)

CRITICAL WARNING

The forbidden list

These actions strip the living finish and create uneven color.

NEVER USE KETCHUP, LEMON, OR VINEGAR

These internet hacks strip the finish down to raw, pinkish metal.

NEVER USE BRASSO OR METAL POLISH

Unless you intend to reset the hardware to Day 1 brightness.

NEVER SCRUB LOCALIZED SPOTS

This creates uneven coloring and visible patches.

The mechanism: the 6-month patina timeline

Understanding the chemistry reduces anxiety.

Weeks 1-4 (The "Leopard Spot" phase): The brass will look spotty and uneven as it reacts to fingerprints and water splashes. This is normal. Do not panic-scrub.

Months 2-5 (The integration phase): The spots begin to merge and overlap.

Month 6 (The "Golden Brown" goal): The surface achieves a uniform, antique darkening that protects the metal.

The step-by-step protocol

Use gentle, full-surface cleaning to preserve the patina.

Routine cleaning (preserving patina)

1. **Dust:** Wipe gently with a dry microfiber cloth to remove surface dust.
2. **Wash:** Dampen a cloth with warm water and a drop of pH-neutral soap.
3. **Wipe:** Gently wipe the fixture. Do not scrub hard.
4. **Dry:** Immediately dry with a fresh cloth. Water spots left to air-dry will leave mineral deposits.

Emergency reset (if you used acid and ruined the look)

1. **Strip entirely:** If a spot is bright pink from acid damage, polish the entire piece with a brass polish to match the bright spot.
2. **Neutralize:** Wash off all polish residue with soap and water.
3. **Restart clock:** The patina process begins again from Day 0.

Maintenance schedule

MAINTENANCE NOTE

Apply Renaissance Wax once per year.

This micro-crystalline wax protects the patina without freezing it, allowing the color to deepen slowly while preventing verdigris (green corrosion).