

# Gravestone Rubbing



Gravestone rubbing is fun. It is possible to collect some beautiful artwork that can be framed and displayed. A carver's skill can be preserved or an ancestor's stone recorded and appreciated through this craft. However, gravestone rubbing is also controversial. Especially in cemeteries where a restoration project is in progress, rubbing is often banned. This is to enable the restorers to have an opportunity to preserve all the stones possible before more damage occurs. Even if a restoration project is not in progress, if the those who care for the cemetery have determined there are very fragile stones there which may be damaged if pressure is applied to the surface as happens in rubbing, there may be prohibitions in place. So be sure to check.

**ALWAYS ASK PERMISSION BEFORE GRAVESTONE RUBBING!**

**Below are some Do's and Don'ts that will make your experience in the cemetery a good one.**

## PLEASE DO

Check (with cemetery superintendent, cemetery commissioners, town clerk, historical society, whoever is in charge) to see if rubbing is permitted.

**Get permission and/or a permit as required.**

**Rub only solid stones in good condition.**

Check for any cracks, evidence of previous breaks and adhesive repairs, defoliating stone with air pockets behind the face of the stone that will collapse under pressure of rubbing, etc.

**Become educated and learn how to rub responsibly.**

Use a soft brush and plain water to do any necessary stone cleaning.

**Make certain that your paper covers the entire face of the stone and secure with masking tape only.**

Use the correct combination of paper and waxes or inks; avoid magic markers or other permanent color materials. Do not use a ball-point pen or anything with a point.

**Test paper and color before working on stone to be certain that no color bleeds through.**

**Rub gently, carefully.**

**Leave the stone in better condition than you found it. Take all trash with you; replace any grave site materials that you may have disturbed.**

## PLEASE DON'T

**Don't attempt to rub deteriorating marble, sandstone or any unsound or weakened stone (i.e., a stone that sounds hollow when gently tapped or a stone that is flaking, splitting, blistered, cracked or unstable on its base).**

**Don't use detergents, soaps, vinegar, bleach or any other solutions on the stone--no matter how mild!**

**Don't use shaving cream, chalk, graphite, dirt or other concoctions in an attempt to read worn inscriptions. Use a large mirror to direct bright sunlight diagonally across the face of a gravemarker casts shadows in indentations and makes inscriptions more visible.**

**Don't use stiff-bristled or wire brushes, putty knives, nail files or any metal object to clean or to remove lichen from the stone. Soft natural bristled brushes, whisk brooms or wooden sticks are usually okay if used gently & carefully.**

**Don't attempt to remove stubborn lichen. Soft lichen may be thoroughly soaked with plain water and then loosened with a gum eraser or a wooden popsicle stick. Be gentle. Stop if lichen does not come off easily.**

**Don't use spray adhesives, scotch tape or duct tape. Use masking tape.**

**Don't use any rubbing method that you have not actually practiced.**

**Don't leave masking tape, wastepaper, colors, etc. at the grave site.**

*Information from [www.globalgenealogy.com](http://www.globalgenealogy.com)*