

# Care and Maintenance of Props and Gear

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## **Your Season is over, what about your props?**

The First Law of Claus gear: You won't know you have a problem until you really need said item on your way to an important gig.

*\*Caveat Emptor: Before cleaning and fixing anything expensive, do a bit of research first, reach out and talk to someone who knows metal, leather, etc. These tips are just a starting point.*

### **1. Make an inventory.**

- As you unpack your prop bag, and look at your items, make a list, and write down where it goes/is used. Make notes as you do, on what needs to be cleaned, fixed, or replace the batteries.

### **2. Separate everything into categories.**

- Cloth items: Can it be washed? Should it be?
- Empty everything out and use a firm brush to clean everything.

### **3. Inspect everything.**

- Look for areas that need to be spot cleaned, loose threads, etc.
- If the item has ever been set on the ground, check for stains, mud, or scuffs. This could be your Claus Bag or any prop bag. Do this in a well-lit area.

### **4. Leather items care.**

- Leather is an organic material (animal skin), and likes the same conditions our skin does: Not too hot or cold, too dry or too wet.
- Brush everything down. In the case of any leather items, I recommend Fiebings Aussie Leather Conditioner. It's essentially a leather moisturizer, and drying and cracking is what you want to avoid. Before you stow leather, give it a good coating, wipe away excess. When you pull it out again, do a dry run with an old t-shirt to pick up any transfer.
- In particular, check any leather gloves (stitching) and belts for wear and issues.
- What to do about Salt? A half cup of white vinegar/half cup of water mixed, and a damp rag, can be used on the salted area. Wipe with a soft washcloth. After application, do it again with regular water. Let it dry, and see if the salt is still obvious. Repeat as necessary. Afterwards, hit the area with leather conditioner once it's dry. If the Vinegar solution doesn't work, you can try some saddle soap.
- Check each rivet and pin/disc/ for corrosion. If it is corroded, they don't get better if you ignore them. And you really don't want to lose your favorite pin, etc.

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## 5. Metal Items care.

- A clean brush and soft polishing cloth are your go-to tools.
- Polish all metal items, check for dings, and if they've been crushed, are missing a clapper.
- Buckles and Buttons: Go through all of them, on your suit or boots. Make certain they are still solidly secure. On buckles, check to see if they work properly, and clean under straps.
- Polish and look for missing stones on your magic key and jewelry.
- You might need different cleaning agents for different metals. Mild is better, pastes are better, and a damp cloth is better than a wet one. Always make certain all your metal items are completely dry before storage.
- You can wash bells, but generally a basic brushing with a brush and polish will be enough. Some brass bells look better with some patina.

## 6. The Big “Do Not Do” List.

- Do not store anything that is wet.
- Do not store anything that is dirty.
- Do not store anything that needs repair.
- Nothing perishable: Including liquids, candy, or batteries
- Do not compress your garments.
- Do not over stack your boxes.
  - Many times, boxes of candy canes will store fine, but put a date on the box and keep them VERY dry.

## 7. Rules for your Storage Spaces.

- Normal but not bone dry, decent airflow, out of the sun, with adequate space.
- Label containers on at least three sides, front, side, top.
- Leather items need airflow. Store them wrapped gently, on fabric like a towel.
- Check regularly and always keep an eye out for mice, moths, ants, or other mishaps.
- Pull and go through gear at least a month before you need it to give yourself time to get a replacement if you have a problem.

## 8. Watch for items that can degrade.

- Don't leave plastic liners in boots.
- Don't leave pins on fur or fabric. Look for items that could corrode or become a problem. Pins could have cheap metal that corrodes. Generally, the cheaper made the item is, the more likely it will have problems as it ages.

## 9. Pay attention to batteries.

- Check those spinning toys or magic props that use batteries. Pull the batteries for long-term storage. Be sure to recharge any that should be recharged. If they use a special kind of battery, make certain you have some spares. You never know what size battery will be discontinued.

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## 10. Emergency back up items.

- Check your back-up items where you may have bottles of water, tissues, cleaning wipes, hair brush, comb, extra gloves, backup medication, flashlight, spare car key, or breath mints.
- Pull the perishable items. Don't store the water bottles.
- Label and date any items that can be kept and stored.
- Make a shopping or refresh list for items that will need to be acquired close to next season.

## 11. Make and update your Inventory Lists.

- Make a list as you go through your prop bags. Make notes about anything that needs to be updated, replaced, or replenished (batteries, repairs).
- If at all possibly, have someone to help you: You can inspect and they can take notes for you.

## What is on your Props and Gear List?

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Your lists will vary. But you might have items like these.

- Claus Gift bags (various sizes)
  - If they have fur trim, be sure to clean and brush it.
  - Check the cords and straps for wear.
- Claus Prop bag
  - Special tip: For any bags that are put on the ground, you can spray the bottom with waterproofing spray.
- Bells (various sizes, types, and uses)
  - Treat the leather.
  - Test and polish the bells.
- Candy Cane Pouches
- Give Aways: Naughty or Nice coins, Christmas Ornaments, Christmas Spiders.
- Card holders
- Elf hats/Reindeer antlers
- Soft toys like stuffed animals or teddy bears
- Hard toys like toy dinosaurs or small cars
- Distractor toys that spin make noise or help in photo sessions
- Hand crank music boxes or snow globes
- Magic Props like the D-light, magical ringing bell, or special pocket watch
- Naughty or Nice List, Magnifying glass
- Story Books, Reading Glasses
- Story Props such as plastic cookies or snow white mittens

What other props do you carry with you? If you have any other tips to share, please do!