

How to Clean and Transport Shells

- Wash shells with freshwater to remove sand, loose debris, and salts.
- Soak shells overnight in a solution of 50% water and 50% bleach. Do not use bleach on shiny shells. It will remove their natural glossy finish.
- Soaking time is dictated by the type of shell, the quantity of shells, and how heavy the periostracum (outer covering of the shell) is. Generally soaking overnight is sufficient. Dead sand dollars should be left in bleach for 20-30 minutes.
- After soaking, scrub the shell with a brush. Clean spiral shaped shells with a small, curved wire brush like a baby bottle brush. Use dental pick to remove barnacles or clean shell ridges.
- To bring out shell color rub with a cotton ball soaked in mineral oil. Let stand about 30 minutes and remove excess oil with a dry cotton ball.
- To strengthen the shells, coat sand dollars, sea urchins, and fragile shells with a solution of 50% water and 50% Elmer's glue. Apply to one side with a paint brush, dry, and repeat on the other side. Apply three coats.
- Fill plastic medicine bottles with sand to cushion small shells.
- Protect hinged bivalves by stuffing with cotton. Use scotch tape to secure and remove after travelling.
- Use plastic peanut butter, mayonnaise containers or zip-lock bags to pack larger shells. Wrap shells in toilet paper or bubble wrap.
- To mail packages use heavy corrugated boxes, reinforce boxes on the corners and line with corrugated material.