

Yes, bleach in vase water can damage cut flowers, especially if the concentration is too high. You do not need to add bleach to enjoy a fresh bouquet, and simple cleaning can help keep the water clear.

How bleach can affect flowers

Bleach is a strong cleaning chemical. Too much of it in vase water can harm the exposed stem ends and delicate flower tissue. Damaged stems may be less able to take up water, leaving blooms limp or causing them to fade sooner.

You might have heard that a little bleach helps keep vase water clean. It can reduce microbes in water, but it is difficult to judge a safe amount by eye. Household bleach products also vary in strength, so a small splash is not a reliable measure.

If your flowers have already been sitting in water with bleach, there is no need to panic. Refreshing the water and trimming the stems gives them a chance to take up clean water again.

What to do if you added bleach

Take the flowers out of the vase and pour away the water. Rinse the vase thoroughly, then fill it with fresh water. Rinse the lower parts of the stems under running water before putting the flowers back.

With clean scissors or a sharp knife, trim a little from the bottom of each stem. This removes the portion that has been sitting in the solution. Remove any leaves that would sit below the waterline, too.

If flowers have wilted or petals have become discolored, fresh water may not reverse the damage. Still, give the bouquet some time before deciding which stems to remove. Some may look better after they have had a chance

to drink.

Keep vase water fresh without bleach

A clean vase and regular water changes are straightforward ways to care for cut flowers. If your bouquet came with a packet of flower food, follow the directions on the packet and mix it with the stated amount of water.

- Wash the vase with soap and water before arranging flowers.
- Keep leaves and loose plant material out of the water.
- Change the water regularly and rinse the vase as needed.
- Trim the stem ends again when you refresh the water.

Place the arrangement away from direct sun and strong heat. Check the water level each day, since some flowers drink more than others. Remove individual stems as they fade to keep the rest of the arrangement tidy.

Cleaning a vase safely

Bleach can be used to clean some vases, but it should not be mixed with other cleaning products. Follow the instructions on its label, and rinse the vase thoroughly before filling it for flowers. Soap and water are a simple choice for routine cleaning.

Clean water, a clean vase and freshly trimmed stems are enough to give your flowers a good start.

Also helpful: cut flowers by season