



Polishing shoes

In the late 1930s mass leather shoe production enabled families to buy leather shoes and shoe care became an essential domestic task.

Families would be known to stay up late and shine their shoes till you could 'see your face in them', taking great pride in lining them up.

Shoe shining is a well-known domestic task and is a popular activity all over the world, some of us may have visited a street shoe shining station.

Supporting the individuals to buff and shine their shoes can be a great way to reminisce and discover familiar daily living skills. The kit and smell alone will get the conversation flowing!

You will need:

- Leather shoes
- Shoe polish the same colour as the shoes.
- Rag
- Small shoes brush
- Large shoe brush
- News paper
- Pinny
- Basket/ box to hold the equipment
- Photos of old shoe polish adverts and polish tins

What you do:

- Make sure everyone is wearing a pinny as polish can be messy.
- Bring out the basket and place on the table.
- Display your photos of old shoe polish adverts and tins for promoting conversation.
- Lay out the newspaper.
- Take the object out of the basket or box and discuss all the products.
- Place the shoes onto the table and using the small brush dust off any dirt or dust.
- At this point replace the newspaper if needed.
- Take the tin of polish and open up, can anyone remember the smell?
- Place on hand inside the shoe and using the rag over your finger (index works well) scoop a little bit of the polish.
- Rub the polish on the rag onto the shoe in circular movements. This will make the shoe go very dull.
- Use the big brush to brush the polish using long, light strokes working your way around the shoe until you see a shine, this could take some time.
- Once finished see how shiny the shoe is compared to the ones not yet complete.

If you would like to discuss the information included in this resource, please call the NAPA Helpline; our free and confidential activity support service.

