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Hi everyone! I'm wondering which verb is the correct with the 'teeth'. I understand that 'Brush my teeth' is the most appropriate to describe the action, but can we also use the Wash or Clean? Thank you! Eli Clean Brush Wash I "brush" and "floss" my teeth; the dental hygienist "cleans" them. Perhaps this is an AE/BE difference? This Google ngram shows the relative frequencies. Google Ngram Viewer It shows that 'brush' is 7 or 8 times more frequent than 'clean', and that 'wash' occurs very infrequently. Hi Eli. Welcome to the forum, I agree with Keith in post #2 for BrE. Google Ngram Viewer As Pob14 suggests, it does appear to be an AmE/BrE difference. Google Ngram Viewer In addition, I've heard people with false teeth say that they rinse them, as well as saying that they brush or clean them. Here on the official website they used -to clean teeth! How to keep your teeth clean "But making sure you thoroughly clean your teeth at least twice a day is more important than the type of brush you use. If in doubt, ask your dentist. But some people find it easier to clean their teeth thoroughly with an electric toothbrush." I'm not sure that I would regard the NHS website as the official website, but in any case, the first sentence of the advice given is Brush your teeth with fluoride toothpaste twice a day for about 2 minutes to help keep your teeth and mouth healthy, "Keeping something clean" doesn't necessarily imply that the appropriate verb for all methods for accomplishing that goal is "cleaning". You keep your teeth clean by brushing them and by having them cleaned at the dentist. You keep your carpets clean by vacuuming them and by cleaning them with a steam cleaner or shampooer, i.e. using a vacuum is not "cleaning" even though it cleans. Hello. When I want to remove whatever was written on a whiteboard with a marker, am I 1. cleaning the board 2. wiping the board 3. erasing the board. I think #2 and #3 are OK. I'm not sure about #1. What do you think? There is a spray or wet-wipes that you can use to clean the whiteboard when it gets really bad, but normally you use an eraser to erase it or, possibly, wipe it off. When I was using a dry cloth or a piece of paper towel, what do I say then: 4. I was erasing (the sentences on) the board. 5. I was wiping off (the sentences on the) the board. I wonder what is the difference between those two sentences. In both of them one was removing whatever had been written or drawn. Hello wolf You could be: - cleaning the board - wiping the board clear - clearing off what was written on the board. - erasing what was written on the board. - erasing the sentences on the board - wiping off the sentences on the board - [and probably lots of other options...] But you couldn't be erasing the board. Yes, you could! I'm not saying this is logical, but it is definitely used. Not only possible but common, or at least it used to be once upon a time. I think it still is, but I don't know that for sure. Out! I live and learn! (I don't think it's possible in BrE, but then who knows? Things may have changed) I would clean the whiteboard or wipe it (clean). I'm not sure that we say erase the whiteboard in BE. What about this sentence: I was wiping off the board. Would it raise an eyebrow? It's probably one of those AE/BE things, Loob - we certainly used to "erase the blackboards" when I was a kid, and I don't see why a whiteboard would be any different. It's probably one of those AE/BE things, Loob - we certainly used to "erase the blackboards" when I was a kid, and I don't see why a whiteboard would be any different. Yes, maybe it is one of those AE/BE things, RM1(SS) - I really couldn't say "erasing the blackboard"/"erasing the whiteboard" What about this sentence: I was wiping off the board. Would it raise an eyebrow? Well, it would sound slightly strange to me, wolf - but only slightly... So... If you don't erase the board, do you call these things erasers? Umm - I'm not sure I've understood your point, Myridon. But anyway: (1) No, I wouldn't erase a blackboard or whiteboard (2) No, I wouldn't call those things erasers. (Maybe we're heading off-topic?) Wiping off the board sounds distinctly odd to me. I've forgotten what was used to wipe the blackboard with, but I think I called it the blackboard duster (which is I am dubious about erasing the board). PS Excuse my misspelling of erasing!! I tried the BNC and I didn't get any result for "erased the board" or "erasing the board". Instead I found a sentence with the word wipe: "Wiping the board clean, she began to write on it in bold letters something that would be comprehensible only to herself and Miss Harker: PLEASE HELP ME" Source: A twist of fate by Pamela Scobie. When I tried the COCA I got this: "The teacher returned to his desk, straightened some papers, then erased the board with a wet rag." Source: A Circus at the Center of the World by Daniel Alarcón. It might be the blackboard. "I stayed in the classroom as long as I could, erasing the board, buffing the erasers. Finally Miss Amherst said it was time to go." Source: In the family by Paulette Rabia Rayford Wiping off the board sounds distinctly odd to me. I've forgotten what was used to wipe the blackboard with, but I think I called it the blackboard duster (which is I am dubious about erasing the board). I agree that there's definitely an AE/BE difference here. Both "Wipe off the board." and "Erase the board." (I call what Myridon linked to an eraser.) sound perfectly normal to me, especially "Wipe off the board." as I use this phrasing with many surfaces. "Wipe off the table.", "Wipe off the mirror.", "Wipe off the monitor.", etc. So... If you don't erase the board, do you call these things erasers? This is the classic AE/BE thing that causes so much amusement to Americans. What you call an eraser, Myridon, we usually call a rubber (whether used on paper, blackboards or whiteboards). When I was at school, we had board rubbers. But even if I called it an eraser, I agree with Loob and e2efour. Given that to erase is to obliterate or destroy, I wouldn't erase the whiteboard (you'd get through a lot of whiteboards that way!); I'd erase the writing. Obviously from Kate's, RM1's and your comments, "erase the white/blackboard" is a common AE expression, but would you say it the same way when talking about something written on paper? — "He erased the paper?" ... or "He erased the writing"? "He erased the paper" sounds fine to me. For me to think it means anything other than he erased the writing on the paper, you'd have to say something like "He erased the paper from existence." (which sounds quite over dramatic) or change the verb completely. "He destroyed the paper." Now I remember the phrase "Would you rub the board?" which parallels the AE "erase the board". This was commonly used for blackboards, at any rate. This is the classic AE/BE thing that causes so much amusement to Americans. What you call an eraser, Myridon, we usually call a rubber (whether used on paper, blackboards or whiteboards). When I was at school, we had board rubbers. But even if I called it an eraser, I agree with Loob and e2efour. Given that to erase is to obliterate or destroy, I wouldn't erase the whiteboard (you'd get through a lot of whiteboards that way!); I'd erase the writing. Obviously from Kate's, RM1's and your comments, "erase the white/blackboard" is a common AE expression, but would you say it the same way when talking about something written on paper? — "He erased the paper?" ... or "He erased the writing"? "He erased the paper." sounds fine to me. For me to think it means anything other than he erased the writing on the paper, you'd have to say something like "He erased the paper from existence." (which sounds quite over dramatic) or change the verb completely. "He destroyed the paper." Now here I must disagree with my countrywoman. I wouldn't say "erased the paper." I would say "erase that word" or "that sentence." (I might even say "rub out that word," though probably not very often.) However, I think there is a reason for this. When I say "erase the black/whiteboard," I mean "erase everything on the black/whiteboard." I think this meaning is fairly common, but if not, let me know. If I had to erase an entire piece of paper...well, I just wouldn't. I'd throw it away and start afresh. Now here I must disagree with my countrywoman. I wouldn't say "erased the paper." I would say "erase that word" or "that sentence." (I might even say "rub out that word," though probably not very often.) However, I think there is a reason for this. When I say "erase the black/whiteboard," I mean "erase everything on the black/whiteboard." I think this meaning is fairly common, but if not, let me know. If I had to erase an entire piece of paper...well, I just wouldn't. I'd throw it away and start afresh. When my son brings home a printed worksheet for homework and I look it over to see he did everything wrong, since he only has that one worksheet he has to start over using that same worksheet (this actually happens on a pretty regular basis at my house). For me, "He erased the paper and started over." sounds just as acceptable as "He erased his work..." or "He erased everything..." He's even asked me, "You mean I have to erase the whole paper and do everything all over again?!" I didn't say "erase the paper" is wrong. I just said that I'd never say that. Well, actually, I might if I meant the entire piece of paper, but only then. And fortunately, the times when an adult has to even consider erasing all of the work on an entire piece of paper are very few and far between. Would you say "erase the paper" if you meant just part of it? Would you say "erase the whiteboard" if you meant just part of it? I wouldn't, but hey, maybe that's just me. Thinking about it, there are contexts in which this AE usage of erase to mean "erase everything on" doesn't shock my BE ear. I would quite happily erase a tape (if I still used audio/video tapes), and I wouldn't buck at someone saying "A virus erased my hard drive". Perhaps the strong US influence in the domains of media and computing have accustomed us Brits to that usage, whereas for blackboards and whiteboards we stay with the literal meaning of erase (especially because we would more often wipe the board or clean the board, so erase the board doesn't even have the merit of being familiar). This is the classic AE/BE thing that causes so much amusement to Americans. What you call an eraser, Myridon, we usually call a rubber (whether used on paper, blackboards or whiteboards). When I was at school, we had board rubbers. I knew that you called pencil erasers "rubbers", it makes sense to me because they're made out of rubber (and rubber is called rubber because it can be used as a "rubber"). We call them erasers for erasing mistakes. The whiteboard "erasers" are made of something like felt (hairy, furry fabric) and the activity is more like wiping than rubbing so it wasn't entirely obvious to me that you would necessarily continue to call them rubbers. Thanks for clearing that up. It seems the divide is an old one and not a recent one. I didn't say "erase the paper" is wrong. I just said that I'd never say that. Well, actually, I might if I meant the entire piece of paper, but only then. And fortunately, the times when an adult has to even consider erasing all of the work on an entire piece of paper are very few and far between. Would you say "erase the paper" if you meant just part of it? Would you say "erase the whiteboard" if you meant just part of it? I wouldn't, but hey, maybe that's just me. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to sound as if I thought you were saying it was wrong. I just wanted to give an example of when I might use it just to show that, in my experience at least, not being able to throw away the paper and start over isn't an uncommon experience to explain why I personally feel it's acceptable. I would definitely only say "Erase the paper/chalkboard/whiteboard." if the entire paper/board had to be erased. If only part of it had to be erased, I would always be specific about what has to be erased. A white board is a direct stand-in for a chalk board. For me that means the same terminology carries over. This is just as when electric windows appeared on cars. People still "wind up" or "wind down" car windows even though they are just pushing buttons. When you have a direct stand-in like this the terminology carries over. [...] and the activity is more like wiping than rubbing [...] I guess you don't leave stuff on your whiteboard as long as I do. Sometimes I have to rub really hard — unless of course I use those sprays or wet-wipes you mentioned. But to come back to wolf's original question, if you want something that's acceptable in worldwide English I'd recommend wipe or clean. Going back to my original objection, the spray is called "whiteboard cleaner" here so "clean the whiteboard" suggests to me using the spray cleaner and "wipe the board" suggests using a wet-wipe. (Helpful hint: if there's a mark that won't come off, write over it again - the new ink dissolves the old ink just like the cleaner does.) If we applied that principle to the BE rubber, we'd have to stick to "rub the whiteboard" — which e2efour does, though I think if I did use rub I'd be more likely to say "rub off". Thanks for the helpful hint. I'll try that next time. When I was a teacher a long time ago, the children would often ask "Can I rub the blackboard?" I never heard rub off. Justkate says that she might use erase the board, meaning the whole of the board. I agree that rub the board should mean wiping the whole of the board clean. The language used may well have changed since then. There is a spray or wet-wipes that you can use to clean the whiteboard when it gets really bad, but normally you use an eraser to erase it or, possibly, wipe it off. It's probably one of those AE/BE things, Loob - we certainly used to "erase the blackboards" when I was a kid, and I don't see why a whiteboard would be any different. Hello wolf You could be: - cleaning the board - wiping the board clear - clearing off what was written on the board. - erasing what was written on the board. - erasing the sentences on the board - wiping off the sentences on the board - [and probably lots of other options...] But you couldn't be erasing the board. Would you say "Wipe these sentences off the board" or "clear/clean up the board"? Thank you. Not exactly on point, but we erase letters, words and sentences. In other words "erase" refers to the writing itself. On the other hand "wipe" or "clean" refers to the whiteboard or chalkboard surface which has been defaced (with letters, words, sentences). So "Wipe a sentence off the board" sounds odd? Should I say "wipe off the board"? Wow, this was a very interesting discussion! And a very useful one! Now it's 2018, five years after the first posting, but it helped me a lot. I was wondering if I could use 'erase' the board myself. (I know 'clean' the board is fine.) Good evening from Málaga, Spain. Could anybody let me know about the difference in meaning between the verbs "wipe" and "clean"? When thinking in "wipe" I do not mean "to dry". I'm only thinking in the sence of "cleaning", i.e. "Yesterday I cleaned the household" or "the floor" or "anything else". Thank you very much for your time and help. Happy New Year for you all kitesandeater Last edited: Dec 30, 2012 "Wiping" just means, well, wiping - rubbing a surface with something. "Cleaning" means "making clean," removing dirt and grime, washing, soaping, etc. You wouldn't "wipe" the household/house, because the household/house isn't a surface. When you're "cleaning the floor," I suppose at times you may be "wiping" it - but I would expect that you would be using a mop of some kind instead of a cloth, and then we would say "mop" (or "sweep" with a broom). Basically, if I "wipe my glasses with my shirt," I can assume that they will get a little bit cleaner. But I'm not doing the thorough job of making them all-the-way clean that "cleaning my glasses" would imply. Another example is the set of rubber blades we call "wipers" on our automobiles. They wipe the water away during, but usually don't clean the glass of the oily film that often builds up, not to mention leaving body goo from the unfortunate insects smashed thereupon. Lucas and sdgraham thank you very much for your prompt responses. Very good and funny examples from you both. Crystal-clear now and thoroughly understood. Good evening. "Wiping" just means, well, wiping - rubbing a surface with something. "Cleaning" means "making clean," removing dirt and grime, washing, soaping, etc. You wouldn't "wipe" the household/house, because the household/house isn't a surface. When you're "cleaning the floor," I suppose at times you may be "wiping" it - but I would expect that you would be using a mop of some kind instead of a cloth, and then we would say "mop" (or "sweep" with a broom). Basically, if I "wipe my glasses with my shirt," I can assume that they will get a little bit cleaner. But I'm not doing the thorough job of making them all-the-way clean that "cleaning my glasses" would imply. When your friend's hands are dirty, can I tell him "wipe your hands"? Wipe off your hands"? If there is nowhere for him to wash his hands then, depending on the type of dirt and on what's available for the job (leaves? paper?), you could say "Wipe the dirt off your hands". "Rub the dirt off your hands", etc. If you have a piece of paper, you could hand it to him and say, "Here - Clean your hands with this." Thanks for your advise, the type of dirt is dust because the ground is dusty, he can get rid of dust using his own hands, is this still applicable? -> "Rub the dirt off your hands" If the ground is dusty, then yes, "Rub the dirt off your hands" would be a sensible thing to say. "Rub the dirt off your hands"