A toothbrush mat for storing a toothbrush between brushings and a method for manufacturing same are disclosed. The toothbrush mat includes an elongated mat body and a flap. After assembly, the mat body and flap cooperate to define a pocket having an opening that is dimensioned and arranged to receive the bristle end of a toothbrush.
Providing an elongated toothbrush mat form
Coating the toothbrush mat form with a water-resistant material
Folding the toothbrush mat form along one or more fold lines to define a mat body and a flap
Forming a vent in the flap
Forming a pocket by adhering at least one edge of the flap to the mat body in a manner that creates a gap between the flap and the underlying portion of the mat body.
TOOTHBRUSH MAT AND METHOD FOR MAKING

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This case claims priority of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/920,195 filed Mar. 27, 2007, which is incorporated herein by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates generally to hygiene and more particularly to the storage of a toothbrush between uses.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Most people prefer to store their toothbrush in a hygienic manner between uses. A sanitary environment is typically desired in which: (a) no other objects are likely to contact the toothbrush, and (b) rapid drying of a wet toothbrush is promoted, or at least not hampered. These conditions are readily provided in one's own home.

[0004] But when away from home, such as at a hotel, hospital, or spa, hygienic storage of a toothbrush is often problematic. In particular, these establishments do not typically stock their guest quarters with a device that will prevent a drying toothbrush from coming into contact with other objects or otherwise limit its exposure to potentially unsanitary conditions.

[0005] What options do travelers have? Hotel guests are often understandably reluctant to place a toothbrush on a bathroom vanity where the bristles of the toothbrush could come into contact with wastewater. Hygiene aside, some travelers are unwilling to place a toothbrush on a countertop due to a perceived unsightliness. It is possible to store a toothbrush in the nearly ubiquitous hotel room drinking glass. But anyone familiar with recent findings concerning unsanitary room-cleaning practices will likely be dissuaded from doing so.

[0006] Travelers often transport toothbrushes in travel containers that are generally adequate for transporting a dry toothbrush. But these containers are not suitable for toothbrush storage between daily brushings. If a travel container were to be used for this purpose, a residue of toothbrush liquids (e.g., toothpaste, saliva, water, etc.) would likely accumulate in the container after only a few uses, rendering it unhygienic. And it is undesirable to routinely dispose of these travel containers due to cost and convenience considerations.

[0007] A variety of storage devices are known in the art for storing toothbrushes between regular brushings; a few such devices are discussed below.

[0008] U.S. Pat. No. 7,097,050 to McClelland et al. depicts a toothbrush holder having individual disposable liners. The disposable liners are placed in a toothbrush receptacle in a reusable toothbrush holder. A toothbrush can then be placed within the disposable liner between uses, and the liner is replaced as desired.

[0009] U.S. Pat. No. 5,687,855 to Heller describes a disposable toothbrush holder having four legs that support a plurality of toothbrush receptacles in the form of holes in the holder body. A toothbrush is stood on end by placing it through one of the holes to facilitate drying between uses.

[0010] U.S. Pat. No. 5,480,027 to Leonard describes a stackable, disposable toothbrush holder that resembles an inverted disposable drinking cup. Holes in the top of the holder admit toothbrushes and support them on end.

[0011] U.S. Pat. No. 4,770,379 to Estvold describes a disposable toothbrush holder that is constructed of a single sheet of material, which is folded to have a triangular cross-section. The triangular holder is stood on one face. Two holes provided in the top of the holder provide support for toothbrushes between brushings.

[0012] These patented methods and systems appear to be satisfactory for their intended purpose. But disposable toothbrush holders are bulk items and a hotel’s decision to use such a product will be very sensitive to pricing and, hence, the supplier’s manufacturing cost. Even if some of the manufacturing cost could be defrayed by leaving a toothbrush holder in a partially unassembled state, the hotel or its guests would incur the inconvenience of assembly. Although simple stand-up type toothbrush holders address some of these drawbacks, they typically permit the toothbrush liquids to drip down the handle of the toothbrush, creating a mess.

[0013] A need remains, therefore, for a disposable toothbrush holder that is easy to use, effective, easy to make and inexpensive.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0014] The present invention provides a way to store a toothbrush between brushings while avoiding some of the costs and disadvantages of the prior art.

[0015] The illustrative embodiment of the present invention comprises a toothbrush mat. In the illustrative embodiment, the toothbrush mat has an elongated body (“mat body”) and a flap that overlies a portion of the body. A standoff, which in the illustrative embodiment is a folded portion of the flap, creates and maintains a gap between the flap and the underlying portion of the mat body. The flap (and standoff) and the portion of the mat body that the flap overlies define a pocket for receiving the bristle end of a toothbrush.

[0016] The pocket includes an access way that permits the bristle end of a toothbrush to pass into the pocket. In the illustrative embodiment, the access way is formed by leaving at least one edge of the flap “free” (i.e., unattached to the mat body).

[0017] In the illustrative embodiment, the pocket includes a vent, which is disposed at the opposite end of the pocket from the access way. The combination of the access way and the vent facilitates air flow through the pocket. The air flow promotes drying of toothbrush bristles after brushing. The toothbrush mat is waterproof, or at least water resistant, to resist deterioration by toothbrush liquids for an extended period of use.

[0018] A further aspect of the present invention is a method for manufacturing the toothbrush mat that is disclosed herein. Some embodiments of the method comprise the operations of:

[0019] providing a mat;
[0020] coating the mat with a water resistant coating if it is not inherently water resistant;
[0021] folding an end of the mat back onto a portion of itself to form a flap, thereby defining a mat body; a fold, and a flap;
[0022] forming a vent in the flap, wherein the vent is proximal to the fold; and forming a pocket by adhering at least one edge of the flap to the mat body in a manner
that creates a gap therebetween, wherein the pocket is dimensioned and arranged to store a bristle end of the toothbrush.

[0023] A toothbrush mat as described herein is capable of storing a toothbrush between uses in a hygienic manner by keeping the toothbrush bristles away from potentially unclean surfaces (e.g., bathroom countertops, vanities, and the like). Furthermore, the toothbrush mat decreases the likelihood that persons handling the toothbrush will directly contact the bristles (e.g., housekeeping personnel needing to move the toothbrush during room cleaning, etc.). Additionally, the toothbrush mats disclosed herein will also prevent a toothbrush that is stored therein from inadvertently rolling or sliding onto unclean surfaces.

[0024] The toothbrush mat described herein is simply made from inexpensive materials and can therefore be considered to be disposable. Yet, since it is water resistant, the toothbrush mat is sufficiently robust for multiple uses before disposal. As a consequence, the toothbrush mats described herein advantageous for use by anyone who is away from home, needs to brush, and who is not provided with a traditional non-disposable toothbrush holder. This situation is commonly encountered by guests in hotels and spas, patients in hospitals, workers in their workplace, and health club members in locker rooms, to mention but a few examples. Of course, a toothbrush mat in accordance with the illustrative embodiment of the invention can be used at home as well, in lieu of or in addition to traditional toothbrush holders or fixtures.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0025] FIG. 1 depicts a perspective view of a toothbrush mat in accordance with the illustrative embodiment of the present invention.

[0026] FIG. 2 depicts a toothbrush being used in conjunction with the toothbrush mat of FIG. 1, wherein the bristle-end of the toothbrush is within a pocket of the toothbrush mat.

[0027] FIG. 3 depicts a back view of the toothbrush mat showing a vent.

[0028] FIG. 4 depicts a pre-assembly plan view of a mat form that is assembled to form the toothbrush mat of FIG. 1.

[0029] FIGS. 5A-5D depict, diagrammatically, the assembly of the toothbrush mat form into the toothbrush mat via partial rotation, around various fold lines, of portions of a flap.

[0030] FIG. 6 depicts a first alternative embodiment of a mat form that can be assembled into a toothbrush mat in accordance with the present teachings.

[0031] FIG. 7 depicts a second alternative embodiment of a mat form that can be assembled into a toothbrush mat in accordance with the present teachings.

[0032] FIG. 8 depicts a back view of an embodiment of a toothbrush mat, wherein a first embodiment of a coupling element is disposed on the back of the toothbrush mat.

[0033] FIG. 9 depicts a side view of an embodiment of a toothbrush mat showing a second embodiment of a coupling element disposed thereon.

[0034] FIG. 10 depicts an alternative embodiment of the toothbrush mat of FIG. 1, wherein the toothbrush mat includes an integral stand.

[0035] FIG. 11 depicts a flow diagram of a method for manufacturing a toothbrush mat.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0036] FIG. 1 depicts toothbrush mat 100 in accordance with the illustrative embodiment of the present invention. Toothbrush mat 100 comprises mat body 102, flap 103, access way 108, pocket 110, and vent 112, interrelated as shown. Flap 103 comprises flap top 104 and flap standoff 106, in addition to any other features.

[0037] FIG. 2 depicts toothbrush mat 100 in use, wherein bristle end 216 of toothbrush 214 is disposed in pocket 110. Bristle end 216 is inserted into pocket 110 via access way 108. Vent 112, in cooperation with access way 108, facilitates air flow through pocket 108 to promote drying of bristle end 216 of the toothbrush. FIG. 3 depicts an end-on view of toothbrush mat 100 from the flap end, wherein vent 112 is embodied as an opening in a portion of flap standoff 106.

[0038] FIG. 4 depicts mat form 400 which, when assembled, forms toothbrush mat 100. In the illustrative embodiment, mat form 400 is segregated into four regions: mat body 102, flap top 104, flap standoff 106, and flap adhesion tabs 418. The flat top, flap standoff, and flap adhesion tabs are each considered to be elements of flap 103.

[0039] Mat Body. In the illustrative embodiment that is depicted in FIG. 4, mat body 102 is defined as the region bounded between distal mat edge 418 and proximal mat edge 420. The relative reference locations “proximal” and “distal” are defined with respect to the end of the mat body that is closest to the flap. Hence, mat edge 420 is considered to be the “proximal” mat edge and mat edge 418 is the “distal” mat edge. In the illustrative embodiment depicted in FIG. 4, proximal mat edge 420 coincides with first lateral fold line A-A.

[0040] In some embodiments, length L_{MAB} of mat body 102 is at least as long as most conventional toothbrushes. A typical length L_{MAB} for mat body 102 will therefore be in the range of about six inches (15 millimeters) to about ten inches (254 millimeters). More typically, length L_{MAB} of mat body 102 is in a range of about eight inches (203 millimeters) to about nine inches (229 millimeters). In a presently preferred embodiment, length L_{MAB} of mat body 102 is about eight and three-quarters inches (222 millimeters).

[0041] Standsoffs. In the illustrative embodiment depicted in FIG. 4, flap 103 includes flap standoffs 106A, 106B, and 106C that separate flap top 104 from mat body 102. Stavoff segment 106A is defined as the region between first lateral fold line A-A and second lateral fold line B-B. Standoff segment 106B is defined as the region between longitudinal fold line C-C, and longitudinal fold line D-D, and standoff segment 106C is defined as the region between longitudinal fold line C-C and longitudinal fold line D-D. The three segments are collectively referenced as “flap standoff 106.”

[0042] As will be clear in conjunction with FIGS. 5C and 5D and the accompanying description, and with reference to FIGS. 1 and 2, in the illustrative embodiment, flap standoff 106 creates and maintains a gap or space between flap top 104 and the underlying portion of mat body 102 in an assembled toothbrush mat. This gap enables the bristle end of a toothbrush to be readily inserted into pocket 110.

[0043] Typically, but not necessarily, all of the standoff segments 106A, 106B, and 106C have the same length L_{O}. In some embodiments, standoff segment 106A has a different length, which can be longer or shorter than standoff segments 106B and 106C. For example, in some embodiments, stand-
off segment 106A is shorter than standoff segments 106B and 106C. This tends to flare flap top 104 outward at access way 108, thereby facilitating insertion of the bristle end of the toothbrush into pocket 110. In any case, length Lₜ is suitably selected to provide a snug fit for the bristle end of a toothbrush while also providing easy access to pocket 110. [0044] It is notable that in embodiments in which flap top 103 and mat body 102 are flexible, as will be typical, stresses induced by the various folds, etc., will cause flap top 104 and mat body 102 to bow outward, thereby increasing the gap between the flap top and mat body (increasing to a maximum near the longitudinal centerline of each). This phenomena should be accounted for when establishing the length Lₜ of standoff 106. As a consequence, the length Lₜ is advantageously less than the nominal width of the bristle end of a toothbrush (i.e., as when the toothbrush is inserted on edge, as depicted in FIG. 2). It has been found that a length Lₜ for the standoff that is within the range of about one-sixteenth of an inch (1.5 millimeters) to about four-sixteenths of an inch (six millimeters) is suitable when used in conjunction with a flap and mat body that are made from a flexible material (e.g., laminated paper, etc.). In a presently preferred embodiment, length Lₜ for the standoff is about three-sixteenths of an inch (about 5 millimeters).

[0045] Flap Top. In the illustrative embodiment that is depicted in FIG. 4, flap top 104 is defined as the region bounded in the longitudinal direction between proximal flap edge 422 and distal flap edge 424. In the illustrative embodiment depicted in FIG. 4, proximal mat edge 422 coincides with second lateral fold line B-B. Flap top 104 is bounded in the lateral direction by right longitudinal fold line C-C₁ and left longitudinal fold line C-C₂.

[0046] Proceeding inward from lateral edges C-C₁ and C-C₂, the profile of flap edge 422 changes from straight to inwardly arcuate. This creates a lunate-shaped opening between proximal mat edge 420 and a portion of proximal flap edge 422 that ultimately becomes vent 112 in assembled toothbrush mat 100.

[0047] In some embodiments, length Lₚ of flap top 104 is at least as long as the bristled portion of most conventional toothbrushes. More typically, flap top 104 is almost as long as the bristled portion of a toothbrush. As a consequence, a typical length Lₚ for flap top 104 will be in the range of about one and one-quarter inches (32 millimeters) to about two and one-half inches (64 millimeters). More typically, length Lₚ for flap top 104 will be in the range of about one and one-half inches (38 millimeters) to about two and one-half inches (64 millimeters). In a presently preferred embodiment, Lₚ for flap top 104 is about two and one-quarter inches (57 millimeters).

[0048] Width Wₚ of flat top 104 is typically within the range of about two to four widths of a toothbrush lying on edge (i.e., bristles extending laterally). A nominal width from the back of the bristle support to the end of the bristles is a little more than about one-half inch (about thirteen millimeters). Therefore, width Wₚ of flap top 104 will typically be in the range of about one inch (25 millimeters) to about two inches (51 millimeters). The width of mat body 102 is typically, but not necessarily the same as width Wₚ of flap top 104.

[0049] It is to be understood that, as desired to accommodate unusual-sized toothbrushes or for any other reason, the length or width of mat body 102 or flap top 104 can fall outside the given ranges such that the lengths and widths can be longer or shorter than specified above. For example, in some embodiments, the length Lₘₚ of mat body 102 is substantially the same as length Lₚ of flap top 104.

[0050] Adhesion Tabs. In the illustrative embodiment, the right and left flap adhesion tabs 418 are defined as the regions that are laterally outward of respective fold lines D-D₁ and D-D₂. As will become clearer in conjunction with FIGS. 5C and 5D and the accompanying description, flap adhesion tabs 418 are adhered to mat body 102 (after flap top 103 is "folded" over the mat body) to stabilize flat top 104. Flap adhesion tabs 418 are sized to provide sufficient surface area to ensure that adhesion will not be lost under normal usage conditions. (To the extent that the bristle end of a toothbrush is in pocket 110, the bond created between mat body 102 and flap adhesion tabs 418 will be under tension.) It has been found that flap adhesion tabs 418 that have a length that is about the same as length Lₚ of flap top 104 and have a width that is about one-third the width Wₚ of flap top 104 is suitable for this purpose.

[0051] Aesthetics. The various edges of mat body 102, flap 103, etc., can be straight, gently curved, or otherwise as desired for aesthetics or other considerations. In the illustrative embodiment depicted in FIGS. 1, 2, and 4, distal mat edge 418 and distal flap edge 424 are curved to provide a pleasing appearance.

[0052] Materials of Construction. It will be appreciated that to resist exposure to toothbrush liquids, toothbrush mat 100 should be waterproof or water resistant. As a consequence, in some embodiments, this is accomplished by forming mat form 400 from an inherently waterproof material, such as a plastic. In some other embodiments, a non-waterproof or non-water-resistant primary material is treated with a coating that imparts water resistance or a water proof characteristic to the toothbrush mat. For example, in some embodiments, a primary material is laminated to impart water resistance. Desirable, but not necessary attributes of the selected primary material is that it is inexpensive, readily cut, lightweight, flexible/bendable, and suitable for receiving print and coloring, among any other attributes. Examples of suitable non-waterproof or non-water-resistant primary materials include, without limitation, paper, cardboard, and/or card stock. The water-resistant coating is suitably selected from plastic and/or wax, or other materials known to those skilled in the art.

[0053] Assembly. Once mat form 400 is appropriately treated (e.g., laminated, etc.), the formation of toothbrush mat 100 involves little more than a series of partial rotations (i.e., folds) about various fold lines. This process is illustrated in FIGS. 5A through 5B.

[0054] For FIGS. 5A and 5B, mat form 400 is viewed from the perspective depicted in FIG. 4 as View A. This perspective is an eye-level view along the surface of mat form 400 in the direction indicated.

[0055] FIG. 5A depicts the partial rotation or folding of flap adhesion tabs 418 and flap standoffs 106B and 106C about respective right and left fold lines C-C₁ and C-C₂. This rotates the flap standoffs and flap adhesions tabs from the orientation depicted in FIG. 4, in which all of mat form 400 lies flat in a plane, to an orientation in which flap standoffs 106B and 106C and flap adhesion tabs 418 are upright (on end), perpendicular to mat body 102 and flap top 104.

[0056] FIG. 5B depicts the partial rotation of flap adhesion tabs 418 about fold lines D-D₁ and D-D₂. This rotates the flap adhesions tabs from the orientation depicted in FIG. 5A, to one in which the adhesion tabs are oriented in a plane that is
substantially parallel to flap top 104 and mat body 102. This rotation also defines standoffs 106A and 106C.

[0057] For FIGS. 5C and 5D, mat form 400 is viewed from the perspective depicted in FIG. 4 as View B. This perspective is an eye-level view from the side of mat form 400 in the direction indicated.

[0058] FIG. 5C depicts partial rotation or folding of flap standoff 106A and flap top 104 about fold line A-A. This rotates the flap standoff segment and flap top from the orientation depicted in FIG. 4 to an orientation in which flap standoff 106A and flap top 104 are on end, perpendicular to mat body 102.

[0059] FIG. 5D depicts partial rotation of flap top 104 about fold line B-B. This positions flap top 104 over a portion of mat body 102 and also defines standoff 106A. In other words, this effectively forms pocket 110.

[0060] The sequence of folds or partial rotations about various fold lines described above effectively converts or assembles mat form 400, as depicted in FIG. 4, into toothbrush mat 100, as depicted in FIGS. 1 and 2. It is to be understood that the folding process, as described above and illustrated in FIGS. 5A through 5D, is provided for pedagogical purposes, and is not intended to limit variations of this process. Those skilled in the art will appreciate that there are a variety of ways to construct the assembly process. For example, there is some ability to change the order in which the folding operations are performed. The initial fold, for instance, could be performed about fold line A-A (rather than C-C), and then followed with a fold about fold line C-C, then D-D, and then finally about fold line B-B. Furthermore, folds (a partial rotation about a fold line) will not necessarily be ninety degrees, as depicted. In conjunction with this disclosure, those skilled in art will be able to develop a variety of different ways to assemble mat form into a toothbrush mat.

[0061] Adhesion. To maintain flap top 104 in position, flap adhesion tabs 418 are adhered to mat body 102. This is suitably accomplished using an adhesive, such as glue or tape, which is preferably non-toxic. In some embodiments in which flap adhesion tabs 418 and mat body 102 are made from plastic or otherwise coated with plastic, a thermal bonding process can be used wherein heat, etc., is applied to melt the plastic to form a plastic “weld.” Those and other bonding techniques are known to those skilled in the art.

[0062] Ventilation. As previously described, in some embodiments, pocket 110 includes a vent. In the illustrative embodiment, vent 112 is disposed at the opposite end of the pocket from the access way 108. The combination of the access way and the vent facilitates air flow through the pocket. The air flow promotes drying of toothbrush bristles after brushing.

[0063] Vent 112 can take a variety of forms and can vary in (1) size, (2) number of vents, (3) location on the pocket, (4) shape. Furthermore, in some embodiments, toothbrush mat 100 does not include vent 112; rather, drying is effected via access way 108.

[0064] Additional Alternative Embodiments. A variety of flap configurations are possible. In the illustrative embodiment, flap 103 is an integral part of mat form 400 of FIG. 4. In some other embodiments (not depicted), however, flap 103 and mat body 102 are separate pieces that are attached to one another to form a toothbrush mat in accordance with the present teachings. In some of such embodiments, flap 103 is attached to mat body 102 (at mat edge 420, etc.) and then folded over the mat body in the manner previously described. In some other of these embodiments, flap 103 is situated over mat body 102 in its final position and then attached to the mat body.

[0065] FIG. 6 depicts mat form 400, which is an alternative to mat form 400 for forming a toothbrush mat in accordance with the present teachings. In mat form 400, flap 603 depends from a lateral edge of mat body 602, rather than being “in-line” with the mat body. As a consequence, to form pocket 110, flap standoff 606A and flap top 604 are partially rotated about fold line E-E, flap top 604 is partially rotated about fold line F-F, flap standoff 606B and flap adhesion tab 618 are partially rotated about fold lines G-G, and flap adhesion tab 618 is partially rotated about fold line H-H.

[0066] Unlike the partially arcuate flap edge 422 of mat form 400, mat form 600 includes flap 604 having flap edge 622 that is straight. As a consequence, to form a vent in this region, flap edge 622 is not adhered to mat edge 620 after flap top 604 is rotated to its final position over mat body 602. Flap 603 will therefore be bound to mat body 602 along only its lateral edges.

[0067] FIG. 7 depicts mat form 700, which is another alternative to mat form 400. Like mat form 600, flap 703 of mat form 700 depends from a lateral edge of the mat body. But unlike mat form 600 or mat form 400, mat form 700 does not provide discrete flap standoffs. Rather, mat body 702 and flap top 704 share a common boundary, which is fold line J-J. Likewise, flap adhesion tab 718 and flap top 704 have a common boundary at fold line J-J.

[0068] In the absence of a flap standoff, flap top 704 is advantageously somewhat wider than mat body 702. As a consequence of this width differential, flap 704 will be forced to bow “outward,” away from mat body 702. This will create the gap that facilitates inserting the bristle end of a toothbrush into the pocket that is created.

[0069] In some additional embodiments (not depicted), flap 703 comprises neither flap standoffs nor flap adhesion tabs. In the absence of the flap adhesion tabs, the edge of the flap top is adhered to the mat body.

[0070] FIGS. 8 through 10 depict embodiments whereby a toothbrush mat in accordance with the present teachings can be positioned vertically. FIG. 8 depicts a back view of toothbrush mat 800. This toothbrush mat has swatch 826A of hook and loop fastener (e.g., Velcro®, etc.) attached to its back surface. A second swatch 826B of hook and loop fastener is provided for attachment (via an adhesive backing, etc.) to a vertical surface, such as a tile backsplash, etc. Contacting swatch 826A on the back of toothbrush mat 800 to complementary swatch 826B will couple the toothbrush mat to the vertical surface to which swatch 826B is adhered.

[0071] FIG. 9 depicts a side view of toothbrush mat 900. This toothbrush mat includes hook 926 such as may be formed from the same material as the toothbrush mat. Hook 926 is suitable for engaging a horizontally disposed member, such as a towel rack or the like that is present in a bathroom. When so engaged, toothbrush mat 900 will hang in a vertical orientation.

[0072] FIG. 10 depicts a side view of toothbrush mat 1000. This toothbrush mat includes integral stand 1028. The stand is an extension of mat body 1002. To support toothbrush mat 1000, stand 1028 advantageously weighs more than the upright portions of the toothbrush mat. As a consequence, a small weight 1030 is disposed on stand 1028. Alternatively, in some embodiments, stand 1028 is formed from a more dense
What is claimed is:

1. A toothbrush mat for storage of a toothbrush between uses, the toothbrush mat comprising:
   a mat body; and
   a flap, wherein:
   (a) the flap depends from the mat body;
   (b) in an assembled state, the mat body and the flap cooperate to define a pocket that is dimensioned and arranged to house a bristle end of the toothbrush; and
   (c) the pocket has an access way that is dimensioned and arranged to admit the bristle end of the toothbrush to the pocket.

2. The toothbrush mat of claim 1 wherein the flap and the mat body are integral portions of a mat form.

3. The toothbrush mat of claim 2 wherein the flap comprises a flap top, a flap standoff and at least one flap adhesion tab.

4. The toothbrush mat of claim 3 wherein, in the assembled state, the flap is coupled to to the mat body by the flap adhesion tab.

5. The toothbrush mat of claim 3 wherein:
   (a) a length of the mat body is defined between a distal mat edge and a first lateral fold line;
   (b) the flap standoff is defined between the first lateral fold line and a second lateral fold line; and
   (c) when the mat form is assembled into the toothbrush mat, the flap top overlies a portion of the mat body.

6. The toothbrush mat of claim 3 wherein:
   (a) the flap standoff is defined between a first longitudinal fold line and a second longitudinal fold line, wherein the first longitudinal fold line coincides with a lateral edge of the mat body; and
   (b) when the mat form is assembled into the toothbrush mat, the flap top overlies a portion of the mat body.

7. The toothbrush mat of claim 1 and further wherein the pocket comprises a vent.

8. The toothbrush mat of claim 8 wherein the vent and the access way are disposed at opposite ends of the pocket.

9. The toothbrush mat of claim 1 wherein the toothbrush mat is water resistant.

10. The toothbrush mat of claim 10 wherein the mat body and the flap comprise a water-resistant coating.

11. The toothbrush mat of claim 1 wherein when assembled, the flap top is spaced apart from the mat body by a gap, wherein the gap is in a range of about one-sixteenth of an inch to about four-sixteenths of an inch.

12. A toothbrush mat for storage of a toothbrush between uses, wherein the toothbrush mat comprises a mat form, wherein:
   (a) the mat form is segregated into a mat body and a flap along a fold line;
   (b) in an assembled state, the mat form is folded at the fold line so that the flap overlies a first portion of the mat body;
   (c) the flap comprises a flap standoff and a flap top, wherein the flap standoff forms and maintains a gap between the flap top and the first portion of the mat body;
   (d) the flap top, the first portion of the mat body, and the standoff define a pocket that is dimensioned and arranged to receive the bristle end of a toothbrush, wherein:
      (i) the pocket has a first end and a second end that are opposite each other; and

material than mat body 1002 and flap 1003, or a greater thickness of material is used to form stand 1028.

In some embodiments, the toothbrush mats disclosed herein will include printed matter, such as a hotel logo, a brand name, or other useful indicia. Such information will typically appear on the flap top and/or mat body (e.g., flap top 104 and mat body 102 of toothbrush mat 100 of FIG. 1). For example, in some embodiments, a picture of a toothbrush is depicted on the surface of mat body 102. An “arrow” is located directly above the toothbrush image that points in the direction of the pocket. The words “Insert Bristles Under Flap” appear above the arrow for the purpose of providing additional directions, such as might be required for a first-time user.

FIG. 11 depicts method 1100 for manufacturing a toothbrush mat, such as toothbrush mat 100.

In accordance with operation 1102, a toothbrush mat form is provided. The mat form, such as mat forms 400 or 600 for example, can be stamped or cut in known fashion.

In embodiments in which the mat form does not comprise a water resistant material, the mat form is coated with a material to impart water resistance, in accordance with operation 1104. As previously described, this can take the form of a lamination process, etc.

In the illustrative embodiment, and as a function of the configuration of the mat form being used, operation 1106 requires folding the mat form to define a flap top, in addition to any other features (i.e., flap standoffs and/or flap adhesion tab(s)).

Operation 1108 recites forming a vent in the flap. In some embodiments, as a function of the configuration of the mat form, this operation is performed simultaneously with folding operation(s) 1108. That is, a vent is formed as the folding occurs. To the extent that not all embodiments of a toothbrush mat described herein include a vent, this operation is considered to be optional.

In accordance with operation 1110, a pocket is formed by adhering at least one edge of the flap to the mat body in a manner that creates a gap between the flap top and the underlying portion of the mat body. It is to be understood that in some embodiments, the flap includes discrete “adhesion tabs” that are adhered to the mat body. For use in this description and the appended claims, the phrase “adhering . . . the flap” is understood to mean adhering the flap adhesion tabs, the flap top (or anything else that is coupled to the flap top) to the mat body.

Toothbrush mats described herein can be pre-assembled and packaged individually. Alternatively, the mat forms can be distributed in bulk and then assembled by a end user, such as a hotel chain. In the case of bulk distribution of mat forms, such as mat form 400, etc., the mat forms can be organized as a “tear-off pad” (i.e., as in a paper tablet in which single sheets are removable at one edge and can be removed one at a time), in a roll (i.e., like toilet paper), or in any other suitable form as is known in the art. Furthermore, in some embodiments, the toothbrush mats (or mat forms) described herein can be sold with a toothbrush as a kit.

It will be apparent to those skilled in the art that many variations of the invention can easily be devised by those skilled in the art after reading this disclosure and the scope of the present invention is to be determined by the following claims.
(ii) the pocket has an access way at the first end, wherein the access way is dimensioned to admit the bristle end of the toothbrush into the pocket.

13. The toothbrush mat of claim 12 wherein the pocket has a vent at the second end thereof.

14. The toothbrush mat of claim 12 further comprising a coupling element for removably coupling the toothbrush mat to a feature that supports the toothbrush mat in a vertical orientation.

15. The toothbrush mat of claim 12 further comprising a stand for orienting the toothbrush mat vertically, wherein the stand depends from an end of the mat body that is distal to the pocket.

16. A toothbrush mat for storing a toothbrush between uses, wherein the toothbrush mat comprises:
   (a) a water resistant mat body, wherein the mat body has a length of less than about ten inches;
   (b) a water resistant pocket for enclosing a bristle end of the toothbrush, wherein:
      (i) the pocket is disposed at a first end of the mat body;
      (ii) the pocket has an access way for admitting the bristle end of the toothbrush;
      (iii) the pocket has a vent, wherein the access way and the vent promote airflow through the pocket.

17. The toothbrush mat of claim 16 wherein the pocket has a length that is in a range of about one and one-half inches to about two and one-half inches.

18. The toothbrush mat of claim 16 wherein the pocket has a width that is in a range of about one inch to about one and one-half inches.

19. A toothbrush kit comprising:
   a toothbrush; and
   a toothbrush mat for storing the toothbrush between uses, wherein the toothbrush mat comprises:
   (a) a water resistant mat body, wherein the mat body has a length of less than about ten inches;
   (b) a water resistant pocket for enclosing a bristle end of the toothbrush, wherein:
      (i) the pocket is disposed at a first end of the mat body;
      (ii) the pocket has an access way for admitting the bristle end of the toothbrush;

20. A planar toothbrush mat form that can be folded into a three-dimensional toothbrush mat, wherein the mat form comprises:
   a mat body portion, which is a relatively longer portion of the mat form and has a length that is in a range of about six inches to about ten inches;
   a flap portion, which is a relatively shorter portion of the mat form and has a length that is in a range of about one and one-half inches to about two and one-half inches, and wherein the flap portion comprises a standoff region, a flap top region, and an adhesion tab, and wherein:
      (a) each region is separated from each other region by fold lines;
      (b) each fold line demarcates a location at which the mat form is to be folded;
      (c) when folded, the flat top region overlies a part of the mat body portion;
      (d) when folded, the standoff region defines a size of a gap between the flap top region and part of the mat body portion that the flat top region overlies; and
      (e) when folded, the adhesion tab abuts the mat body portion for bonding thereto.

21. A method of manufacturing a toothbrush mat for storage of a toothbrush between uses, the method comprising:
   (a) providing an elongated mat form;
   (b) coating the mat form with a water-resistant material;
   (c) folding the mat form, along a fold line, into a mat body and a flap, wherein the flap overlies a first portion of the mat body; and
   (d) forming a pocket by coupling at least one edge of the flap to the mat body to create a gap between the flap and first portion of the mat body.

22. The method of claim 21 further comprising forming an access way in the pocket.

23. The method of claim 21 further comprising forming a vent in the pocket.

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