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Clothing Care



Texas Agricultural Extension Service • The Texas A&M University System • John E. Hutchison, Director • College Station, Texas

PERMANENT CARE LABELING

CONSUMER CARE GUIDE

COMMON CLOTHING CARE PROBLEMS

Clothing Care

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The availability and popularity of easy care clothes have rapidly expanded the scope of home laundry. An amazing variety of garments routinely go into the washload. The development of easy care clothing has provided convenience and savings on clothing upkeep. A readily available care label on each garment tells what to do and not to do.

With the advent of permanent press, polyester and knits, developments in easy care fabrics have rapidly mushroomed. Laundry equipment and aids such as detergents have changed to be compatible with these new fabrics and finishes.

Easy care clothes do not mean that damages resulting from improper laundry procedures have been eliminated. Improper care of clothing can permanently change the appearance, feel, size and serviceability of a garment. Additional money demands on the clothing budget are necessary to replace the loss of clothing made unwearable by improper care.

Permanent Care Labeling

Since July 1972, permanent care labels have been required by law for the majority of garments and fabrics sold. Labels must contain clear instructions for washing or dry cleaning, drying and pressing of the garment. Labels must be easy to locate and remain legible for the life of the garment.

Garment manufacturers are responsible that care procedures recommended on the label will not diminish the ordinary use and enjoyment of the item.

It is the consumer's responsibility to look for, read and follow the care instructions provided. If more care is required than the consumer is willing to give or a care label is not provided, it is advisable to make another selection. When care labels are followed carefully and the garment does not hold up to reasonable expectations, the consumer should inform the store and/or the manufacturer about the failure.

Because of limited labeling space, care information must be condensed. The following guide was developed by a special committee representing all aspects of the clothing industry to aid consumers in understanding the instructions that appear on the label. Be sure to read and follow all care instructions completely!

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CONSUMER CARE GUIDE FOR APPAREL

	WHEN LABEL READS:	IT MEANS:
MACHINE WASHABLE	Machine wash	Wash, bleach, dry and press by any customary method including commercial laundering and dry cleaning
	Home launder only	Same as above but do not use commercial laundering
	No chlorine bleach	Do not use chlorine bleach Oxygen bleaches may be used
	No bleach	Do not use any type of bleach
	Cold wash Cold rinse	Use cold water from tap or cold washing machine setting
	Warm wash Warm rinse	Use warm water or warm washing machine setting
	Hot wash	Use hot water or hot washing machine setting
	No spin	Remove wash load before final machine spin cycle
	Delicate cycle Gentle cycle	Use appropriate machine setting; otherwise wash by hand
	Durable press cycle Permanent press cycle	Use appropriate machine setting; otherwise use warm wash, cold rinse and short spin cycle
	Wash separately	Wash alone or with like colors
NON-MACHINE WASHING	Hand wash	Laundry only by hand in luke warm (hand comfortable) water. May be bleached. May be drycleaned
	Hand wash only	Same as above, but do not dryclean
	Hand wash separately	Hand wash alone or with like colors
	No bleach	Do not use bleach
	Damp wipe	Surface clean with damp cloth or sponge
HOME DRYING	Tumble dry	Dry in tumble dryer at specified setting—high, medium, low or no heat
	Tumble dry Remove promptly	Same as above, but in absence of cool-down cycle remove at once when tumbling stops
	Drip dry	Hang wet and allow to dry with hand shaping only
	Line dry	Hang damp and allow to dry
	No wring No twist	Hang dry, drip dry or dry flat only. Handle to prevent wrinkles and distortion
	Dry flat	Lay garment on flat surface
	Block to dry	Maintain original size and shape while drying
IRONING OR PRESSING	Cool iron	Set iron at lowest setting
	Warm iron	Set iron at medium setting
	Hot iron	Set iron at hot setting
	Do not iron	Do not iron or press with heat
	Steam iron	Iron or press with steam
	Iron damp	Dampen garment before ironing
MISCELLANEOUS	Dryclean only	Garment should be drycleaned only, including self-service
	Professionally dry clean only	Do not use self-service drycleaning
	No dryclean	Use recommended care instructions. No drycleaning materials to be used

Common Clothing Care Problems

The following chart lists the most common clothing care problems, causes, recommended preventative procedures and remedies encountered in home laundry. For many problems, more than one cause, prevention or remedy is given. Relate each to known circumstances concerning home laundry equipment, aids and procedures and the clothes involved.

Many problems can be eliminated by carefully following manufacturers' instructions for the use of all laundry equipment and aids and by reading garment or fabric care labels.

Problem	Cause	Prevention Procedures	Remedy
Absorbancy (lack of)	Too frequent, incorrect or over-use of fabric softener	Omit fabric softeners every fourth or fifth wash to prevent buildup. Fabric softeners should not be used in the same water with detergents or water conditioners unless recommended by the product label. When fabric softener dispensers are available on the washing machine, use as instructed or in the final clear rinse cycle. (Fabric softeners designed to be used in the final rinse cycle of the wash are preferred.)	If build-up occurs, apply liquid detergent and launder. Check washing machine or dryer to see if a residue is left in tub. Remove any residue with a damp sudsy cloth.
Color loss by bleeding, fading or migration	1. Type of dye, intensity or application used in the dyeing process	Launder separately and gently before wearing as instructed by the garment care label. (Nylon and other synthetic fabrics are color "scavengers" and pick up colors easily. Follow instructions on garment's care label.)	Solid colors may be dyed a darker shade. Garments that have received dye transfer in the wash should be rewashed immediately using appropriate bleach for the fabric. Repeat as necessary before drying to remove excess color. A color remover may be used on whites, but should not be used in the washing machine. (Lost color cannot be restored.)
	2. Drip drying	Tumble dry or dry flat as instructed by garment care label.	
	3. Prolonged soaking	Launder soon and frequently after soiling before soil sets into fabric.	
	4. Incorrect or overuse of bleach	If in doubt whether or not to use chlorine bleach, test one drop of a weak solution containing one tablespoon bleach to $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water on the underneath seam allowance. Let stand one minute and examine for color change. If a color change occurs, do not use chlorine bleach. Use the washing machine's bleach dispenser as instructed if one is available. Read the garment care label for warnings about using bleach.	
	5. Too hot water temperature	For heavily soiled non-colorfast clothes, use the washer's warm water pre-wash or soak as instructed. Read the garment's care label for warnings against using excessive water temperatures.	
	6. Too harsh stain removers	Follow instructions for use of each product and test for color change on the underneath seam allowance of the garment before using. If a color change occurs, do not use the product.	
	7. Perspiration	Launder frequently with detergent and bleach suitable for the fabric.	

Problem	Cause	Prevention Procedures	Remedy
Dinginess and Graying	1. Not enough detergent	Follow product and equipment instructions for amount of detergent to use for washer type, the degree of soil or size of wash load.	Fill the washer, using lowest water level and hottest water appropriate for the fabric. Add four times the normal amount of phosphate detergent plus 1 cup of non-precipitating water conditioner. Agitate clothes about 1 minute until wet and leave overnight or about 12 hours. Drain solution and spin. Do not agitate. Launder using regular cycle, no detergent, 1 cup non-precipitating water conditioner and appropriate bleach. Rinse as many times as necessary to remove all laundry products from the fabric. Do not use this procedure on silk and wool.
	2. Soil build-up	Launder frequently before soils set into fabrics, using correct water temperature and bleach, adequate detergent, and rinse thoroughly. Pre-treat before laundering with liquid detergent. When "hand wash only" is recommended by the garment care label, use as warm a water temperature as possible, extra detergent, appropriate bleach and a non-precipitating water conditioner with hard water. Rinse thoroughly. (Do not press soiled garments as heat sets in soil and stains that cannot be removed.)	
	3. Water hardness	Use adequate amount of low-sudsing detergents for the degree of water hardness and as hot a water temperature as recommended by the garment's care label. (For severe water hardness over 10 grains, an installed water conditioner improves overall washing results.)	Use regular wash cycle and as hot a water temperature as appropriate for the fabric. Add 1 cup of non-precipitating water conditioner and no detergent. Complete cycle. Repeat entire procedure until no suds appear during washings.
Glazing, melting, or shining	1. Too high temperature for water or dryer and iron settings	Follow garment care label instructions and use equipment settings appropriate for the fabric. When in doubt, test the iron temperature on underside of garment by placing edge of iron on seam allowance. Settings can gradually be increased as necessary. For a fabric blend, use settings for the most heat sensitive fiber.	Light shininess may be reduced on some fabrics by dampening and lightly brushing the surface immediately when detected. (Once synthetic fabrics have been melted or glazed, they cannot be corrected.)
	2. Incorrect or over-pressing	Press garments on the wrong side. Use press cloth or iron sole plate attachment when pressing on right side. Press by raising and lowering the iron, not by ironing or sliding the iron. A lightly padded ironing board helps prevent glazing by absorbing some of the iron's pressure. (Many fabrics such as knits and those with permanent press finishes do not require pressing when dried properly.)	
Insect damage (moths, carpet beetles and silverfish)	Storing soiled, damp or heavily starched clothing	Store garments clean. Regularly clean and spray or fumigate storage areas. Store garments in airtight or in cold storage. Cedar chests or cedar closets will reduce but not prevent all damage. Moth balls or crystals will protect woolsens from moth damage. Use 1 pound per 100 cubic feet. Dry cleaning or washing fabrics will usually destroy all stages of insect pests. Thorough brushing and airing in strong sunlight for a full day will rid wool fabrics of insects.	Mend holes appearing in garments as soon as detected.

Problem	Cause	Prevention Procedures	Remedy
Linting	1. Incorrect sorting	Sort clothes such as terry cloth and corduroy that give off lint from lint attracters such as permanent press, synthetics and dark colors. Launder separately. Turn lint attracters and fabrics with pills wrong side out. Remove paper products from pockets before laundering or drying. Clean lint filters regularly on all equipment.	Brush lint from garments, especially cuffs and pockets, or lift with tape. Turn garments right side out and place in dryer on air cycle. Re-launder on appropriate washer and dryer cycles using an adequate water level and detergent. Use a fabric softener according to product instructions. Do not overdry.
	2. Too little detergent	Follow detergent instructions for amount to use. (Detergents enable lint to be held in the wash water rather than redepositing on clothes.)	
	3. Low water level for load size	Use enough water to let clothes move freely.	
	4. Buildup of static electricity	Proper use of fabric softeners according to product instructions. (See "static electricity".)	
	5. Overdrying	Follow directions for using laundry equipment. Remove items from the dryer as they dry. (Fabrics may dry at different rates. Special knit cycles are designed to reduce overdrying of synthetics or synthetic blends.)	
Mildew	Soiled and damp clothes	Keep clothes clean. Never hang damp clothing in the closet or store them in drawers. Ventilate clothes closets. Leave light on periodically in closets. Clean storage areas with a disinfectant or a solution of chlorine	Treat promptly. Moisten stain with lemon juice and salt if safe for fabric. Test drop of lemon juice on underneath seam allowance and observe for any color change. If color change occurs, do not use lemon juice. Dry in the
		bleach, following product instructions. (Cotton, linen, rayon, silk, wool and leather are mildew prone.)	sun. Apply liquid detergent and launder using hottest temperature water and bleach safe for the fabric.
Pilling (formation of tiny balls that cling to the fabric)	Abrasion	Turn garment wrong side out for laundering. Use fabric softener. Follow directions for use. Sort wash loads by similar weight garments to reduce abrasion and launder accordingly. (Synthetic fibers and blends do not release pills once formed. Light lint accentuates pills on dark colored garments since the lint will collect around the pills.)	Shave or cut pills carefully from fabric.
Scorching	Too high temperature setting on the iron or dryer	Follow garment care label instructions and use equipment settings appropriate for the fabric. When in doubt, test the iron temperature on the underside of the garment by placing edge of the iron on the seam allowance. For a fabric blend, use settings for the most heat sensitive fiber. Use a silicone treated ironing board cover.	Launder scorched areas immediately. Apply liquid detergent and use recommended bleach. A solution of 3 percent hydrogen peroxide or diluted household ammonia may help remove stains. Scorch may be sandpapered from heavy wools. (Severe scorch damages fabrics and cannot be removed.)
Shrinkage	1. Manufacturing processes	Check garment label or hangtag for shrinkage control finishes. Pre-shrink fabrics before sewing.	Shrinkage of fibers or fabrics cannot be corrected once the problem has occurred.
	2. Excessive heat or overdrying	Remove from the dryer while still slightly damp, if equipment does not have special cool down cycle. Follow garment label and equipment instructions. (Items often dry at differing rates.	

Problem	Cause	Prevention Procedures	Remedy
		Special or knit cycles are designed to reduce overdrying of synthetics and synthetic blends.)	
	3. Incorrect pressing	Never place a really wet press cloth and then apply a hot iron that dries the cloth immediately on loosely woven or knitted fabrics, especially those of wool or acrylic.	
	4. Felting	If washable, wool garments should be carefully laundered and dried according to label instructions.	Some washable sweaters require blocking or laying flat to dry. Follow garment care label instructions.
Snags, tears or rips	1. Hooks and eyes and zippers not closed when laundered	Close all fasteners before laundering. Turn knits wrong side out.	Snags should be pulled through the wrong side of the garment with a needle threader. Never cut off a snag.
	2. Sharp objects left in pockets or attached to garments	Check pockets and garments for sharp objects such as pins, nails or paper clips. Spring-type clothes pins are best for line drying.	Repair all tears and rips as soon as detected.
	3. Incorrect use of bleach	Never pour or sprinkle chlorine bleach directly on clothes. Follow product instructions and read garment care label. (Never use chlorine bleaches on wool, mohair, silk, polyurethane foam, spandex or on blends of these fibers. Never use on fabrics with flame-retardant finishes.)	
	4. Too low water level for the wash size	Overloading for the water level used does not allow clothes to move freely and they may tangle.	
Static Electricity	1. Overdrying	Follow garment label and equipment instructions. Do not tumble dry unless instructed. Check label or hangtag for anti-static fibers. (Anti-static finishes are frequently not permanent for the life of the garment.) Use of a fabric softener, according to directions, is recommended for static prone synthetic fabrics. (Fabric softeners designed to be used in the final rinse are preferred.) Do not brush.	Temporary relief can be obtained by dampening the surface of the garment with water to reduce static charges. Launder again using appropriate washing procedures along with a fabric softener. Do not overdry when using the dryer.
	2. Friction from incorrect sorting	Sort garments to be washed and dried by like or similar weights to reduce friction.	
Stretching	1. Hanging	Store stretch knits folded over a hanger or in a drawer. Follow garment label for special storage instructions.	Laundering may temporarily return some garments to their original shape, but they will bag or sag again when worn. (Once stretched, it is impossible to return garments to the original shape. Some knits and stretch fabrics "grow" or fail to recover to original shapes, especially when worn.)
	2. Drip drying	Tumble dry, dry flat or block to dry according to garment label.	
	3. Too hot temperature settings	Follow garment care label instructions. (Articles containing rubber such as elastic may be weakened and damaged by too high iron, water or drying temperatures over a prolonged period of time.)	
	4. Incorrect pressing or ironing	Press with the grain of a woven fabric and not on the bias. Raw edges or extra fabric hanging off the ironing board may be stretched out of shape by pulling and then pressing.	

Problem	Cause	Prevention Procedures	Remedy
Wrinkling	1. Overcrowding washer or dryer	Follow instructions for use of equipment. Fabric softeners reduce wrinkling when used correctly. Check garment label for permanent press or wrinkle resistant finishes and specific care instructions.	Wrinkles may be removed by tumbling in the dryer 10 minutes with heat appropriate for the fabric and then 10 minutes on the cool down or air only settings. Wet or re launder the garment using proper washing and drying procedures if necessary. (Wrinkles can be set permanently by heat in permanent press or synthetic garments when improperly or overly dried.)
	2. Improper sorting	Sort washer and dryer loads by weight and type.	
	3. High agitation and spin speeds	If slower speeds are not available, manually shorten agitation and spin times.	
	4. Incorrect water temperatures	Use a cool-down water cycle before spinning. If unavailable, manually add cold water after hot has partially emptied. Use a cold final rise when possible. Dry as promptly as possible.	
	5. Incorrect drying	Use recommended drying procedure and temperature. Drying cycles that cool down are best. When using dryers that do not cool down, remove garments when slightly damp. Smooth or finger press into shape. When available, select dryer speeds appropriate to load size and type. Garments drying at different rates should be removed individually when each is dried. Garments should be removed from dryer and hung or folded immediately. Do not allow the weight of garments	
		to cause wrinkles. Tumble drying removes more wrinkles than line drying. However, proper line drying is effective. Shake clothes to remove as many wrinkles as possible and hang straight by the strongest part.	
Yellowing	1. Aging of certain fibers	Good laundering practices will prolong the original appearance. (Nylon, polyester, spandex, acrylics and some finishes naturally yellow with age. This cannot be prevented.)	Use a color remover on white fabrics. Never use color removers in the washing machine or on fabrics that cannot withstand hot water temperatures.
	2. Chlorine retentive fabrics	Read the garment care label for warning against use of chlorine bleach.	
	3. Soil build-up		See prevention procedures and remedy under Dinginess and Graying.
	4. Inadequate amount of detergent or high enough water temperature		
	5. Iron content in water (if severe, stains are reddish brown or black)	Before washing, run hot water a few minutes to clear water lines. Occasionally, drain the water heater. In severe cases, install a mechanical iron filter. To minimize iron stains, avoid using chlorine bleach.	Use a commercial rust remover on colorfast fabrics according to product. Rinse thoroughly. Do not use in the washing machine.
	6. Deposits of silt, sand and clay or color in the water may result from erosion, sudden pressure changes in water lines, decaying vegetation, or industrial wastes	Normal prevention is by water treatment plants. If treatment service is not available, a mechanical filter can be installed. Use non-precipitating water conditioners which hold minerals and deposits in the water solution and off clothes.	Stains are removed by laundering with bleach appropriate for fabrics.

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