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Fabrics : Buying, Sewing, Laundering

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WITH A widening world of new fibers, fabrics and finishes, we need facts to help us buy, use, sew and care for family clothing. It is difficult and confusing to tell by look or feel just what fibers are in today's fabrics. We may know certain tests, but our best guide is reliable label information to tell us how to use and care for a garment. We learn special qualities about fibers, but when they are made into fabric, then dyed, finished, or made into garments, their behavior may be very different.

Through the ages, natural fibers have had certain shortcomings. Their quantity and quality could be affected by drought or floods, or by diseases in flocks of sheep, in silkworm cultivations, and in fields of cotton or flax. Although quality of fibers depends on length and fineness, little could be done about their natural size, strength and weight. Now, man-made fibers can be controlled with scientific precision, but they, too, have limitations. None are perfect or "miracles." It is necessary to test each fabric construction to find if it is suited for a specific end-use.

Man-made fibers may be regenerated from a cellulose (vegetable) base such as cotton linters or wood pulp to make a fiber like Rayon or from a protein base such as corn to make a fiber like Vicara. Or they may be made from a combination of chemicals such as coal, air and water to make a fiber like Nylon. Many of the 20 or more man-made fibers today have a proved value, others are, still experimental. Several have qualities in common.

**Blends** in a fabric are a mixture of two or more fibers, either natural or man-made. Well over a million blends are possible. For a special use they need to combine desirable fiber qualities or eliminate the undesirable. In a true blend, fibers are mixed and spun into single yarns. In a combination blend, yarns of different fibers are woven into a single piece of fabric. Lengthwise yarns may be one fiber, crosswise yarns another.

Caring for garments is lighter work than in grandmother's day, but we have to know more about the varied fabrics, laundry supplies and equipment available.

When you fold back this flap you will find a reference chart giving you a few pointers about fibers, fabric finishes, uses, sewing tips, and care of today's clothing fabrics.
Labels Help You

We are all consumers. Haphazard buying wastes hard-earned money, but wise buying gives us more for our dollars. If wise, we know our family clothing needs, how much money we have to spend, the price of each item, and its quality compared to another.

Most clothing items have a brand or trade name which is a standard, but not a guarantee of quality. A brand name makes it convenient to find the same item again. Informative labels describe the quality of a fabric, garment or both. A guaranteed washable fabric, for example, may be made into a garment with an unwashable trim.

We judge a label's helpfulness if it—
- Defines fiber content and fabric finish.
- Describes qualities in order of importance.
- Gives information on use and care.
- Describes hidden values and qualities.
- Is stated in terms we can understand.
- Has name and address of manufacturer.
- Is in a form we can save for future use.

If we want good labels on the clothing we buy, we should buy from the stores selling well-labeled merchandise. Labeling adds to cost but our satisfaction is worth it. Ask for, read and use labels.

Then, keep up-to-date about labeling legislation. Fiber identification gives information, but no guarantee of fabric performance. The Wool Labeling act requires manufacturers to state the amount of wool in a fabric, and whether it is new or re-used. Present labeling requirements cover one-fourth of the textile fiber trade.

The Federal Trade commission also has accepted Trade Practice rules requiring fiber labeling on Rayon, Acetate, silk, and linen fabrics and garments. Other rules define acceptable pre-shrinking and flammability processes, and the metallic weighting of silk. These are steps toward other helpful rules about fiber content labeling.

We should tell buyers in stores and dry cleaners about the success or failure of purchases. They will relay comments to the manufacturer. Eventually, keen competition in the art and science of engineering new fabrics will produce even better ones than we have today.

If the Label About Care Says-

"Wash and Wear"—the garment can be laundered and worn with little or no ironing. Wash those with resin finishes in warm water (not above 120 °F.), mild soap or detergents, and pretreat oily soil.

These garments may wrinkle less if they are carefully dryer-dried than if drip-dried on hangers—the exception, "durable pleating" which should be drip-dried.

"Hand wash" indicates careful laundering. For very delicate garments or single pieces requiring a different treatment, true hand washing in a bowl may be practical. Avoid too much detergent or soap, knuckle rubbing and hard wringing. It is possible, by proper management of washer and dryer, to get equally careful handling (see back page).

"Washable" indicates moderate colorfastness or sensitive finishes. Wash in warm (120 °F.) water, with soap or detergent at home or at commercial laundry. It is best not to bleach.

"Not completely washable" or "Washfast" may be washed at laundry or in home washer in hot water (160 °F.) with soap or detergent and bleaching agent.
**FABRIC REFERENCE CHART**

### Natural Fibers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Uses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High-priced vegetable fiber. Most highly prized. Dense, absorbent, lustrous, very strong. Mildew resistant.</td>
<td>For the finest Fabrics for the sheerest use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxury animal fiber. Long, fine, lustrous, durable, strong, springy. Drags easily.</td>
<td>For fine and dress fabrics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloth of a durable, strong, absorbent fiber. Does not need a finish.</td>
<td>For the bestLady’s clothing, men’s shirts and accessories.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Man-Made Fibers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Uses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No one fiber or fabric has everything. Most fabrics of man-made fibers have qualities in common.</td>
<td>For the finest Fabrics for the sheerest use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May be styled to resemble many natural fibers.</td>
<td>For women’s clothing, children’s clothing,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Laundering Today's Fabrics

Remove stains while fresh and always before
the garment is washed (keep a reliable reference
handy). Hot water and soaps set some stains
permanently. Pretreat heavily soiled parts with
detergent solution.

Oily stains on Dacron, Nylon, Acetates and
resin-treated cottons and linens should be pre-treated with solvent because these stains become
permanently set when washed.

Machine Washing: Proper management of
washer controls, water, choice of laundry supplies,
and of timing can give good results with any
washer. Machines with greater choice in water
temperature, amount of agitation, length of wash
and rinse, or spin speed may be more convenient.

The "blanket technique" of soaking, brief agi-
tation and spinning may be used for garments
that would be harmed by agitation. Do not wring
or spin fabrics that wrinkle-set when wet and
warm.

Dryer drying for regular laundry loads:
• For faster drying remove as much water as
possible in washer, except for fabric finishes
which become wrinkle set.
• Don't overload the dryer—this slows drying
time and adds to agitation.
• Practice accurate timing — overdrying may
cause shrinkage, harshness and wrinkles.

Dryer drying for careful handling:
• Dry a few pieces at a time with dry towels as
buffers and absorbers.
• Tumble until nearly dry—usually a very short
period. Use a bell timer to remind you to be
there when dryer stops.
• Remove immediately and put on hanger.
• Smooth collars, facings, etc. into place. Gently
stretch puckered seams.

Although proper washing and thorough rinsing
give satisfactory laundering results, some laundry
aid products are helpful. None of them are cure-
alls for poor laundry practices. Most of them work
well to solve specific problems. The danger and
unnecessary expense comes from their misuse.

Water Conditioners or Softeners of the non-
precipitating type are a very effective aid to good
laundering. Add to wash with either soap or
detergent (amount varies with hardness of water)
and to rinse for thorough rinsing. Use for removal
of built-up soil and detergent.

Rule of Thumb for Handling Fabrics

Avoid prolonged agitation, either in wash-
ing or drying, on wool, silk, man-
mades, resin - treated cottons and
blends.

Avoid excessive heat, on man-mades (es-
specially Dynel, Acetate), wool, and
resin-finished fabrics.

Treat blends and combinations of fibers
according to recommendations for the
most delicate fiber in the combination.

Starches or Sizing Aids give a crisper new look
to regular fabrics or to finishes lost after several
launderings. Vegetable starches are applied with
each washing—buy prepared for convenience or
make your own for economy. Plastic starches have
a varying permanency and must be applied with
cautions—may require low heat ironing (over-
dosage may be removed with rubbing alcohol).

Bleaches are available in several forms.
Chlorine type bleach should be used cautiously
—never on silk, wool, acetates or resin-treated
fabric since it causes yellowing and fabric split-
ting. New finishes being developed will be
tolerant to chlorine. Dry chlorine type bleach is
safer, more convenient and more expensive than
the liquid type.
Powdered perborate type bleaches are mild—
may be used on resin-treated fabrics but become
effective only at high temperatures.

Fabric softeners or "laundry rinses" may prove
helpful for lending a softer feel to cottons,
especially napped fabrics, and as a static electricity
remover for man-made fabrics. Repeated over-
dosages may build up water repellency. Must be
used after thorough rinsing.

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