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Textile Care: Drycleaning and Fabric Care
Michigan State University Extension Service
Issued September 1967
2 pages

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TEXTILE CARE...

DRYCLEANING & FABRIC CARE



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

ATTRACTED BY LOW COST CLAIMS of the coin-operated stores, the public is discovering "do-it-yourself" drycleaning.

For the first time many are facing the perplexing problems involved in the proper care and maintenance of garments, draperies, slip covers and other articles requiring drycleaning. The homemaker is finding that there is more to it than just waiting out the cleaning and drying cycles and removing the finished product. She is learning about such things as spot removal, sizing, finishing, erratic dyes, synthetic fibers, and the hundred-and-one eccentric characteristics of the many different fabrics, fibers and blends which go into the manufacture of today's garments and household articles.

In short, she is learning that drycleaning is a science that requires knowledge and skill.

Each day millions of dollars worth of clothing and household articles are entrusted to the drycleaning processes. Most of it is given over to the professional cleaner, but the emergence of do-it-yourself drycleaning has created a number of questions and for the homemaker who lacks technical skills and knowledge, errors can be costly.

Because proper care and handling are essential to the long life and serviceability of any garment or fabric, this booklet has been prepared to explain some of the mysteries of drycleaning and answer those questions most frequently asked by the consumer.

This folder is reprinted through courtesy of the Better Business Bureau of Greater St. Louis, Inc. It appeared originally under the title, "Here's Help on Drycleaning & Fabric Care."

Most reputable manufacturers supply either cleaning or laundering instruction tags on garments constructed of fibers requiring special attention. The homemaker should take extra care to preserve these tags or labels and observe them when the time comes to clean or launder the fabrics involved.

WHAT IS MEANT BY "DRYCLEANING"?

Drycleaning is not actually "dry." It is a process which involves the immersion and agitation of a garment in a chemical solvent. There are two general classifications of drycleaning solvent: 1) Petroleum, and 2) Synthetics of various chemical compositions. Special soaps and detergents are often used in combination with drycleaning solvents.

SHOULD ALL FABRICS RECEIVE THE SAME TREATMENT?

No. Special care must be taken in sorting and classifying articles to be cleaned, according to the fabric, color, prints, etc. Processes for the correct cleaning and drying cycles, and drying temperatures vary for many items. Knit sweaters, for example, should be run on short cycles and dried at low temperatures to prevent shrinkage and pilling (fuzz balls).

WHY ARE SOME GARMENTS LIMP AFTER CLEANING?

It is not the drycleaning process which gives a garment body. This is accomplished in the pressing or

For other information on buying and caring for textile products, you may be interested in the following bulletins:

- 400 Using Modern Laundry Aids
- 401 Problems in Textile Care
- 402 Easy Care—Do I Select It At the Store?
- 403 Give Labels a Try Before You Buy
- 404 Keeping Clothes in Service

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"finishing" of the garment. Wool suits, coats, trousers and the like are pressed under 65 pounds per square inch of pressure in order to obtain correct creases and proper finish. Often, no mechanical pressure is needed — only air and steam are applied.

WILL WATER OR DRYCLEANING SOLVENTS REMOVE MOST STAINS?

Generally speaking, water will remove only those stains which water soluble substances (non-greasy) have caused. Drycleaning solvents will remove some stains, but have no effect on others. Stubborn or "set" stains must be removed individually by the dry cleaner with special treatments called "spotting." Paint, inks, dyes and food stains are among this group. Skill, specialized solvents and formulas, knowledge of fabrics and dyes/stuffs are essential to the satisfactory removal of stains and spots. It is important to identify stains so the dry cleaner will know which methods he must use.

WHAT ARE "INVISIBLE STAINS"? WHAT CAUSES THEM?

These are stains which are not apparent until the garment is cleaned. Perfume, hair spray, and cold wave solutions are examples of the everyday household items which can cause invisible stains. These only show up when subjected to the drycleaning, drying, or pressing processes. Whenever something is spilled on a garment or fabric, whether or not a stain appears, it should be sent to the cleaner with a note attached explaining what was spilled, so that special attention can be given to try to prevent permanent damage.

WHAT IS "FUGITIVE" DYE?

This is a term applied to dye which "bleeds and runs" when subjected to cleaning solvents. It contaminates the cleaning solvent and transfers to other garments. A skilled dry cleaner minimizes the danger from this type of dye by careful color classification before dry-cleaning. A constant check must be kept on the solvent temperature and its filtration to be sure that it is free from contamination. This is to assure that garments will not be damaged by fugitive dyes, or other substances from previous loads.

CAN SILKS AND OTHER DELICATE FABRICS BE CLEANED IN DO-IT-YOURSELF EQUIPMENT?

Because of the fixed cleaning and drying cycles of do-it-yourself drycleaning machinery, it is unwise to attempt to clean silks and certain fabrics in this manner. Silk garments should be dipped by hand, dried and pressed by hand. Fiberglass and fabrics containing metallic threads must also be treated with special care. Too much agitation in the machinery would break the fibers in these fabrics causing permanent damage.

DO MOST OTHER FABRICS LEND THEMSELVES TO PROPER CLEANING BY THE DO-IT-YOURSELF METHODS?

For some things it's fine.

As far as cleaning is concerned, most serviceable fabrics can be accommodated by the do-it-yourself methods. Some man-made textile fibers have crease and shape-holding qualities that require little pressing or finishing. But there are a number of man-made, or synthetic fibers and blends which require special handling. Most do-it-yourself establishments have posted warnings in their stores and on the machines noting the type of fabrics, fibers or materials such as plastics, fiberglass, furs, leathers, suede, etc., that should not be cleaned in the machines.

CAN LIGHT AND DARK COLORED ARTICLES, OR ARTICLES OF DIFFERENT FABRICS, BE SAFELY CLEANED TOGETHER IN ONE LOAD?

For best results, items to be cleaned should be separated according to color and fabric. Each is an important factor in determining the proper cleaning methods.

AFTER DRYCLEANING, DRAPERIES WERE FADED AND SHRUNK. WHY?

Most draperies will shrink during the drycleaning process, particularly when submitted to tumble-drying. Draperies should be measured before cleaning and after cleaning, they should be hung to dry or placed on a special table or drying rack where they may be stretched to the original size while drying. In addition to shrinkage, draperies are subject to other damage which is not apparent before drycleaning. Long exposure to sunlight can cause fading and rotting of fibers and atmospheric conditions present in every home (heating fumes, dust particles, moisture, etc.) can create invisible stains and work a damage on draperies.

WHAT ARE THE PROPER STEPS IN PROCESSING GARMENTS IN A PROFESSIONAL DRY-CLEANING PLANT?

When items are received in a professional drycleaning plant they are marked for identification and inspected. Any rips, tears, and stains are noted, garments are checked for type of fabric or construction, trim, belts, or buttons, etc., which may require special handling.

Articles are then sorted according to types with woollens and worsted items separated from silks and synthetics.

Next, they are classified according to white, light and dark colors. Articles requiring special handling are separated from those to be cleaned by regular procedures.

Pockets, cuffs and seams are brushed to remove loose soil and lint. This helps obtain better finishing by eliminating shine or seam impressions. This is the time to attend to those spots and stains which must be removed by pre-spotting or pre-brushing methods before cleaning.

When garments are cleaned and free from spot and stain, they are sent to the proper finishing department. Here, good judgment and a knowledge of fabric and garment construction are again important. A technician must decide which of several types of presses or other procedures will give the correct finish. Some garments will require pressing under pressure, some will be finished with steam and air, and others may demand hard pressing.

Issued in furtherance of cooperative extension work in agriculture and home economics, sets of May 8, and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U. S. Department of Agriculture. George S. McIntyre, Director, Cooperative Extension Service, Michigan State University, E. Lansing, Michigan.

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