

COLOR FAILURE ON SILK

Silk, one of nature's most luxurious fibers, is becoming more and more popular in the fashion industry. The colors and weaves used for silk fabrics are endless, which can pose problems for cleaners and consumers. Silk fabrics can be used for most types of garments and may also be used in some home furnishings.

PROBLEMS AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

There are many problems that may occur due to the limited colorfastness of the fabric. These include:

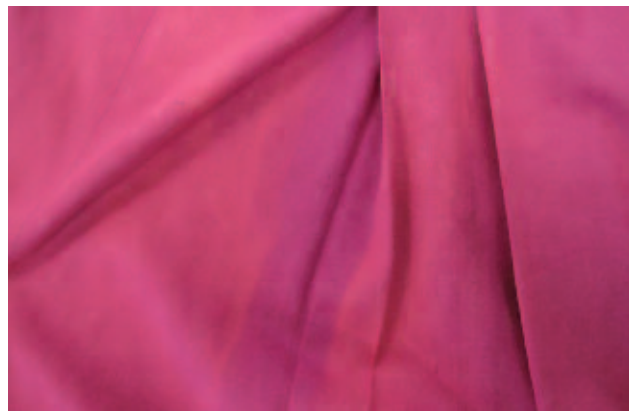
- **Color Rubs Off During Wear.** Friction or abrasion on silk fibers can lead to color loss. Areas that receive the most abrasion will show signs of color loss first. These areas will include the neckline and collar fold, inside of the elbow, underarms, bottom of shirts that are tucked into pants, inner thighs, and seats of pants.
- **Solvent-Soluble Finishes.** In some instances, a finish is applied to silk fabrics to improve the luster or sheen. When this finish is removed in drycleaning, the result is a silk fabric that no longer appears as shiny or appears to be a different shade or color.
- **Solvent-Soluble Dyes.** This type of color loss may occur in the first care process or may be progressive and not noticeable until after the item has been cleaned a few times. For this reason, it is recommended that all matching pieces of an outfit be cleaned together.
- **Dye Bleeding on Multi-Colored Fabrics.** This type of staining may occur during drycleaning or wetcleaning procedures.
- **Water-Soluble Dyes on Washable Silks.** To prevent staining of other garments, these items should be wetcleaned separately.
- **Water Soluble Dye Transfer from Use.** When multicolored silks come in contact with water based substances, the dye from one color can bleed onto another. This can occur from contact with any water source such as spillage of food or beverages, contact with perspiration, or even being caught in the rain.
- **Salt and Pepper.** Manufacturers may often mix light and dark colored yarns within a fabric to produce a desired effect. This type of mixture is commonly referred to as "salt and pepper." In some cases, the darker yarns may be sensitive to moisture and bleed into the lighter colored yarns thus staining the fabric. Check for colorfastness to

moisture before attempting any stain removal procedures on these types of fabrics. Often the dye will bleed immediately upon contact with water, steam, or detergent. This type of staining cannot be corrected.



This fabric is made with both black and white yarns. The black yarns have bled into the white ones, causing permanent damage.

- **Light Fading.** Silk fabrics are more prone to fading from light exposure than most fabrics. This is especially true for bright, vivid colors, such as blues, greens, reds, and purples. Light sources capable of causing color loss include sunlight, artificial light, and ultraviolet light. Fading of this type can result from even the most minimal exposure to light sources. Never place silk items in direct exposure to light. The original color of the fabric can be seen in the areas protected from light, such as inside the seam allowance, under the collar, or pleats, inside pockets, or on the backside of the fabric.



Light has faded this silk garment. The original color can still be seen under the pleats.

STAIN REMOVAL:

- **Dryside:** Stain removal procedures on the dryside usually do not result in damage. However, some dyes on

printed garments may bleed during stain removal procedures. It is best to test for colorfastness before using any dryside stain removal agents.

- **Wetside:** Before any wetside stain removal procedure is attempted, test for colorfastness. In some instances, the dyes may bleed, which can result in an overall lightening of color. Rings may form after wetside stain removal procedures. These rings may improve by feathering the area. Place a towel under the affected area. Hold the steam gun four inches above the fabric at the center of the ring. Lightly steam in a circular motion while raising the steam gun to nine inches. Steam just beyond the outer edge of the ring. Remove the towel. Dry over the nose of the board working from the outer edge to the center.
- When attempting wetside stain removal procedures on silk fabrics, **NEVER** rub the fabric while it is damp. Severe chafing and lightening of color will occur. Improper use of spotting brushes, spatulas, or bones can also result in localized surface chafing. Before cleaning silk garments, make sure the fabric is completely dry. Otherwise, chafing, color loss, and, in some cases, wrinkling may occur in the area.



Rubbing while the fabric is wet can cause chafing.

RESTORATION:

In some cases, the intensity of color loss or chafing on silk fabrics may be restored by using a mineral oil bath. You can purchase ready-made products from your supplier or create your own by mixing 8-10 ounces of white mineral oil (available at most grocery stores) per gallon of solvent. Immerse the damaged item in the mixture until saturated. Remove from the bath, extract lightly in the drycleaning machine, and tumble dry. This procedure is temporary and will have to be repeated after each drycleaning process. Lightening or darkening of the color due to contact with moisture may also be improved by immersing the item in water. This procedure may even out the dye, making it appear uniform. When removing the garment from the water, do not twist or wring the fabric. The item should then be air dried and finished. It should be noted that some silk fabrics may shrink or have a texture change after immersion in water or wetcleaning.

FINISHING:

Misting with water during finishing may cause water spots on some silks. If so, apply a leveling agent and reclean. Water spots will also be removed by wetcleaning.