

How can I stop dark clothes from fading when I wash them?

You may be able to extend the look of the blacks and brightly coloured garments by the following:

- If only mildly dirty, wash in small washer load, or wash separately on delicate, or hand wash.
- Turn the garments inside out to wash. This reduces the amount of abrasion the clothes experience during washing.
- Use mild detergent and avoid using too much detergent. Harsh detergents are hard on dyes.
- Do not leave in the dryer too long. Take out when still slightly damp. The heat in the dryer ages fabrics.
- Dyes are also affected by sunlight, and from abrasive wear.

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How can I remove burnt starch residue from an iron?

Try heating equal parts of vinegar and salt in a small pan. Rub the solution on a cool iron, and wipe dry.

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I would like to know how to best remove a curry stain from a light coloured washable shirt. (Tumeric is the yellowing agent in curry sauce and has left behind a yellow stain.)

Curry/tumeric stains can be very difficult to impossible to remove. First try soaking in a solution of enzyme product, i.e., Biz. (Follow the instructions on the package). If stains do not come out try making a paste out of baking soda and water. Leave the paste on as long as it is improving. Always read the care instructions and any warnings on the garment label before you start, and test for colourfastness before using any bleach.

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How can I keep my whites white and the bright colours bright?

There are several reasons why clothes lose their brightness. Common reasons include the use of too much/too little detergent, use of too large of washer loads, inadequate rinsing, and using the wrong water temperature. Read the detergent package for the correct amount of detergent for your type of washer.

If the washer is too full, there's more rubbing/abrasion on the clothes, which dulls the fabric/colours. So, don't overload, and use the right amount of water for the load. Regarding the temperature, follow the care instructions on the garment label. Periodic

use of appropriate fabric bleach (all fabric or chlorine, as appropriate) and/or laundry boosters will help keep clothes bright. Sometimes changing detergents may help.

Many clothes have optical brighteners or fluorescent whitening agents (FWAs) applied, which help brighten colours. Unfortunately, if the FWA are damaged by sunlight, bleach, or simply age, there is nothing you can do.

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What are enzyme cleaners?

Enzymes are a type of protein found in living matter. Used in laundry products, they have the ability to breakdown protein type stains, such as blood, meat juice, dairy products, baby formula, and vegetable proteins. Enzymes contain amylase (for starch), protease (for protein), and lipase (for fats).

Be sure to check detergent ingredients, because some do contain enzymes. Enzyme pre-soak products include Axion and Biz Bleach.

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Is there any way to determine how much a garment will shrink?

Any fabric can be expected to shrink about 1 to 3 percent, even dry clean only garments. Manufactured fibres will shrink the least, and natural fibres the most. The shrinkage of natural fibres is often controlled during the manufacturing process, by washing and preshrinking the fabric before it is made into a garment.

Natural fibres which are not pre-shrunk, and some manufactured fibres such as rayon and acetate (both of which are made using natural plant matter as part of their ingredients) can shrink significantly...even several sizes.

Always read the care label before buying a garment. Dry Cleaning will generally shrink a lot less than home washing.

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How do you remove an undesirable odour from a silk garment?

The odour is likely related to the dyes used and/or the sizing/finish. Although it will tend to diminish with cleaning, it may not totally go away. You might also check with your dry cleaner.

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I have an acetate blend garment that has water stains and possibly alcohol stains on it. I have taken the skirt to the dry cleaners and they were unable to remove the stains. Any suggestions?

One downside of some/most acetate fabric is that the dye runs when exposed to moisture...even light rain. And, if washed, acetate can shrink significantly. So, the "water spots" are most likely areas where the dye has run. Unfortunately, there is nothing that can be done.

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I read somewhere that if you wash clothes in vinegar the colour won't bleach out. Is this true?

It used to be that adding one cup of WHITE vinegar to a full washer tub of water BEFORE adding the clothes would help to set the dyes. However, this doesn't work on today's better quality dyes.

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I sometimes find stain I have no idea where they came from. How should I treat them?

Here are some steps to consider for "unknown stains" on washable fabrics. Always read and follow the care instructions and any warnings on the garment label. Try the following in the order given. Go to the next step if stain remains.

- Soak the stain in cold water for 20 minutes. Work liquid laundry detergent into the area and let stand 30 minutes. Rinse. Launder with hottest water safe for fabric.
- Soak the stain for several hours or overnight in enzyme pre-soak. Launder.
- If the fabric can be bleached, launder with chlorine bleach if safe, or all fabric bleach. Always be sure the garment is colourfast by testing an inside seam first. Launder immediately.
- If the stain still remains after all these steps, nothing can be done to remove it.

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Is there anything I can do to salvage a table cloth, which has been stored with old, dried-on food stains?

Often old linens can be improved significantly by soaking in a solution of all fabric bleach and water. If food stains are suspected, use an enzyme pre-soak product. If the stains remain make a paste from baking soda and water and apply to the stain. Leave it on as long as the stain is improving.

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I shrunk a sweater made of 50% lambs wool, 40% angora and 10% nylon. Is there anything I can do to reshape my sweater? Sometimes you can restore slight shrinkage by soaking the sweater in luke warm water, wring out and then block it on a cork board, using push pins to hold it while you gently stretch it back to form. However, when the shrinkage is significant, there isn't anything that can be done. Dry cleaning is much less likely to cause shrinkage particularly with fibres containing angora.

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Can you tell me how to care for, and how to press velvet?

Velvet is usually made from rayon or acetate, which is a dry clean only fabric. If you need to have it pressed, you can do one of two things: 1) Take it to your local dry cleaner and have it professionally pressed, or 2) Press it yourself by using what is called a needle board.

You should be able to purchase a needle board at your local fabric store. It can be found in the notions area. This is a pressing tool specifically designed for pressing velvet fabrics. The top of the needle board has many needles protruding from the surface of a flat board. You place the needle board on your existing ironing board with the needles pointing upward, place your velvet fabric face down on the needles, and steam press with your conventional iron.

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Why do some designers and manufacturers use blended fibres?

Blending of fibres is done to enhance the performance and improve the aesthetic qualities of fabric. Fibres are selected and blended in certain proportions so the fabric will retain the best characteristics of each fibre. Blending can be done with natural and man-made fibres, but is usually done with various combinations of man-made fibres or man-made and natural fibres. For example, when polyester is blended with wool, the fabric retains the beautiful drape and feel of 100% wool and the polyester adds durability. In some blends the polyester even makes the fabric machine washable.

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What can be done to minimize pilling?

Pilling of a fabric occurs when groups of short or broken fibres on the surface of the fabric become tangled together in a tiny ball called a pill. Pilling results from rubbing (abrasion) of the fabric during normal wear and use. While pilling cannot be eliminated it can be minimized by proper handling during washing of the fabric/garment. Before laundering, turn the garment inside and out. Use a slower agitation and a shorter wash cycle. And, remove the garment from the dryer as soon as it is dry.

To remove any pills on fabric, pull the fabric taut over a curved surface and carefully cut off the pill with scissors or shave the fabric surface with a safety razor. There are also battery operated pill removers, which shave the pills much like an electric razor.

However, it's important to understand that once you remove the pills, they can come back. So you may find that you'll have to remove pills from time to time to keep your garment looking fresh and new.

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Are fabric softeners always OK to use?

Take a walk through a display of high tech apparel and you'll find a number of care labels that say "no fabric softeners." Many high performance fabrics and finishes, including microfibers, allow the fabric to breathe and transport moisture away from the skin to the outer surface of the fabric, where it can evaporate. This keeps the wearer dry and comfortable. The "fatty" material in a fabric softener attaches directly to the fabric and makes the fabric feel softer. However, fabric softeners can build up over time, and can reduce the ability of the fabric to manage moisture and breathe.

Frequent use of fabric softeners can also reduce the absorbency of cotton towels. The web site of Cotton Inc. provides the following tip for consumers: "Use fabric softeners occasionally. Overuse will cause your towels to stiffen and become less absorbent."