

About Care Labels

Care labelling outlines how a user should care for a garment or textile item. Garment manufacturers are required to attach a label providing appropriate and adequate directions for the care of the article so the article is not damaged when the user follows the instructions.

The care label must be easy to find, permanently attached, written in English and remain legible throughout the life of the garment. The manufacturer must have a reason for the recommended care instructions and must warn about any part of the care method that would harm any component of the garment or other garments that may be drycleaned or laundered with it. A care label must also warn when there is no method for cleaning—these typically read: “Do Not Dry Clean,” “Do Not Wash.”

Providing overly cautious instructions such as ‘dry-clean only’ or ‘hand wash in cold water only’ on a garment that a user can safely wash using other methods may breach the mandatory standard.

Where an article can be laundered or dry-cleaned or both, care instructions for both treatments must appear on the label.

Specific and prohibited care instructions

Care instructions may include both specific and prohibited instructions.

Specific instructions provide advice on what a user should do with the article.

Examples include:

- dry flat
- cool iron
- dry-clean only.

Prohibited instructions provide advice on what a user should not do with the article.

Examples include:

- do not iron
- do not tumble dry.

For articles that can be neither laundered nor dry-cleaned, suppliers should indicate this on the care label and adequately describe the recommended care treatment.

Delicate and multiple components

Sometimes delicate components of articles such as trims or padding in furniture or bedding cannot or should not be removed. When an article is made of different materials, suppliers must provide care instructions that are suitable for all materials, including those most sensitive.

Articles with multiple parts

Each detachable or separate part of an article must have a care label, even if the care instructions are the same for all parts.

The Care Label Rule applies to all clothing and textile products except as detailed in the ACCC publication *Care labelling for clothing & textile products –Supplier Guide*.

Care Symbols

In Australia, care instructions **must be written in English** and they can also include care symbols, but this is not mandatory.

Consumers can rely on the Drycleaning Institute of Australia as a resource for interpreting non-conforming instructions and symbols.

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Using a care method not specified on the label

If a different care method is undertaken, there is some risk. Professional Cleaners may, at times, suggest an alternative method based upon their knowledge, skill, or the type of soil or stains on the garment; or you may request a different method. Either way, the Professional Cleaner will carefully consider all options and advise you before beginning any requested process and may ask that you sign a release from responsibility form.

If there Is no label

All garments sold in Australia must have a care label. An appropriate care label must also be made available when purchasing fabric that will be used for clothing. Removing the care label entails some risk since care information or warnings are no longer available.

What If there Is a problem after care instructions are followed exactly?

If a garment is damaged or ruined at home even though care instructions were followed, you should return the garment to the retailer. If the retailer is not helpful, you may wish to contact the local Office of Consumer Affairs or alternatively, it may be possible locate the manufacturer via the Internet.

If the garment was damaged at a drycleaning store, speak to them directly. If they did not follow the care instructions, they have a responsibility for the results. If they did follow the care instructions, they may be able to assist you with a settlement from the retailer.

To make contact and resolution with a retailer go more smoothly, you should:

- Be prepared with a purchase record or an estimate of approximately when the garment was purchased
- Estimate of the number of times the garment has been washed or drycleaned
- State a resolution that would be satisfactory

Common Care Label Terms and What They Mean

DRYCLEAN: Any drycleaning process can be used and may include moisture, pressing by steam or steam-air procedures, and drying up to 70°C.

PROFESSIONALLY DRYCLEAN: The item may be cleaned by varying from a normal drycleaning process. The care label must provide specific instructions.

SPOT CLEAN ONLY: The only thing that can be done is stain removal without immersing or otherwise cleaning the entire garment.

HAND WASH: This is a gentle soaking process with very limited agitation by hand. Other information may include specific water temperature and drying requirements.

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MACHINE WASH: This instruction indicates that use of either a commercial or home washer is acceptable. The type of cycle may be specified, such as a gentle cycle. Other information may include specific water temperature, drying requirements, and bleaches that can or cannot be used.

BLEACH: Care labels on washable garments will usually indicate if bleach can be used and, if so, which type is appropriate. Common terms include: "Do Not Bleach," "Non-Chlorine Bleach Only," or "Bleach When Necessary." If the type of bleach is not specified, any type may be used.

TUMBLE DRY: Most garments have tumble or machine drying instructions along with recommended temperatures such as low, medium, durable or permanent press, hot, or no heat. If no temperature is recommended, the garment can be tumbled in a hot dryer.

LINE AND DRIP DRY: This instruction means that the garment should be placed on a clothesline or hanger when removed from the washing machine. If a garment is heat sensitive, the label may state, "Line Dry Away from Heat."

DRY FLAT: Usually found on garments susceptible to stretching when wet (such as jumpers), this instruction entails placing the garment on a towel in order to absorb moisture as it dries or using a drying rack with an open grid that allows air to circulate completely around the garment.

IRON: If ironing is recommended, iron or temperature settings are usually stated. Instructions may include: "Cool/Low Iron," "Warm/Medium Iron," "Hot Iron," "Iron on the Wrong Side Only," "Steam," "Do Not Steam," "Iron Damp." If no temperature or setting is stated, the highest setting can be used.