

Comet Care Tips

Here are some care tips that can save you some money!

Frequently asked questions about clothes cleaning:

When a garment's label says "washable", does this mean it cannot be dry-cleaned?

Not necessarily. The Care Label Rule states that only one suitable method of care must be on the label. Cleaners usually follow the care instructions, unless otherwise requested. If you want your washable items dry-cleaned, the cleaner may ask you to sign a damage waiver.

Does frequent dry-cleaning shorten the life of a garment?

On the contrary, frequent cleaning prolongs the life of a garment. Not only do stains set with age, making the garment unwearable, but ground-in dirt and soil act as an abrasive, like sandpaper, causing rapid wear of fibers. Also, insects are attracted to soiled clothes and will cause further damage.

How Can You Help Your Clothes and Your Cleaner?

1. Bring your garments in for professional cleaning as soon as possible after staining occurs. Stains or soils left too long may become permanent.
2. Discuss any stains with our cleaning staff.
3. Keep perfumes, lotions, deodorants, antiperspirants, and other toiletries away from your clothes. These products likely contain alcohol, which will damage some dyes.
4. Protect garment, especially those made of silk, from excessive perspiration, as this can cause dyes to discolor.
5. Have matching pieces of an ensemble cleaned together so any color fading will be uniform.
6. Protect your garments from prolonged exposure to direct light.
7. Don't press stained or soiled clothing, as the heat may set some stains.

Basic Cleaning Tips

If you spill something on a garment (i.e. ink, lipstick, etc.), do not put any other items on the garment to try to remove the original stain or "keep it from setting." Doing this would create a garment with a dual stain, thereby making the original stain harder to remove. The best thing to do is to take the stained garment to the cleaners as soon as possible and point out the stains to the counter personnel.

Never spray cologne, perfume, or any items that contain alcohol on garments. The alcohol will react to the dry cleaning process and could possibly damage the color of the garment.

When taking garments to the cleaner, please count the number of garments you are dropping off and we will be happy to make a note of the number of garments on your claim ticket. As well, customers are encouraged to check and count the number of garments when picking up their order. This is to ensure that you did receive all of your items, that you are happy with the condition of your garments before leaving the cleaners, and it saves you a trip to have an item recleaned.

What is Dry-cleaning?

Professional garment care dates back to the days of Pompeii when early cleaners were called "fullers". They used lye and ammonia in early laundering and a type of clay called "fuller's earth" to absorb soils and greases from clothing too delicate for laundering.

While 1690 is the first published reference to the use of spirits of turpentine for removing tar and varnish from fabrics, it wasn't until 1716 that turpentine began to be used regularly as a "drycleaner" for grease and oil stains to supplement wet-cleaning processes. Down through the ages, turpentine, a distillation of pine pitch, has had several names: oil of turpentine, spirits of turpentine, camphene, and "turps".

Even before organic solvent was used to clean garments by immersion methods, the cleaner of clothes was known as a "degraisseur", a degreaser of textiles able to remove grease and fat stains from cloth. The French name for cleaner was teinturier-degraisseur (a dyer-degreaser). "Degraisieur" was the common term applied to a master dyer who specialized in both dyeing and cleaning garments.

In the early 1900s, drycleaners began using spirits of turpentine, called "camphene", as a dry-cleaning solvent. This discovery quickly spread to other countries on the continent and later to the British Isles, led by John Pullar and Sons in Perth, Scotland. The new process became known as "French Cleaning", named for the earlier reputation and fame gained in France. This term continues to be used today signifying a special process requiring highly skilled handwork.

The first use of dry-cleaning soap was in Germany. In 1928, Stoddard solvent, which had a higher flash point than other solvents currently being used, was introduced. In 1932, chlorinated hydrocarbons-nonflammable synthetic solvents-were introduced in the United States.

Two types of solvents are currently used for dry-cleaning; perchlorethylene (PREC) and petroleum. While both perform essentially the same function, their structures and properties are different.

A solvent must meet certain criteria in order to be used for dry-cleaning. For example, an acceptable dry-cleaning solvent must be free of objectionable odors, and certainly must not leave residual odor in garments after drying. In addition, the solvent should be able to be safely heated to its boiling point for distillation purposes so that it may be continually cleaned and recycled.

In order to be used for safe and effective dry-cleaning; a solvent must have the capability to dissolve solvent-soluble substances. This "solvent power" must fall in a range that will effectively remove solvent-soluble soils (fats, oils and greases) without risking any damage to common textile fibers and dyes.

Solvents that are appropriate for use in dry-cleaning perform a number of functions. Dry-cleaning solvents dissolve solvent-soluble soils, such as oils, waxes, and greases. They also act as a carrier for insoluble soils. Solvents carry detergent, which in turn carries water to remove water-soluble soils. Lastly, in combination with mechanical action, solvents produce a flushing action on fabrics to aid in cleaning.

There are two types of dry-cleaning machines used in the industry for cleaning with perchlorethylene (PERC) or petroleum. One type is the dry-to-dry machine, in which the clothes are put in dry and come out dry, ready to finish. The other type is the transfer unit, in which the clothes are cleaned and extracted in one machine and dried in another machine before finishing. There are various options to choose from, such as filtration systems and model sizes. These options apply to petroleum as well as PERC.

The actual cleaning process for dry-cleaning is similar to the washing process. Clothes are separated by weight, finish, and color. Heavyweight clothes are separated from lightweight clothes. Delicate clothes are further separated and cleaned separately. Finally, light colors and dark colors are cleaned separately. Clothes with spot are also separated for spot cleaning.

The clothes are cleaned in machines that look like large, over-sized front load washing machines. However, this machine requires cleaning solvent, which is used over and over and continually cleaned during the cleaning process by recycling the solvent through filters and distillation.

With each load of clothes cleaned, some distillation takes place. As the clothes are dried, the solvent vapors are passed over condensation coils where the solvent is again returned to its clear liquid form and reused.

Finally, after the clothes are removed from the machine, they are checked for spots and additional cleaning if necessary. The clothes are steam finished and are ready to be returned to the customer.

All about Shirt Laundering

Wear Life Expectancy

Determining how long a shirt should last is difficult due to the variances in frequency of wear. However, industry experience shows that, on average, shirts have a two-year wear life expectancy. The number of launderings is a better measuring method. The average shirt should have a wear life of 35 to 50 washings. This will fluctuate depending on the amount of abrasion and strain placed on the shirt during wear, the fiber content, the type of fabric, and the laundering procedure.

Shrinkage:

Most dress shirts are difficult to shrink. The manufacturer has already allowed for the normal two percent and progressive shrinkage requirements. This shrinkage is usually not enough to cause a complaint. Shrinkage beyond this is usually due to poorly stabilized materials.

Shrinkage complaints can easily be resolved by measuring the collar and sleeve length. Measure the collar from the end of the buttonhole to the center of the button. Measure the sleeve length in a straight line from the center of the back of the collar at the seam to the end of the cuff. If these measurements correspond to the shirt size, it has not shrunk.

Holes and Tears in Oxfords

Tiny holes can appear at random throughout an oxford shirt due to the weaving process. These should not be confused with damage from bleach. Oxford consists of two thin warp yarns to every soft, thicker yarn in the filling direction. The unbalanced construction causes the thin yarn to break, leaving tiny holes. Manufacturers could use a higher twist in the yarn to retard the development of holes, but eventually any oxford weave will develop tiny pinholes.

In addition, tears in oxfords occur in the direction of the softly twisted, thicker yarns. All the yarns in an oxford receive the same care process, but the constant abrasion in wear causes the thick yarns to weaken and tear.

Buttons

Buttons may crack during pressing even though the press padding is in excellent condition and the procedures used are correct. The reason for this is that there is an inherent problem in the button or the way the button was applied to the shirt. The majority of shirt buttons are made from a polyester resin. The strength of the button depends on the amount of polyester in the resin; some imported buttons contain less polyester.

Off-quality buttons are graded because they do not meet the requirements in one or all of the following criteria: color, visual inclusions, chips or cracks, and uniformity of size. Some manufactures use less expensive, off-quality buttons to save money but this sometimes results in higher than average breakage.

Perspiration and Antiperspirant Damage

Perspiration, if allowed to stay in the shirt, will eventually stain and also weaken the fabric, allowing the weakened area to be damaged during washing. Aluminum chlorides found in antiperspirants will also weaken the fibers under the arm. Controlled use of antiperspirants and frequent washings immediately after wear may minimize this type of damage.

Fugitive Dyes

The Care Label Rule states that the color in a garment must withstand the recommended care procedure. If the dyes in a multicolored shirt are not colorfast to water, bleeding will occur. The dye will migrate into adjacent areas during the washing process. This migration of the dye into the surrounding areas is not acceptable.

Some dyes dissolve in water and are partially removed during laundering. After the first laundering, the lightening of color may be apparent, or it may be progressive and only noticeable after several care procedures.

Interfacing Defects Puckering and excess fabric in the shirt collar after laundering is caused by shrinkage of the interfacing (within the collar). If the shirt is laundered, and the interfacing shrinks excessively, it will cause the puckering of the outer fabric. The manufacturer must select an interfacing, which is compatible with the shirt fabric.

Collars and cuffs will have a mottled gray or shiny look in specific areas when excess adhesive is used to fuse the collar or cuff fabric and the interfacing. This excess adhesive softens in pressing and penetrates the outer fabric of the collar and cuffs. This can be prevented by the correct selection of an adhesive by the manufacturer, which is compatible to commercial laundering.

Yellowing occurs because some interfacings on shirts react adversely with chlorine. Laundries often use other oxygen-type bleaches, which do not react with chlorine retentive resins. If chlorine bleach is used on this type of fabric, yellowing could occur.

Stains and Spills

Stains from medicines, strong acids, the acid residue of foodstuffs and beverages, or liquid chlorine bleach, can easily damage a shirt. Spillage of a strong household product causes localized fabric weakness or color loss in the area of contact with the fabric. This type of damage may not show up until after washing. This type of staining is not unique to shirts.

Stains, help with Spots

If spots and stains are promptly and properly treated they can be treated without damage to the garment. Dry-cleaners have special equipment and stain removers to remove most of the toughest stains.

However, if in an emergency, you can remove small, fresh stains from your washable items by home methods. We offer this guide to help you do so.

Remember:

- Always check first for colorfastness. Apply the recommended stain remover to a hidden part of the fabric. Rinse out and let dry. If there is no damage, then proceed.
- Read and follow all manufacturers instructions.
- If you're unsure, check with your drycleaner before proceeding.

1. **Ball-point ink:** Using cleaning fluid, place stain face down on clean white paper towels. Apply cleaning fluid to back of stain. Replace paper towels under the stain frequently. Dry thoroughly. Heavy concentrations of this stain should be brought to your drycleaner.

2. **Blood:** Blot with cold water. Apply an enzyme detergent. Rinse with water. If the stain is still present, apply household ammonia. Rinse thoroughly with water.

3. **Gum:** Harden with an ice cube. Gently lift off any large pieces. Do not scrape with sharp objects that may damage the fabric. Wet with cleaning fluid over a clean white towel to remove final traces.

4. **Mildew:** Fabrics, which are badly mildewed, may be damaged beyond repair. If it is safe for the fabric, use chlorine bleach. Rinse thoroughly. Rinse with a small amount of white cider vinegar and another rinse and launder.

5. **Nail Polish:** Use colorless nail polish remover. Place face down on clean white paper towels. Apply nail polish remover. Replace paper towels under stain frequently. Repeat until stain is removed. Never use on acetate or triacetate fibers.

6. **Coffee:** Blot with cold water. If the stains not removed, apply liquid synthetic detergent (from your kitchen sink). Rinse with water. If stain persists, apply white vinegar. Rinse with water.

7. **Rust:** Use a fabric safe rust remover following manufacturer's instructions carefully. Rinse rust remover completely out. Best to take to a professional drycleaner for removal.

8. **Lipstick:** Using cleaning fluid, place stain face down on clean white paper towels. Apply cleaning fluid to back of stain. Replace paper towels frequently. Dry thoroughly. If stain is still visible, use a synthetic detergent and water.

9. **Chocolate:** Blot with cold water. Apply an enzyme detergent. Rinse with water. If the stain persists, apply household ammonia. Rinse thoroughly.

10. **Perspiration Stain:** Use method shown for chocolate.

11. **Scorch:** Rinse out light scorch with cold water. For heavier scorch, treat with 3% hydrogen peroxide after testing first for color loss.

12. **Wine and Other Alcoholic Beverages:** When fresh, blot these stains with cold water; even white wine and colorless drinks. Heat can cause colorless stains to yellow even weeks later. Spot with synthetic detergent and water. Rinse with water. If the stain persists, spot with white vinegar. Rinse with water. Finally, try chlorine bleach or organic bleach, if safe for fabric (test first for color fastness).

Remember:

- * Always check first for color fastness.
- * Read and follow all manufacturers instructions
- * If you're unsure, check with your drycleaner before proceeding

About Silk and Rayon

Silk - the very word implies softness, elegance, and luxury. This shiny fiber, produced by silkworms to form their cocoons, was discovered in China more than 4,000 years ago. It has been prized ever since for its many unique qualities.

Soft and fluid, rayon is a favorite of fashion designers. It gives the look of silk at a fraction of the cost. Rayon is regenerated cellulose material produced from a solution of a cellulose source (wood pulp, cotton waste, etc.) The solution is forced through a spinneret and subsequently regenerated to form the fiber. It was the first manmade fiber produced.

Wash or Dry-clean?

Both silk and rayon fibers dry-clean very well. If the manufacturer has not tested for appropriate care instructions, however, certain dyes or finishes applied to the fibers may react adversely to dry-cleaning. Washing may damage garments containing sizing and/or dyes that are sensitive to water. Also, some rayon water-spot or stain readily upon contact with any moisture. It is important that you follow the care label on the garment.

"Washable" Silk and Rayon

Washable silk and rayon have become increasingly popular. It is assumed that if a garment is labeled as "washable," the manufacturer has tested the fabric accordingly. However, this is not always the case. Some dyes on "washable" silk and rayon have actually dissolved in water, causing considerable dye bleeding and transfer. This is especially true on many darker colors; most pastels have a greater degree of colorfastness. It is not advisable to wash dark-colored garments with other items due to the possibilities of dye bleeding and migration. Multicolored articles should be tested for colorfastness before washing them.

It is important to keep the washing cycle very short, followed by rapid rinsing and drying. Never soak these garments for extended periods of time, as prolonged soaking will often cause dyes to bleed and migrate even more.

If you follow the procedure suggested on the label and the appearance of the item is permanently altered, return it to the retailer for an adjustment.

Dry-cleaning is not advised for articles of this type. Tests have shown that many of these dyes may be extremely sensitive to dry-cleaning solvents. When consumers bring these washable garments to be dry-cleaned, the dry-cleaner should clean them according to the instructions on the care label. If those care instructions are not followed and problem occurs, the retailer cannot be held responsible.

Sizing and Moisture Do Not Mix

One of the most frequent problems with silk and rayon is the tendency of the sizing or finish applied by the manufacturer to discolor upon contact with moisture. In some cases, just wearing the garment in the rain can cause considerable shading. The moisture effects of water-soluble food and beverage spillage, as well as perspiration, may also discolor sizing. If the article is badly stained by moisture, and labeled as "dry cleanable," it may be very difficult for a drycleaner to correct this shading. A bad discoloration may necessitate a short wet cleaning process. This should only be done with the consumer's consent.

Color Fading

Occasionally, dyes on silk and rayon are not colorfast to the procedures listed in the care instructions. Articles labeled as "dry cleanable" will sometimes contain dyes that bleed extensively when dry-cleaned. Deep colors may transfer onto lighter areas. The same is true for some articles that are labeled a "washable".

Most stains are water-soluble and required special spotting techniques using moisture that are not part of normal dry-cleaning. The degree of stain removal will often be determined by the colorfastness of the dye. Sometimes, a dye is initially disturbed by the moisture of

the staining substance and will not withstand the additional moisture needed to remove the stain. The stain cannot be removed without serious color failure.

Beverage Stains

Beverages such as soft drinks, wine, and mixed drinks contain sugars. A spill may be colorless and disappear when it dries, but later the sugar may cause yellow or brown stains, especially when exposed to heat. Be sure to point out such stains so that the drycleaner can use special pre-treatments on the stain prior to dry-cleaning. Sugar-based beverage stains cannot always be completely removed, especially on silk.

Chemical Damage

Some silk dyes bleed or change color when exposed to solutions containing alcohol. Allow perfume, deodorant, and hair spray to dry before you dress, and remove spills from alcoholic beverages as soon as possible.

Some dyes, especially blues, purples and greens on silk, are sensitive to alkalies. Many facial soaps, shampoos, detergents, and even toothpastes are alkaline enough to cause color loss or change. If this happens, talk to your drycleaner promptly about possible restoration.

Many bright colors used on these fabrics can fade from exposure to sunlight or artificial light. Some blue, purple and green dyes fade exceptionally fast, especially on silk. Store garments in closets away from any light, such as windows or electric lights that are left on.

Never use chlorine bleach - it permanently damages silk.

Perspiration Problems

Perspiration contains salts that can damage fabrics, especially silk. Perspiration is acidic and turns alkaline on exposure to the atmosphere. This can cause the fabric to change color and may disintegrate and weaken silk. Have perspiration stains removed as soon as possible to avoid permanent staining. If you perspire heavily, consider wearing underarm shields.

Wedding Gown Heir looming

Your wedding gown - you'll never own anything more beautiful, more special, or more symbolic of the most precious day of your life.

Perhaps it's the gown your mother wore, and you want to make your lifetime commitment in that same special dress. Or maybe you'll choose a dress designed especially for a bride of today . . . fresh, modern, luxurious. Whatever gown you choose; remember to protect it after your wedding day with expert dry-cleaning and careful storage. Your gown will always remind you of one of the most important events in your life.

Some gowns have decorative lace and embroidered trim that may be dyed with dyes that are not colorfast to cleaning. Some lace trims will turn snow white in cleaning while the base fabric of the gown will retain its ivory or off-white color.

Drycleaners find that some trim is glued on rather than sewn on. The adhesive used may not withstand the dry-cleaning process causing the trim to be loosened or completely removed from the garment. Sometimes beads and other decorative trim are made of plastics that dissolve in dry-cleaning solvents. Make every attempt to ensure your dress is dry-cleanable so that you can preserve your investment for many years. If in doubt about any of the cleaning characteristics of your gown, discuss it with your drycleaner. Your drycleaner may have processed a similar garment and could give you valuable advice on your expected purchase of the gown.

Caring for Your Gown After the Wedding

Most brides want to preserve their dress as a keepsake, perhaps for their own daughter to wear on another special day. Experts at the International Fabricare Institute, the worldwide association of professional drycleaners and launderers, recommend cleaning your dress before storage.

The dress may contain invisible stains caused by various foods and beverages, as well as perspiration and body oils. These will later appear as permanent yellow stains if not properly cared for in cleaning. On a full length gown the hemline will likely be soiled. If the article was worn in inclement weather, removal of the soil from the hem could be very difficult.

Insects are attracted to food, beverage and perspiration stains. Insects will actually feed on a stained garment and, while feeding on the stain, eat part of the fabric. During a later cleaning, these weakened yarns could actually fall out causing a hole. Point out any stains or spills to your drycleaner. They will expertly remove these stains if at all possible and clean and refresh the entire gown.

Some drycleaners will pack your wedding gown for you in a special box that will aid in storage. This is a convenient way for the consumer to not only store the garment but also it offers some protection from dust, dirt, insects and other contaminants in the air. These boxes are made up of an inner paper box into which the gown is packed and carefully stuffed with tissue paper. (White acid-free tissue paper is preferred.) This lightweight paper box is then inserted in a loose plastic bag. The garment is then placed in a sturdy cardboard container providing compact garment storage. Ask your professional drycleaner if he has these services. Unfortunately, no process or storage method yet

known can absolutely guarantee against possible yellowing or deterioration of textile fibers during extended storage.

Even after your gown is carefully stored, inspect it again from time to time. Stains that didn't show up at the time of cleaning could appear later, and should be attended to at once. An occasional inspection will assure you that your gown is not becoming damp or suffering from heat exposure.

Your wedding gown is worth the attention you give to its selection and care, both before and after the wedding.

Color Failure

Since earliest time fabrics have been enhanced by the addition of color. Colored fabrics are produced in several different ways. Some fabrics are woven from dyed yarns, some fabrics are dyed after weaving, and some fabrics are colored by printing the surface, often with several different colors. Modern technology has brought great improvements in color performance, but color failures may still occur from a variety of causes.

Color Loss in Dry-cleaning

Some dyes are soluble in dry-cleaning solvent. This may result in severe color fading if such an article is dry-cleaned. If two or more dyes have been used and only one is solvent soluble, a dramatic color change can occur. For example, the yellow component may be removed and leave a green garment blue. The only clue of the former color may be the thread, which was dyed by a different method.

The same color on two different garments may also be affected differently. For example, you may buy a dress with a coordinated jacket in a blue and white print. When they are dry-cleaned, the dress, which was vat dyed, may be unaffected, while the blue print of the jacket may fade so the blues no longer match.

Color failure is frequent in household items such as bedspreads and draperies. Often the fading does not appear severe, but it can be very noticeable when the item is compared with a matching item. For this reason, matching bedspreads and draperies should all be cleaned at the same time.

Water-soluble Dyes

Some dyes bleed when wet. This can occur in laundering or simply upon exposure to perspiration, rain, or water spillage. Some stains require water and water-soluble chemicals for removal, so even a dry-cleanable item should have dyes with some resistance to water.

Sizing Disturbance

Fabrics often have sizing to give them body. Sometimes water spills can cause sizing to migrate and form dark rings or streaks as it dries. This can be a problem with rayon, which is often heavily sized. Sizing can also become lightened on exposure to water. These discolorations are difficult to remedy on dry-cleanable fabrics because they require additional water to remove the sizing buildup, and this may aggravate the problem.

Crocking

Crocking is the rubbing off of color from the fabric surface. Crocking may occur from wear alone, along edges of hems and creases. Crocking can also occur in washing or dry-cleaning. This phenomenon is expected in some garments, such as denims, but the technology exists to produce deep colors that do not streak or fade.

Fading From Light Exposure

Eventually most dyes fade on exposure to light, especially sunlight. But sometimes color failure occurs rapidly on exposed areas such as shoulders, collars, and sleeves. Usually sunlight is the cause, but artificial light can also cause fading. Many blue, green, and lavender dyes are particularly light sensitive, especially on silk and wool fabrics.

Chemical Damage

Many common substances found in any household can cause chemical changes to dyes. Exposure to perspiration or to alkaline substances, which are present in many toiletries, can cause color change. Dyes used on silk can fade on exposure to alcohol. Even acid from lemon juice can cause bleaching on some dyes. And spillage of chlorine bleach is a very common cause of color loss and even fabric damage.

Fume Fading Fume fading is the result of a chemical change in the dyestuff. Acid gases that form in the atmosphere as a product of combustion react with some dyes to cause a gradual color change. This type of change can occur even while a garment is stored in your closet. It is usually not uniform, but is more noticeable on exposed areas such as shoulders and sleeves. Sometimes this type of color change may not be noticed until after washing or dry-cleaning, but these immersion processes cannot cause this localized type of change. Fume fading is most common on acetates.

Whites White is actually a color, too. In their natural state, many fabrics have an off-white or yellowish cast and are therefore often bleached to remove this natural color. In addition, many white fabrics are treated with whiteners during manufacture. These optical brighteners, also called florescent whitening agents, change the reflective quality of the fabric to make it appear whiter and brighter.

Different brighteners are used with different types of fabric. Some of these agents are unstable and may break down and lose their whitening power, so that the fabric reverts to

a yellowish or grayish appearance. Some fabrics may take on a pinkish or greenish blue. When a fluorescent brightener breaks down due to light exposure, the unexposed areas will be unaffected. For example, the front of a sweater laid out to dry in the sun may turn yellow while the back remains white. Brighteners are especially sensitive to light exposure when garments are wet. This is why some care labels specify drying out of direct sunlight.

Another cause of yellowing of white may be resins added to impart a permanent press quality. These resins can yellow when they are exposed to chlorine bleach. In this case, the yellowing will be uniform. It can be avoided by following the care label and using only non-chlorine bleach when this is specified.

Some white fabrics lose their whiteness just from normal aging, oxidation, and exposure to atmospheric soils. This process can be reversed in some fabrics by careful wet cleaning and bleaching, but often yellowing is not reversible. Drycleaners sometimes add a fluorescent brightener to their dry-cleaning procedure, and many laundry detergents include brighteners, but severe cases of yellowing cannot be corrected in this manner.