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**Ironing**

**WHAT IS THE PROPER WAY TO IRON A SHIRT?**

**STEP 1** Working with a damp shirt, start at the collar, ironing the underside from ends to center. Repeat on front. **STEP 2** Iron the inside of a cuff, then the inside of the cuff placket and the lower inside portion of the sleeve, above the cuff. Iron the outside of the cuff. Repeat on other sleeve. **STEP 3** Hook one shoulder over the wide end of the board, and iron from the yoke (where the collar meets the shoulder) to the center of the shirt’s back. Repeat on other shoulder. **STEP 4** Lay one sleeve on the board, and iron from shoulder to cuff; then iron the other side. Repeat on other sleeve. **STEP 5** Iron the reverse side of the placket, and then the front and back panels of the shirt. Finally, touch up the collar if necessary.

**WHAT SHOULD NEVER BE IRONED?**

Some fabrics are prone to stretching, scorching, or flattening under the heat and weight of an iron. Steam drapes, valances, duvet covers, and silk ties. Fabrics such as velvet, knits, and blends that contain stretch synthetics (such as spandex) usually require steam. To avoid creating a shine, iron dark clothing on the wrong side or with a press cloth, which serves as a protective barrier between the fabric and the iron.

**DO SOME FABRICS IRON BETTER WHEN WET?**

Steam irons generally provide plenty of moisture, but as a rule, cotton, linen, rayon, and silk should be damp when ironed. If you can’t iron them right away, place rolled-up damp garments in the refrigerator for up to a day until you are ready.

**CAN I MAKE MY OWN STARCH AT HOME?**

Yes, but it’s easier to use spray starch, which has a finer mist and a longer shelf life. To make your own, add one tablespoon of cornstarch to one pint of water; mix to dissolve, and transfer to a spray bottle. Keep the unused portion in the refrigerator. To use it, bring it to room temperature and shake the bottle to break up any clumped particles.

**DO BUTTONS AND OTHER CLOSURES NEED TO BE PROTECTED?**

Not necessarily, but ironing over any fasteners can damage the garment and the iron. The heat from your iron can crack or melt buttons and plastic closures. Any rough or sharp edges on the garment are liable to scratch your iron’s soleplate. Always close zippers before ironing, but make sure to leave buttons unbuttoned.

**WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO HANDLE CLOTHING AFTER IRONING?**

Always hang a garment after ironing it. Let the clothing rest for at least five minutes and up to 30 minutes before wearing it or putting it into the closet. By letting the fabric cool this way, new wrinkles are less likely to form.
Embroidered monograms look best when they pop up crisply from the polished linen around them. To keep them looking sharp and distinct, lay the monogram face down on a towel, and iron it from the back. Then remove the towel, and turn the linen over; iron the area surrounding the monogram from the front, avoiding the embroidered design itself.

Of the many household tasks, doing the laundry seems to be a no-brainer: Put clothes in the washer, add detergent, and press start. But regular washing can take a toll on your garments. Here’s how to prevent white shirts from turning gray, sort your bright clothing (hint: you need more than one pile), undo the damage when colors run, and perform many other tricks that will keep your clothes and linens in near-original condition.
HOW TO KEEP WHITES WHITE

The main reason white items turn gray or become dull is incorrect sorting. People generally have few all-white loads, so they tend to mix whites with colored garments. Unfortunately, some types of fabric, notably cotton, aren’t colorfast, so their dye molecules wind up in the wash water and settle on other fabrics, noticeably on white and other light ones. Washing heavily soiled items, such as athletic socks, with lightly soiled ones, such as sheets, can also lead to dinginess. Unless you add enough detergent to hold the dirt in suspension, it will end up back on the very articles you intended to clean. Water quality, too, can affect how your whites emerge from the washer. Iron-laden water and hard water (rich in calcium and magnesium) can render detergents less effective and cause staining.

WHAT TO DO

Wash whites separately. The best way to retain whiteness is to launder white items together in the hottest water the fabric will tolerate (water that is at least 120 degrees is most effective at removing soil). Choose detergent with a bleach alternative and/or enzymes, using the maximum amount recommended.

Add a laundry booster. You can increase the cleaning power of a detergent by adding a booster, such as borax, oxygen bleach, or washing soda to help maintain whiteness. Before washing, soak heavily soiled items using an enzyme detergent (available in the laundry aisle of many supermarkets) or oxygen bleach, and launder them separately.

Pretreat body-oil marks. To remove perspiration and other greasy stains, pretreat with liquid detergent, dishwashing liquid, or shampoo (use colorless ones to avoid dye transfer). Gently rub the liquid into the fabric using a clean toothbrush or complexion brush.

Accept less than perfect. Even with meticulous sorting, don’t expect whites to stay fluorescent bright forever. When white fabrics are manufactured, they are often treated with optical brighteners, which are chemicals that boost whiteness. They will eventually wash out and cannot be replaced.

Minerals and water: If your water has a high iron content (look for reddish stains in the shower and toilet), launder with an iron-removing product (available in the laundry aisle of many supermarkets). Alternatively, soak items in boiling water and oxygen bleach in a basin (this is suitable only for fabrics that won’t shrink). You may have to experiment to determine which technique whitens best.

HOW TO KEEP DARKS DARK

During the wash cycle, articles of clothing collide with one another and the washer’s interior, which causes some of the fibers in the fabric to break, exposing the raw fiber ends. This friction
disrupts the surface of the fabric, tricking the eye into seeing less color. Tumble drying can cause similar damage, though to a lesser extent. Also, washing darks in warm or hot water can hasten dye loss. With some fabrics, expect a certain amount of fading; there’s no such thing, for instance, as truly colorfast cotton.

**WHAT TO DO**

**Wash darks separately.** To help preserve dark items’ original colors and prevent bleeding onto lighter clothes, wash darks together using the cold-water cycle (60 to 80 degrees).

**Use the shortest cycle.** Select the appropriate setting depending on how soiled the clothes are and what fabric they’re made of. As far as detergents go, experts say that they don’t really contribute to fading. While some formulas are designed specifically for darks, any liquid detergent without a bleach alternative is suitable (liquids work better in cold water; powders may not dissolve fully).

**Line-dry darks.** Whenever possible, hang dark items to dry (out of direct sunlight); this helps maintain their original appearance. When you do use the dryer, opt for the lowest temperature suitable for the material, and be careful not to overdry your clothes. Remove them from the machine as soon as they’re dry or even while they’re slightly damp; this will help keep shrinkage to a minimum.

**Prepare your clothes for the washer by closing zippers, fastening hooks, and turning items inside out. Also, wash items of similar weight together -- that is, don’t wash a cashmere sweater and jeans in the same load just because they’re dark blue.**

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**The Wash Cycle**

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**Washing in winter:** Although cold water helps prevent dark clothing from fading, frigid outdoor temperatures may cause the washer’s water temperature to fall below 40 degrees, rendering even detergents designed to work in cold water ineffective. If you live in an area with particularly chilly winters, don’t use the cold-water wash setting during that time of year. Instead, select a warm-water wash and a cold rinse.

**HOW TO KEEP BRIGHTS BRIGHT**

As with darks, wear and tear in the washer and dryer as well as warm and hot water can cause colors to fade. Deep, bright garments often shed a little dye over time, so some color loss is inevitable.

**How to wash:***

**Separate by color intensity.** Launder colored items in two groups: brights and pastels. Wash brand-new brights on their own for the first few cycles, when they’re most likely to bleed significant amounts of dye.

**Turn items inside out.** Keep brights looking good longer by reversing them before washing. Choose the shortest cycle appropriate for the soil level and fabric.

**When colors run:**

Forget soaking your bright fabrics in salt or vinegar to forestall bleeding; it won’t help. If brights do bleed onto other clothing in the wash, don’t put the stained items in the dryer. The heat will set the dye, making any discoloration permanent. Instead, launder the clothes again separately. As long as you don’t apply heat, the dye should come out, even if you don’t rewash the items immediately.
More Ways to Brighten Whites

CHLORINE BLEACH, used once in a while, can refresh sturdy linens. Mix up to 1/4 cup per gallon of cool water. Soak 5 minutes, checking progress and stirring gently with a wooden spoon. Rinse then launder.

BOILING WATER AND LEMON whitens table linens. Fill a pot with water and a few lemon slices, and bring to a boil. Turn off heat, add linens, and let them soak up to an hour; then launder as usual.

No-Slip Hangers

Keep your most delicate dresses from falling to the floor with felt-topped wooden hangers. Photocopy the template (right) at 200 percent, then cut it out. Trace template onto felt with tailor’s chalk, and cut out; repeat. Adhere felt with craft glue, wide ends out, to both sides of a wooden hanger.
Removing Stains

There’s no single technique or product that takes care of every spot and spill. Here is a list of cleaning products to use along with the following Stain Removal Guide.

The golden rules:
- It’s best to take nonwashable garments to a dry cleaner
- Act quickly for stains on washable garments
- Blot, don’t rub
- Work from the outside in, so you don’t spread the stain
- Always test stain-removal techniques on a hidden area

WHAT WORKS

Combination Solvents (Shout, Spray ‘n Wash)
All-purpose stain removers, good on greasy stains.

Oil Solvents (K2r, Afta)
Dry-cleaning fluid, safe on non-washables. Good for greasy stains. Use only on dry fabric in a well-ventilated area.

Digestants (Biz, Era Plus, Wisk)
Contain enzymes that “eat” protein stains, like grass and blood. Do not use on silk or wool.

Absorbants (cornstarch, talcum powder)
Sprinkle on fresh grease stains, wait 15 minutes, then scrape off and treat stain.

Detergent
A mild, clear liquid dish-washing detergent is an effective all-purpose cleaner. Apply it straight, wait five minutes, then flush or dab with water.

Bleaches
Remove the color left behind by stains with mild bleaches, like lemon juice; white vinegar (mixed 1:1 with water); 2 or 3 percent hydrogen peroxide; or ammonia (2 parts water to 1 part ammonia; do not use on wool or silk). Use a cotton swab to dab the bleach, or place paper towels under the fabric, and use an eyedropper to flush the area with the proper bleach.

Chlorine bleach, diluted with water, is to be used only as a last resort.

Denatured Alcohol
Effective at breaking down some stains and evaporates without leaving a residue.

Mineral Spirits
For greasy stains, like tar. Air out clothes after using.

Glycerin
Particularly good for ballpoint ink.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stain</th>
<th>Washables</th>
<th>Non-Washables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grease</strong></td>
<td>Start with a combination solvent. Follow up with mineral spirits or oil solvent if necessary.</td>
<td>Use an oil solvent, then dab with cool water; dry flat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protein</strong></td>
<td>Soak bloodstains in cold saltwater first. Use digestant. If necessary, flush with white vinegar or hydrogen peroxide, using an eydodper, to remove color.</td>
<td>Use dish-washing detergent, dab with cool water, and blot out excess moisture; dry flat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fruit &amp; Vegetable</strong></td>
<td>Use a combination solvent to remove grease. Using an eydodper, flush with white vinegar to remove remaining color, then dishwashing detergent to remove residue.</td>
<td>Start with denatured alcohol. Using an eydodper, flush with white vinegar to remove remaining color, then dishwashing detergent to remove residue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lipstick</strong></td>
<td>Use an oil solvent to remove grease. Dab with white vinegar to remove remaining color. Dab with cool water; dry flat.</td>
<td>Use denatured alcohol. Dab with white vinegar to remove remaining color. Dab with cool water; dry flat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Red Wine</strong></td>
<td>Use denatured alcohol, then with an eydodper, flush with white vinegar for remaining color. For sturdy fabric, coat area with salt, hold over a bowl or the sink, and pour very hot water through the fabric from above.</td>
<td>Use denatured alcohol. Dab with white vinegar to remove remaining color. Dab with cool water; dry flat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>White Wine</strong></td>
<td>Flush with water, and wash as you normally would.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tea</strong></td>
<td>Using an eydodper, flush with lemon juice to remove color, then stronger bleach if necessary. For sugar, flush with water. For milk, follow up with combination solvent.</td>
<td>Dab with lemon juice to remove color. For sugar, dab with water. For milk, follow up with an oil solvent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coffee</strong></td>
<td>Using an eydodper, flush with white vinegar to remove color. For sugar, flush with water. For milk, follow up with combination solvent.</td>
<td>Dab with white vinegar to remove color. For sugar, flush with water. For milk, follow up with oil solvent.</td>
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<td><strong>Wax or Gum</strong></td>
<td>Use ice to freeze wax or gum, or place item in freezer; scrape or crack off as much as you can, then use oil solvent or mineral spirits to remove residue.</td>
<td>Same as for washables.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chocolate</strong></td>
<td>Start with a combination solvent for grease, then follow up with a digestant for protein, if necessary.</td>
<td>Start with an oil solvent for grease. Dab with white vinegar for color if necessary. Use an oil solvent for grease. Then dab with white vinegar for color. Dab with cool water; dry flat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sauces</strong></td>
<td>Scoop off excess. Use a combination solvent for grease. Then, using an eydodper, flush with white vinegar for color.</td>
<td>Scoop off excess, if necessary. Use an oil solvent for grease. Then dab with white vinegar for color. Dab with cool water; dry flat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mustard</strong></td>
<td>Flush with ammonia solution, then wash with dishwashing detergent.</td>
<td>Try dabbing with white vinegar; you may need to dry clean.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vinaigrette</strong></td>
<td>Use an oil solvent for grease, then, using an eydodper, flush with white vinegar for color.</td>
<td>Use an oil solvent for grease, then dab with white vinegar for color. Dab with cool water; dry flat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Soy Sauce</strong></td>
<td>Start with water and dishwashing detergent. Using an eydodper, flush with hydrogen peroxide for remaining color.</td>
<td>Use water and dishwashing detergent sparingly. Then dab with white vinegar for remaining color. Dab with cool water; dry flat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mud</strong></td>
<td>Shake or scrape off residue. For large areas, presoak in a solution of warm water and laundry detergent for one half hour. For small areas, use combination solvent. Follow up with white vinegar or peroxide if necessary.</td>
<td>Shake or scrape off residue. Use dishwashing detergent and water sparingly. Dab with white vinegar for color.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ballpoint Ink</strong></td>
<td>Rub glycerin into area; let stand 15 to 20 minutes; wash with dishwashing detergent. Or spray with inexpensive hair spray, and flush with water.</td>
<td>Rub glycerin into area; let stand 15 to 20 minutes; use dishwashing detergent and water sparingly. Dab with cool water; dry flat.</td>
</tr>
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