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# All About Silk

## Caring for Silk

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One of the biggest misconceptions about silk is that it is so fragile. Silk is actually very strong. One silk filament is as strong as one steel filament of the same size.

Many silks are hand washable. You can check to see if a silk is color fast by covering a small corner of the silk with a damp cotton cloth and pressing down on it with a hot iron for a few seconds. If the color or the print shows up on the cotton, then your silk should be dry cleaned only. If not, then handwash your silk in lukewarm water using a mild soap or detergent. Do not use regular laundry detergent as it is too harsh. Fabric softeners can also be used to reduce static cling. Follow directions.

When laundering silk garments, be sure that all soap or detergent residue is removed when rinsing. Do a final rinse with a capful of white vinegar added to clean, cool water. After rinsing, remove excess water by rolling in a towel so that water is absorbed. **Never wring!!!** Smooth all seam lines, and straighten garment on a dry towel. Hang towel over shower rod, out of



direct sunlight. Sunlight will cause yellowing and breakdown of fluorescent brighteners.

Dry until slightly damp; silk dries very quickly. Press on the wrong side with a dry iron. **Never** exceed a synthetic setting. A temperature of more than 340°F (171°C) weakens silk and causes the color to fade or yellow. (Some silks naturally yellow with age.) If garment has dried completely, redampen before ironing.

To whiten silk, you can use a hydrogen peroxide or sodium perborate bleach. This is quite effective in assisting in stain

removal also. It does not cause degradation of the fiber. Chlorine bleach will degrade the fiber and cause permanent yellowing. In case of color transfer to white or off white silk, it is safe to use Rit Color Remover®.

Certain types of silk should always be drycleaned — chiffons, satins and crepes. Also advisable is to dryclean garments with lots of detail even if the garment is constructed with a washable silk.

When taking your silk garments to your drycleaner, keep these things in mind:

- Take in a stained garment as soon as possible.
  - Tell the drycleaner what the stain is if at all possible.
  - Be sure to point out unapparent spills such as from white wine or ginger ale.
  - If the problem with the garment is loss of luster or loss of color from a chafed area, tell the drycleaner so he can give it a special restorative bath.
- Air garments after each wearing if not immediately laundered or drycleaned.

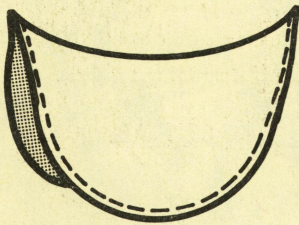
Never store silk in plastic bags because they prevent the garment from breathing. Use cloth garment bags, or make a covering out of old sheets.

Turn the garment inside out during storage to protect the outside and prevent fading. Use a padded hanger to prevent hanger marks and rust stains.

## Spots and Stains

Silk fibers are easily broken when wet. For this reason, you should never attempt to remove a stain from your silk garment by rubbing with a damp cloth. Instead, blot the area gently. Once surface fibers are damaged, a permanent light area may appear.

Perspiration contains chloride salts that will weaken the structure of the garment if left in the fabric. Prolonged contact with perspiration, deodorant (some deodorants and antiperspirants are more damaging than perspiration) or body oils can cause permanent staining as well.



To avoid fabric damage, have perspiration stains removed as soon as possible. If you perspire heavily, consider wearing underarm shields to protect the garment. Shields can dramatically decrease washing and drycleaning frequency.

Spilled soft drinks, fruit juices, mixed drinks as well as coffee and tea can develop into permanent, yellow stains if they are not removed immediately. These substances are usually not particularly visible when first spilled, but as they dry, they become more difficult to remove.

## Color Loss

Color loss can occur in several ways. One cause is water-soluble dyes. Some dyes bleed when wet with water. This can cause shaded areas in the underarm area because of dye bleeding when wet with perspiration. Color loss can also occur as a result of spillage of a food or beverage. Water and water

based chemicals are needed to remove these stains and may cause additional bleeding.

Some dyes used on silk will bleed when wet with alcohol. Alcoholic beverages, perfumes and deodorants all contain alcohol. Allow perfume and deodorant to dry before dressing, and remove beverage stains as soon as possible to avoid permanent color loss.

Some silks are heavily sized during manufacture, and some sizing will discolor when wet. This will cause the fabric to lighten or, more usually, to darken in color. This problem is not always correctable.

Many brightly colored silks will fade on exposure to light, whether natural or artificial. Light also tends to yellow and weaken silk. To minimize light fading and damage, store your silks away from direct light exposure.

## Yarn Slippage

Silk is usually a fairly sheer fabric, and loosely woven fabrics are susceptible to yarn slippage. Yarn slippage produces a puckered, distorted effect in the fabric. This is most likely to occur when the fabric is damp and is exposed to strain; thus, it usually occurs in the underarm, elbow or waist area. To minimize the possibility of yarn slippage, avoid buying or making silk garments that are tight fitting. The sheerer the weave, the more likely yarn slippage will be.

## Stains from Fusibles

Interfacings are often used to give the collar, pockets, lapels and cuffs stability and body. Frequently, the interfacing is fused to the fabric with an adhesive. Some of these adhesives are not resistant to drycleaning and may deteriorate, leaving dark spots on the outer fabric. These spots are usually permanent.

## Holes

At times, a garment may be so weakened by exposure to chloride salts that the cleaning process will cause the fabric to disintegrate. Chlorides are in perspiration, in some food and drink and in sea spray. Cleaning has merely accelerated the inevitable.

## Silk Look-a-Like

Obviously, silk takes much care, and obviously, many low cost synthetic



look-a-likes are on the market that require virtually no care. So why bother with the real article that is fussy and expensive?

While silk can be damaged easily by sharp or snaggy objects, it is one of the toughest fibers in existence and resists wear and age deterioration very well. Still serviceable and still attractive centuries-old silk garments, while definitely not common, are not unusual.

Many synthetics resemble silk in appearance. None, however, has the natural elasticity that, with its smooth lightness, makes silk caress you almost like a second skin. And not even wool is the superlative insulator that silk is for keeping you cool in summer and toasty in winter.

Rayon, nylon and the other scientific wonders conceived in the laboratories are monumental achievements...but only the lowly mulberry-munching worm can make real silk, and nothing but nothing can make you look and feel as pampered, regal and wealthy as real silk.

Silk naturally repels dirt. Always keep silks clean, and they will wear well.

Reference to trade names is made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended nor endorsement implied.