

BLOCKING KNIT FABRICS

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Knit fabrics are defined as fabrics made by interlocking yarns. Blocking is molding or shaping the fabric to its original shape and size. In the course of routine washing, knit fabrics may lose its dimensional stability causing it to stretch or shrink. There are procedures you can use to insure that the knit fabric is brought back to shape. The methods I am describing may differ entirely from what you do but these are the same methods I teach to professional drycleaners.

PRE-MEASURING

To insure proper size after wetcleaning it would be advisable to pre-measure your knits that may need stretching or shrinking. Many knit fabrics may have dimensional stability and may not need pre-measuring or blocking. Knit fabrics that may need blocking are typically wool, acrylic and cotton. Measure the sleeve length. Measure the length from the collar to the waistband, width across underarm area and width of waistband area. It is not time consuming to re-measure your knits since if one measurement is correct the rest is usually okay.

PROPER WETCLEANING

Wool knits should be agitated by hand in warm water, not by the agitation of a washing machine. Acrylic and cotton knits can be put in knit bags and run on a gentle cycle. You should use fabric softener in the rinse water to soften the fabric. After extraction all knit fabrics should be put in the dryer on a warm cycle for no longer than TWO MINUTES. I know that most consumers block a wet knit on a towel to dry. This often creates a harsh fabric and uneven drying.

AFTER TWO MINUTES DRYING

Lay a knit fabric on your ironing board. The knit fabric should be soft, slightly damp and usually can be blocked to size by pulling and pushing in the knit construction. If the knit fabric needs more stretching run a steam iron over the area WITHOUT THE IRON TOUCHING THE FABRIC. The iron is held about one inch above the fabric. When it is warm from the iron it is pliable and can be pulled. To shrink areas on the knit fabric push in the fabric to be shrunk so it creates waves or small hills on the fabric. Again hold the steam iron above the fabric without touching it. After this procedure pack the affected area in a manner that the knit construction is pushed in. Waistband and cuff areas may need this type of shrink treatment.

CAUTION-ACRYLIC KNIT FABRICS CAN USUALLY NOT BE SHRUNK INTO SHAPE. TOO MUCH STEAM ON ACRYLIC KNITS MAY PERMANENTLY DISTORT THE FABRIC. AFTER BLOCKING LAY ON A TOWEL TO DRY OR FOLD OVER A HANGER TO DRY.