

**FIBER IDENTIFICATION
LOOK ALIKES ARE NOT ALIKE (28)**

There are often times when you have to determine the fiber content of a garment that has no labeling or the labeling came off. Sometimes fabrics are similar in appearance with other fabrics but differ greatly in their cleaning characteristics. Sometimes garments are mislabeled as being drycleanable yet ascertaining the fiber content will give you the ability to possibly wash the garment instead.

FIBER SAMPLE

When testing it is necessary to snip a small fiber sample from an unexposed area of the garment. On shirts and blouses you might find a fabric sample in the pocket area of the garment. On knit fabrics you can pick off some fibers and nap from the surface of the fabric and roll the sample between your fingers to form a small yarn.

BURN TEST

In order to perform the burn test hold the fiber sample by a pair of tweezers and hold a lit match to it. Observe how the sample burns, smells and after cooling try to crush it.

FLOATATION TEST

In this test you can put the fabric sample in water. Some fibers will sink while others will float.

ACRYLIC AND WOOL

Knit fabrics are often made with wool or acrylic yarns. It is often difficult to distinguish the fiber content on the knit garment if no labeling is present. Manufacturers have developed procedures for crimping and bulking acrylic yarn so it resembles wool. Acrylic knit fabrics usually present no problems in washing on a gentle cycle while wool fabrics have characteristics of shrinkage.

BURN TEST IDENTIFICATION

When a match is held to an acrylic yarn it will melt and burn rapidly. The flame is self extinguishing. When cool it will leave a hard bead that is difficult to crush between your fingers. When a match is held to a wool yarn it will sizzle, and be self extinguishing. Wool will have an odor of burning hair or feathers. When the fiber sample is cool it will leave a black hard bead that can easily crush between your fingers.

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FLOATATION TEST

Put a sample of the fiber in a glass of water. Acrylic fiber will sink while wool will float.

POLYESTER AND SILK

In manufacture polyester can be made to imitate silk. Manufacturers can make polyester micro fibers that can be made as thin or even thinner than a real silk yarn. The look of a polyester micro fiber fabric is hard to distinguish between real silk if no labeling is present. Manufacturers often mislabel with Dryclean Only labels yet the fabric can be washed successfully providing trimming and lining is also washable. Silk fabrics pose a greater risk in washing and frequently have color problems. Polyester fabrics need a cool iron when pressing while silk can withstand higher temperatures in ironing.

BURN TEST

Polyester fiber is difficult to burn. It melts and shrinks away from the flame. The flame is usually self extinguishing. When cool it leaves a round hard bead that is difficult to crush between your fingers. It has a pungent odor. When a flame is held to silk it will sizzle and be self extinguishing. After cooling it leaves a black hard bead that can easily be crushed between your fingers. It smells like burning hair or feathers.