

PROFESSIONAL SECRETS FOR KEEPING WHITE FABRICS WHITE (72)

When a fabric reflects all the colors of the visible light spectrum it is viewed as white. When a fabric absorbs any degree of color the shading of the white may be varied. Manufacturers go to great lengths to achieve the brilliance and whiteness of the fabric. In manufacture the finisher or converter uses bleaches to whiten the fabric since the natural fibers may be gray, tan or yellow. Manufacturers also use optical brightness to increase the whiteness of the fabrics e.g. fluorescent dyes or tint dyes. The fluorescent dyes are absorbed into the fiber and emit a bluish fluorescence that covers up a yellow or gray shading. Fluorescent dyes have an effect similar to bluing which is used in laundering. White fabrics may appear to be trouble free but there are many factors that can cause white fabrics to discolor or change in brightness. White fabrics can yellow while stored away for a period of time. Air and atmospheric gases can cause oxidation of the fabrics. Storage in a plastic bag causes gases (nitrogen oxide) to react with the optical brightness causing yellowing.

CORRECTION USING OXYGEN BLEACHING

There are products in the supermarket containing sodium perborate or sodium percarbonate. Some products are Clorox II, Publix All Safety Bleach and others. These are referred to as oxygen bleaches or color safe bleaches. They are slow acting bleaches and when used correctly can whiten fabrics. This can be used on all white fabrics including wools and silk. Caution-It can discolor colored fabrics.

PROCEDURE

- (1) Put warm water (100oF) in a small plastic pail.
- (2) Add product to the water in a ratio of 2 ounces per gallon of water.
- (3) Put a towel over fabric to keep it wet and submerged.
- (4) Soak overnight.
- (5) Rinse or wash garment.
- (6) Add vinegar in the rinse cycle (1 ounce per gallon of water). This neutralizes the bleach and brings out the whitening effect of bleaching.

Remember that wool fabrics can not be washed in the washing machine and should be hand washed.

CHLORINE BLEACH

There are products in the supermarket such as Clorox which contains sodium hypochlorite. This is a strong bleach and should only be used on cotton, rayon or linen. Do not use on wool, silk, nylon or any spandex fabric.

PROCEDURE

- (1) Fill a bucket or pail with warm water.**
- (2) Add ¼ ounce of bleach per gallon of water.**
- (3) Soak for 10 minutes.**
- (4) Wash garment.**
- (5) Add vinegar in the rinse cycle. This is important since it accelerates any residue of the bleach out of the fabric.**

BLUING

Mrs. Stewarts liquid bluing can whiten fabrics. A blue tint on a garment can hide or camouflage yellowing. Add a few drops of bluing in a quart or more of water. Add to the final rinse water. The water should have a light tint. Do not use too much of the bluing or staining will occur.