

THE ART OF CLEANING YOUR WOOL KNITS WITHOUT SHRINKAGE (104)

As a drycleaning instructor I have taught thousands of drycleaners the art of wetcleaning. Wetcleaning is a different process than washing since it involves knowledge of fabrics and specific controls when using water, heat, mechanical action and drying. Consumers can also wetclean wools successfully with an understanding of the wool yarn and proper procedures to use.

WOOL FACTS

The wool yarn is similar in structure to a telescope with hair like scales. It has the ability to shrink when subjected to certain conditions. The first thing to understand is that water alone does not produce excessive shrinkage that we associate wools with. The wool yarn will shrink when water and the following conditions are applied.

- (1) Mechanical action-this is rubbing, friction and abrasion that occurs in a washing machine. Many consumers think that hand washing means setting the washing machine on a gentle cycle. Even if you set your washing machine on a gentle cycle it will produce enough mechanical action to cause excessive shrinkage of wools.**
- (2) Heat-the hotter the water temperature the more susceptible the wool is to shrinkage. When in combination with mechanical action it produces excessive shrinkage. This is the extreme shrinkage that has occurred when a wool garment is accidentally washed in a washing machine on a normal cycle. Extreme shrinkage such as this is referred to as felting.**
- (3) Alkali-many detergents are alkaline in nature and this can increase the possibility of shrinkage. Such products include Oxy-Clean, Clorox II and others. Regular chlorine bleach such as Clorox must never be used on any wool fabric.**
- (4) Change in temperature-when cold water is used for wetcleaning wool and then warm or hot water is used for rinsing it can produce a shock to the fabric which increases the incidence of shrinkage.**

WETCLEANING WOOLS

Preparation-

- (1) Pail or washing machine**
- (2) Tide (Bleach-free)**
- (3) White distilled vinegar**
- (4) Fabric softener such as Snuggle**

Procedure-

- (1) Fill the washing machine or pail with warm or cool water (90-100 degrees F)**

- (2) Add a mild detergent such as Tide**
- (3) Add a little vinegar-this helps soften the wool and will set color**
- (4) Agitate by hand**
- (5) Rinse and add a fabric softener such as Snuggle**
- (6) Extract normally-extraction or spinning does not cause shrinkage**
- (7) The wool can be put in the laundry dryer for no more than 2 minutes on a warm setting. If it is left for more than 2 minutes shrinkage will occur. The purpose of tumbling the wool is to soften up the fabric so it is not stiff and boardy.**
- (8) Remove and block on a towel to dry or block over the bars of a hanger to dry. Do not hang the wool from the shoulders or stretch marks will occur.**