

## Starch

Cotton is the one fabric that benefits from moderate starching. Other natural fibers are weakened by exposure to laundry starch. Pillowcases that are lightly starched will resist stains from hair creams or oils.

## Bleach

When whitening becomes necessary, we recommend any gentle non-chlorine, oxygen-based bleach. Chlorine-based bleach should only be used as a disinfectant (with nursery bedding, for example), since the chlorine in its formula ultimately damages natural fibers and shortens their life span.

## Fabric Softener

Fabrics soften with ease through normal use and regular laundering. Using a liquid fabric softener is not recommended. Over time, it actually stiffens the fibers and reduces absorbency, ultimately shortening the useful life of a fabric meant to be enjoyed for many years.

## International Textile Care Symbols



Machine-wash



Bleach



Dry-clean



Tumble dry



Iron



Do not wash



Do not bleach



Do not dry-clean



Do not tumble dry



Do not iron

# Chambers

## The Care of Fine Linens

# Chambers

*We believe you'll agree that quality makes a tangible difference. The basis of our fine linens collection is just that—quality revealed in comfort, craftsmanship and design. While every item we offer is made to last, to appreciate its premium quality is to recognize the proper care in cleaning and storage that it deserves.*

*As a supplement to the manufacturers' care labels, this guide provides general advice for maintaining cottons, linens, silks, woolens and down. If we've overlooked anything, please contact us at 1-800-334-1254 with your questions.*

## Cotton

Three times stronger wet than dry, cotton will stand up to the most rigorous laundering. It's inevitable, however, that cotton fabrics shrink when exposed to water and heat. Under these conditions, the fibers simply return to the original lengths from which they were stretched during weaving. While shrinkage is practically eliminated by dry cleaning, taking proper care in home laundering will keep it to the minimum.

Most cotton linens and apparel are loomed from yarns coated with a temporary sizing that facilitates weaving. As a result, newly purchased towels, sheets and pajamas still have a crisp feel that misrepresents their true softness, which is revealed after they are washed. In fact, cottons become softer with every laundering.

### *Cotton Sheeting and Apparel*

Wash plain-woven cottons (sheets and pajamas, for example) in warm water, and tumble-dry at a moderate temperature. Smoothing and folding cottons still warm from the dryer can reduce the need for ironing. But if ironing should become necessary, dampen the fabric before pressing with a hot iron.

### *Cotton Blankets*

Cotton blankets with a stretchy, open thermal weave are subject to greater shrinkage than plain-woven cottons. Washing in cold water and tumble drying at the lowest setting help reduce shrinkage.

### *Cotton Toweling*

Because of its absorbent quality, cotton is the superior fiber for toweling. It can be woven with plush terry loops or in a European-style waffle pattern; both maximize the amount of cotton fiber in each square inch of fabric, increasing its ability to draw moisture. Washing in warm water and tumble drying at a cool setting are recommended. Avoid fabric softeners; they only diminish towels' absorbency. Since synthetic fibers attract lint from cotton terry, wash and dry towels separately from polyester-blend articles. Ironing is recommended only for flat-woven guest towels.

### *Easy-Care Cottons*

"Easy-care" and "no-iron" cottons are coated with any of a variety of resins. Somewhat permanent, the resin will eventually wear away. To protect this finish for as long as possible, follow the manufacturer's gentle-care instructions. If wrinkling occurs, press with a warm iron.

## Wools

With its natural resistance to soil and wrinkling, wool requires cleaning less frequently than other fabrics; but because lamb's wool, cashmere, angora, camel's hair and other animal fibers represent a sizable investment, they should be cleaned with care and must be safeguarded from insects.

### *Dry Cleaning or Hand Washing*

Wool loses 40% of its strength when saturated with water, which explains why dry-cleaning or gentle hand-washing is most often the rule. Unless the manufacturer's label specifies Dry-Clean Only, woolens can be hand washed with a mild detergent in cool water. (Hot water discolors and shrinks wool.) Never use a softener or chlorine bleach with wool. To hand-wash, prepare an extremely sudsy solution before immersing the article. Gently squeeze suds through the fabric using your fingertips, without rubbing, then rinse thoroughly. Never pull, twist or wring wet wool. Dry the article flat after first removing excess moisture by rolling it in a towel.

### *Machine Washing*

Nowadays some woolens are deemed "machine-washable" by their manufacturers. Always follow the care label instructions.

### *Ironing*

Wool is a resilient fabric, less apt to wrinkle than others. If ironing should become necessary, use a cool iron for touch up.

### *Moth Protection*

The most crucial care for woolens (including cashmere, camel's hair, angora and mohair) is protection against certain types of moth larvae. Wool can provide their "bed and board" for many months, and the damage is usually irreparable when finally discovered. Since the type of moth that deposits eggs among wool fibers prefers the dark, these fabrics are at much greater risk in storage than in use.

Before storing woolen blankets or apparel in a closet or chest, thoroughly vacuum clean the storage space and have the item dry-cleaned. Ask your dry cleaner to wrap each article in acid-free paper. Sealed paper wrappers and zippered cloth bags are recommended for long-term storage; both provide protection, yet allow air circulation. Stored woolens should be inspected every six months and moth protection renewed. Airing them outdoors in direct, permeating sunlight will quickly eradicate any larvae.

## Silk

Only in recent years has silk become so widely available, proving its versatility in both luxury and workaday textiles.

### *Dry Cleaning and Hand Washing*

Many silks can be home laundered, but the very finest silks should be entrusted only to a professional for dry-cleaning. The safest approach to home laundering is hand washing—always in lukewarm water with soap or a gentle detergent. Silk articles should be washed individually, without soaking for very long. Wash with a delicate hand movement, and gently rinse in lukewarm or cold water. After washing, roll the article between towels to remove the excess moisture; then iron the barely damp silk on its reverse side with a cool iron. Never wring water from silk.

### *Machine Washing*

For silk bedding or garments advertised as "machine-washable," the manufacturer's care label provides explicit instructions that should be strictly followed.

### *Ironing*

Silk has a natural resiliency to creasing; most wrinkles will smooth out on their own. If ironing should become necessary, press the dampened silk on its reverse side with the iron set at a low temperature.

## Linen

Linen is the most durable of the natural fabrics. Given continued care, linen bedding and tablecloths can last for generations. Laundering actually renews the fabric's smooth surface, which becomes softer and more luminous with each washing. Shrinkage is negligible, and pure linen will not create lint.

### *Dry Cleaning*

When linen items require dry cleaning, as spelled out on the care label, it is usually due to the fabric's special finish, dye or trim.

### *Washing by Hand or Machine*

Like wool, linen becomes less sturdy when wet. Gently wash it by hand or machine in water at a moderate temperature. Avoid harsh alkaline detergents, starch and chlorine bleach, which can damage the threads. Tumble-dry in moderate heat.

### *Ironing*

While linen has its own intrinsic crispness, it wrinkles very easily. To facilitate ironing, dampen the fabric and press with a very hot iron, first on the reverse side to eliminate creases and then lightly on the face side, shielded with a cotton pressing cloth. Never iron creases into linen.

### *Storage*

It is ironic that for its ruggedness, linen is more susceptible to damage from careless storage than from wear or laundering. Avoid contact with sharp pointed utensils; the slightest abrasion can lead to a tear. Otherwise, linen threads are most apt to break along fold lines, so whenever possible, store linen articles without folding. Large pieces can be rolled on a rod for long-term storage or folded with white cotton or acid-free tissue (available from dealers in art and framing supplies). If folding is necessary, then use the softest possible folds and alternate the fold lines after each use. Never stack other articles on top of folded linen pieces.

## Down Fills

Never expose down-filled pillows and duvets to direct heat warmer than body temperature. Excessive warmth dehydrates down fibers, reducing their resiliency and loft. While the sorting process removes most feathers, even the finest all-down fills will contain a few stray feathers. Those with fine pointed quills may eventually pierce the down-proof cover. When this occurs, simply clip the point of the protruding feather and push the remainder back into the fill.

## Pillows

Tightly woven zippered covers help to maintain the freshness of a pillow's fill, protecting it from odors and moisture, reducing the need for regular washing. Although most pillows are washable, they should be washed only when necessary. Regular fluffing is recommended instead, to prevent the gradual matting of the fill and help maintain loft. Tumbling in a dryer without heat for three or four minutes will easily do the job.

To machine-wash pillows with cotton, wool or synthetic fills, use warm water on a gentle cycle. Use a small amount of detergent and never include bleach. Pillows will float, so be sure they're submerged. Thorough drying is essential to prevent mildew: Hang to dry in the sun, or tumble-dry at a cool setting.

Down- or feather-filled pillows can be washed by hand in cold water with a gentle soap, then air dried until no dampness remains. (As the cover dries, it wicks moisture from the fill.) But dry cleaning by an experienced professional is preferred, since some cleaning agents remove the natural oils from down and feathers, leaving them dry and brittle.

## Duvets

As attractive as they may be uncovered, duvets (and comforters) are meant to be used with washable covers. In fact, the covered duvet usually takes the place of a top sheet in European homes. Filled with natural fibers or down, most duvets are machine-washable, but their bulk and the difficulty in properly drying them make home laundering impractical. Professional dry cleaning is recommended; but with proper care, your duvet will require cleaning only as often as once every three to five years.

### *To maintain your duvet:*

- Use a washable cover for protection against perspiration, soil and wear.
- Avoid sitting or sleeping on a duvet; this mats the fill and reduces its loft. Regular fluffing helps redistribute the fill and prevent matting; the result is better insulation. Daily fluffing is recommended.
- Airing allows absorbed moisture in the duvet to evaporate. Weather permitting, occasionally air the duvet out-of-doors or near an open window for an hour or two.

## Quilts

While antique quilts require professional cleaning, a new quilt can be washed in a machine equipped with adjustable controls—set so the quilt soaks in lukewarm water with minimal agitation and spins only after most of the water has drained away. Tumble-dry on a moderate setting until it is dry through and through. Expect some shrinkage, which will cause the fabric to pucker nicely. There should be no need for ironing.

## Ironing Techniques

Always use a clean iron on a padded surface. Maintain the heat setting recommended for the fabric by the manufacturer, and remove the iron as soon as the article is dry to the touch. (Over-ironing removes the natural moisture from fibers, making them susceptible to wear and tear.)

If time permits preparation for ironing, dampen each article, then roll it up and wrap in a plastic bag for several hours to allow the moisture to distribute throughout. (To keep the outer layer moist, refrigerate for several hours, but no longer than overnight.)

To simplify ironing sheets and tablecloths, fold them first—selvage to selvage, right side out—and press both sides at once. Then fold lengthwise and iron again. Some oversize linens may be more easily ironed on a wide, padded tabletop.

Embroidery, lace and cutwork need special attention, as described below.

## Embroidery

Embroidered fabrics require either professional cleaning, if specified on the care label, or the most gentle washing (by hand or machine) in lukewarm water. Tumble-dry at a low temperature. To iron linens trimmed with lace, embroidery or cutwork: Place a soft towel under the needlework, cover it with a thin, moist pressing cloth, and iron lightly.

## Soap & Detergent

Use the gentlest laundry soap or detergent for hand or machine laundering. Always be sure that the article is rinsed well before drying or ironing.