



CLEANLINESS FACTS

TIPS AND TRENDS FROM THE SOAP AND DETERGENT ASSOCIATION

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LOOKING GREAT IS GOOD BUSINESS Wardrobe Care for Casual Wear

When business attire was more formal, caring for that wardrobe was fairly straightforward. Suits and tailored dresses went off to the cleaners and returned crisply pressed and ready to wear. But with the advent of casual wear for the office, clothing that is suitable for business is usually suitable for the washing machine. The challenge is to take advantage of the time and money savings these easy-care clothes provide, while still maintaining a polished, professional appearance. To help consumers accomplish this, The Soap and Detergent Association has gathered some tips on shopping and caring for a wardrobe that shines in the workplace.

A suitable work wardrobe begins with items that are appropriate to the particular situation. For example, what is acceptable in an advertising agency may not be a good choice in the investment banking industry. Check with the employer regarding company guidelines before investing time and money in a new wardrobe.

To maximize wardrobe dollars, look for separates that will coordinate with several different outfits. When shopping, check garment care labels. If the garment must be dry-cleaned or requires extensive ironing, the time and money spent on maintenance can defeat the point of casual wear. In general, synthetic blends and microfibers are good choices, particularly for the basics, because they are easy to care for. Wrinkle-free khaki pants and skirts, permanent press shirts and blouses, and washable silks are all good choices. Save the high-maintenance fabrics, such as finely woven cotton, linen, peau de soie, suede, raw silk and beaded or embroidered fabrics, for special, seldom-worn items.

Making wise purchases is the first step to a wardrobe that works; maintaining it is the second step. Review the care labels while sorting soiled clothes by color, by water temperature, by dirtiness




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and by type of wash cycle. Separate wash loads will be required depending on the type of bleach used (chlorine or non-chlorine), the water temperature (some garments are cold-water-wash only) and the wash cycle setting. Permanent press fabrics should be laundered on the permanent press setting. This setting, which has a cold water rinse cycle, was developed after it was discovered that wrinkles will set if permanent press fabrics are spun while hot. Garments marked "hand-wash only" can be machine laundered on the "hand wash" or "delicate" cycle.



The low agitation on these settings replicates the gentle motion of hand washing.

Avoid over-drying clothes. Too much heat causes excess wear and tear, intensifies static buildup and is not energy efficient. To keep wrinkles from setting, remove clothes from the dryer as soon as the buzzer sounds and hang them up.

Certain types of stains are common hazards in the workplace. Prompt and proper treatment will prolong the life of the garment. Ink stains are a frequent occurrence. Be aware that some ink may be impossible to remove. Try a prewash stain remover, following the manufacturer's directions. To remove adhesive tape or rubber cement stains, apply ice or cold water to the hardened surface; scrape with a dull knife, saturate with a prewash stain remover, then launder. To remove coffee, tea or soft drink stains, sponge or soak the stain in cool water. Pretreat with a prewash stain remover, liquid laundry detergent or a paste of granular laundry detergent and water. Launder using chlorine bleach, if safe for the fabric, or oxygen bleach. Most cosmetic stains can be removed by pretreating with a prewash stain remover, liquid laundry detergent, a paste of granular detergent and water or by rubbing with bar soap; launder.

A prewash stain remover is a fairly universal aid to removing stains. For this reason, it's a good idea to pack a stain stick in the suitcase for business trips. Using it promptly will keep stains from setting until the garment comes home for cleaning. A lint brush to help keep clothes fuzz-free is another good idea, both for travel and in the office. ■

HOME SAFE HOME

Childproofing Kitchens and Baths

While the home is generally regarded as a safe haven, statistics indicate all is not what it seems. According to the National Safe Kids Campaign, nearly 4.5 million children age 14 and under are injured in the home. Approximately 2,700 of these children die each year from their injuries.

The two most dangerous rooms in the house are the kitchen and bathroom. The Soap and Detergent Association has put together a collection of tips for parents, caregivers and anyone who has children in their home.

Sharp objects, dangling cords, hot surfaces, shiny surfaces and small "hideouts" can all be dangerously attractive to children. Cord shorteners will minimize the length of appliance cords and help keep them from dangling over the edge of countertops. Get in the habit of unplugging appliances, including toasters, coffee pots, hair dryers and electric shavers, after each use so there is no chance a child can accidentally activate the "on" switch. As a further precaution, install outlet covers on all outlets not currently in use. Child-safe receptacle covers that require sliding a cover to one side before a plug can be inserted, are a particularly good idea in the bathroom.

Install childproof locks on all base cabinets in both the kitchen and bath. Cleaning supplies and anything else that could possibly be ingested by a child, including bath supplies and vitamins, should be stored high up in wall cabinets out of the child's reach. Even though it is usually positioned high up, consider a childproof lock on the medicine cabinet. ■

KITCHEN AND BATH FITTINGS

Good Design Is Only Part of the Story

Kitchen and bathroom fittings have crossed the line from utilitarian to decorative, with faucet, showerhead and knob designs that are compatible with many décors. However, the wide variety of finishes, including chrome, oil-rubbed bronze, platinum alloys, colorful powder-coated finishes over metal and even sterling silver, can be confusing because it's difficult to discern the quality of the finish by looking at it. An excellent undercoat covered by thick plating, as well as fittings made from brass bodies, is what generally determines quality and price.

Polymers have also joined the list of luxury materials, particularly for hand-held showers and shower hoses. These polymer products are resistant to the water's mineral content or acidity, provide good insulation, thus protecting users from extreme high or low temperatures, and are lightweight. This last attribute means they are less likely to damage tile or other fixtures when dropped or bumped.

Cleaning all these beautiful, expensive fixtures requires care. Until recently, clear powder coating or lacquer was the only method used to keep finishes like brass and nickel from tarnishing. But a new system, called PVD (Physical Vapor Deposition), utilizes ionized gases to force atomic molecular bonding so that the chemical reaction becomes part of the finish. It cannot wear off or discolor, even when scoured with steel wool or cleaned with an ammonia-based product. PVD fittings come with a limited lifetime warranty.

The Soap and Detergent Association reminds consumers that all finishes, no matter how durable, should be cleaned with water and a soft cloth, unless the manufacturer recommends otherwise. On some finishes, even soap can leave film and spots. Check the fixture manufacturer's cleaning instructions, as different finishes require different products. Keep cleaning instructions where you can refer to them easily. If in doubt, call the cleaning product manufacturer's 800# to see if a product can be used safely on a specific fixture. ■

HEAT TRANSFER PRINTING

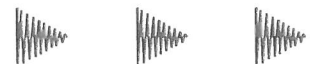
A '70s Technique Emerges in the '90s

In the mid '70s, transfer prints on polyester knits were all the rage. Today, these prints are back on a variety of fabrics and looking better than ever. Improved dyes provide deeper fabric penetration eliminating the telltale white fabric back that used to signal a heat transfer print. New machines make it possible to print fabrics up to 126" wide.

The heat transfer process is simple, reports The Soap and Detergent Association. Once a design is developed, it's made into film. The film is engraved onto rotogravure cylinders. As many as six cylinders can be used for one design and each cylinder can produce three or four variations of a shade. The next step is to use specially formulated inks or dyes to transfer the design from cylinder to paper, then from paper to fabric via a roll heat press. The result is a beautifully consistent print. Because it's a photographic process, heat transfer printing captures detail better than wet printing. On fabrics that have a high and low surface such as jacquards, it doesn't create the distortions that wet printing can. For mills and manufacturers, the heat transfer process offers a strong economic advantage: inventory can be stored on paper rather than on fabric.

A fabric's fiber content can affect the finished appearance. Polyester is the most receptive, absorbing 100% of the color. Other fibers, such as rayon, cotton and nylon, absorb less dye. Changing the fiber blend can create exciting color variations; changing the weave can produce intriguing textural variations.

Perhaps the most exciting application of this technique comes in the furniture market. Advances in paper-finishing techniques make it possible to create laminate products with the look of wood but that are more durable and cost less. Designs can mimic everything from wood grain to marble to lacquer-like finishes. Surfaces can be treated to be scratch-resistant, stain resistant and even flame-resistant. ■





MISCELLANY

Rust Be Gone

Rust stains that seem to appear out of nowhere and settle on clothes can often be prevented. The culprits can be rust in the water or a rust spot in the washer basket or dryer drum that is transferred to the fabric. Some laundry habits encourage basket or drum rusting, reports The Soap and Detergent Association.

Practices to avoid include: soaking clothes in water only, with little or no detergent; prolonged or overnight soaks using a strong chemical; using vinegar, other acids or lime deposit removers which can damage the washer basket's porcelain finish; and leaving wet or damp clothes in the dryer. In addition, laundering with soft water or water with a high salt or mineral content can damage the basket finish unless adequate detergent is used.

If a rust stain occurs, use a commercial rust remover that is safe for fabrics, and follow the remover manufacturer's instructions. Contact the appliance manufacturer to have the rust spot fixed.

Caring for Non-stick Cookware

Nonstick cookware is more popular than ever. While people respond to the healthy-cooking aspects, The Soap and Detergent Association suggests that the easy-clean properties are also responsible for its favored status.

To keep this type of cookware at peak performance level, it's important to avoid scratches. Use kitchen tools made from high-impact plastic or wood. When storing cookware, avoid stacking habits that can cause damage. Storing the cookware in a single layer or hanging it on a rack is the best solution. If stacking is unavoidable, protect the cookware's inner surface with a paper towel.

Be aware that most nonstick surfaces are not dishwasher safe. They should be cleaned with a hand dishwashing detergent and a non-abrasive sponge. Use plenty of hot water and detergent to remove any greasy film. Rinse thoroughly.

Fryer Sales Heat Up

Americans may give lip service to healthy eating, but when it comes to putting out the dollars, fried foods are coming out ahead. A recent consumer study conducted by The NPD Group, a market research firm, indicates that sales of deep fryers were up 32 percent for the first half of 1999, while sales of food steamers remained flat. This occurred despite the lack of new advertising or promotional campaigns, new brands or significant product modifications.

The Soap and Detergent Association hypothesizes that consumers no longer feel guilty about occasional indulgences in fried foods. One out of every seven meals prepared at home contains one fried product. This is part of our national propensity for choosing the fastest method for cooking favorite foods.

Fry, Baby!

The newest deep fat fryers simplify the cooking process for many foods, including tempura, fried chicken and homemade French fries. An adjustable thermostat for oil temperature control is important for successfully frying foods that require lower temperatures, such as mushrooms. Removable non-stick bowls make clean up easier, while safety lids prevent burns and messy oil splatters, observes The Soap and Detergent Association. Cool-touch exteriors make the fryer's sides safe to touch, even when the temperature inside is hot.

Where fat consumption is a concern, new fryer models cook food rapidly at temperatures high enough to keep the food from absorbing excess oil. If the oil is not hot enough, a surface crust will not form. Without the crust, more oil is absorbed. Removing the food promptly will also cut down on the amount of oil that enters the food.

The Best Dressed Bed

Like a fashionable wardrobe, today's best-dressed bed consists of elements that work together to create a beautiful ensemble, reports The Soap and Detergent Association.

Bed dressing begins with the foundation. A feather bed (down or feather-filled) or a mattress pad adds a layer of luxury while saving the mattress from surface breakdown. A zippered cover will do the same for the pillow.

When it comes to sheets, total match is no longer the norm. Complimentary sets allow for mix-and-match bed making options.

The toppers of choice are quilts in traditional colorations or funky, graphic patterns and duvets that are often covered to match the sheets. Coverlets, which fit just over the mattress and are usually reversible, can be used with or without a blanket, depending on the season.

Pillows are the final accessories. On a double or queen bed, a pair of European squares can substitute for a headboard. Basic pillows come in king, queen and standard sizes, although queen-size cases and shams can be hard to find.

Color, Convenience Spark Oven-to-Tableware

Colorful cookware that performs well in the oven, looks great on the table and is easy to clean is a winning combination for today's cooks, states The Soap and Detergent Association. Traditional colors and shapes, including pie and lasagna pans, are joined by cookware in bright citrus colors and unusual pieces, such as a Moroccan Tangerine slow cooker.

Renewed interest in microwave ovens has broadened the market for microwave-to-tableware. Particularly popular are pieces that can go directly from freezer to microwave to table. ■

Q & A

SDA Answers Your Questions

Q: My dryer takes a long time to dry a load of clothes. How can I speed up the drying time?

A: First, check the lint screen and the exhaust duct. A lint-filled screen or blocked duct can add to the drying time. These conditions can be dangerous, as they cause the dryer to use more energy and put unnecessary wear and tear on the dryer. Always clean the lint screen after each dryer load, and periodically check the exhaust duct for lint buildup.

Any of the following reasons can also cause long drying times:

- The load is too large. Check the recommended load size in the washer use and care guide.
- The load is too wet. Allow each wash load to complete the washing cycle so as much water as possible is removed. Make sure each load is properly balanced - water may not be completely removed from an unbalanced load.
- Cold rinse water. A cold wash load takes longer to dry than a warm one.
- Room temperature is too low for good drying results. If the room temperature is below 45 degrees F, drying will take longer and clothes are more likely to wrinkle.

Q: I have spots on my glasses after they are removed from the dishwasher. They are clean, but look dirty because of these spots. What can I do?

A: Spotting happens when water evaporates from a glass, leaving the minerals behind. There are more minerals in hard water; thus this condition occurs more often in areas that have hard water.

Make sure to use the correct amount of dishwasher detergent. Using a rinse agent will also help. Rinse agents cause water to sheet off the dishes and speed drying, thus helping prevent spots from forming. ■





“KEEP IT CLEAN” BRIEFS

Read the washer use and care guide to determine how many clothes can be effectively washed in one load.

Overloading the washer decreases the cleaning power of the washer and detergent. Also, overloading causes excess abrasion of fabrics. This abrasion increases linting and pilling. Clothes need to be able to move in the wash and rinse water so that loose lint can be carried away. Make sure to select a water lever that is correct for the load size being washed.

If you accidentally wash a tissue with a wash load and find tissue pieces all over your clothes, redry the load adding two fabric softener sheets to the load. The fabric softener will help release the tissue from the fabrics. Hang the clothes and use a clothes brush or masking tape to remove any remaining lint.

Remember to clean out the lint screen after drying, as the tissue will accumulate there.

Dust is made up of thousands of airborne particles of fiber, earth and silica. All these elements can cause tiny scratches that dull wood furniture finishes not correctly removed. Always dust with clean cloth moistened with furniture polish. The polish cushions the cloth, eliminating the scratching that occurs when a dry cloth is used for dusting. It also picks up and holds the dust particles so they are not released back into the air.

Washing fine wood furniture with soap and water is not recommended. Soap is not an efficient cleaner for most types of soil that accumulate on furniture surfaces. Also, it will not remove the previous coat of polish; it simply leaves the piece looking dull and unattractive. Water can damage wood surfaces.

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