

GOOD CLEAN ADVICE...

In collaboration with leading organization World's Best Cleaners (WBC), *Bespoken* offers tips on how best to maintain your favourite garments.



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Dry cleaning is a real science

Choosing the correct suit is child's play compared with deciding how to clean it – the better quality the suit, the greater the fear. Dry-cleaner horror stories and contradicting care advice abound, leaving gentlemen confused. Some manufacturers go so far as to recommend that suits be cleaned only once per year, as a preventative measure against what they perceive as the inevitable confrontations with customers over damaged merchandise.

“The key problem with how garment manufacturers view the dry-cleaning industry is the previous lack of universal standards of excellence,” explains WBC Technical Director Christopher White. *“In reality, proper cleaning will actually extend the life of your wardrobe and*

maintain the original integrity of your garments. But the operative phrase here is ‘proper cleaning.’ It’s a real skill and a real science. Unfortunately, few countries impose any sort of procedural regulation, which means that just about anyone can become a dry cleaner.”

WHEN SHOULD I WASH MY SUIT?

According to White, when it comes to caring for a good suit, factor in a few variables: firstly, how often do you wear it? *“Hot urban environments would require you to clean more often than a cooler suburban or rural environment,”* he explains. *“In an urban environment you tend to wear lighter colors that show soiling easier; also, these garments are exposed to more perspiration, vehicle exhaust and general soiling. This would require cleaning every three to four wears. In suburban and rural environments, you can get by with every four to five wears, as the colors are darker and there’s less overall soiling.”* Secondly, how long do you wear the

suit? *“A suit worn for an evening event would only require cleaning every four to five wears, with a re-finishing after the third – depending on whether the garment is properly stored after each wear. If it’s a suit that you wear to the office every day, it should be cleaned every two to three wears.”*

Lastly, do you use a lot of health and beauty aids? *“Hair gel, cologne, deodorant, antiperspirants all make their way into the garment and can cause serious damage to the fibres and colours, if not treated quickly. Many of these products contain alcohol, which, over time and with a little heat, will destroy dyes and finishes. Shirts are very susceptible to this damage and should be cleaned every one to two wears.”*

HOW SHOULD I WASH IT?

If there is one point that White makes abundantly clear, it would be: **DO NOT TRY THIS AT HOME.** *“Up until now, we’ve been talking about general garment maintenance. But what happens when you*

'THE SUIT THAT YOU WEAR TO THE OFFICE EVERY DAY SHOULD BE CLEANED EVERY TWO OR THREE WEARS'

TEN TIPS FOR STAIN REMOVAL

1. Act quickly

Fresh stains make stain removal an easier task. Give yourself the upper hand by treating stains as promptly after they happen as possible. If your stains are on a non-washable fabric, take them to the dry cleaners as soon as possible. Be sure to point out the stain to the dry cleaner and describe the nature of the stain. This makes the likelihood of stain removal success greater.

2. Follow the directions

Follow the directions on any stain removal products you use. Don't forget to follow washing directions on the stained clothes. Getting the stain out, won't make much difference if you ruin the clothing in the process.

3. Test in a hidden area

Don't forget to test any stain removal methods on a hidden seam or other inconspicuous spot. You want to check for colorfastness before applying a treatment to a large or noticeable area of the clothing. Do not use if the color changes.

4. Remove stains from the back

Place the stained garment with the stain upside down on top of a clean white cloth. Apply stain treatment to the back of the stain. Our goal is to remove the stain from the clothing instead of making it travel all the way through to the other side. Make sure to move the stained clothing to a fresh spot as the stain begins to remove itself from the clothing and onto the cloth.

5. Be careful with dry cleaning solvents

Make sure to rinse thoroughly, and allow to

air dry any garment that's had dry cleaning solvents used on it. These solvents can be a fire hazard in a washing machine. Remember never to put dry cleaning solvents directly into the washing machine.

6. Be wary of even colour removal with bleach

Bleaching only one stained spot on a garment may result in uneven colour removal for the entire garment. Consider using the appropriate bleach listed in the garment tag to bleach the entire garment.

7. Don't mix stain-removal products

Mixing different chemicals can cause toxic odours and mixed results on your clothing.

8. Wash stain treated items

Remember to thoroughly wash items that have been treated with stain removal products to remove product residue and also the stain residue.

9. Be patient

Stain removal can take time. Sometimes repeat treatments may be required. Be sure to thoroughly check the garment before drying to determine if a repeat treatment is necessary. Drying will cause a stain to set.

10. Some stains won't leave

For some stains, no stain removal idea or tip can get rid of them without damaging the clothing or its color. But take heart in the fact that the other 9 general stain removal tips will give you a fighting chance against all the stains in your laundry basket. Just a few simple guidelines can take the guesswork out of stain removal.

DECRYPTING WASHING SYMBOLS



What it indicates:

Wash By Hand.

What it really means:

Wash at medium temperature between 30 and 40°C) with a small dose of washing product – do not rub clothes too vigorously and dry with care.



What it indicates:

Do not bleach.

What it really means:

Ensure that your washing product contains no whitening agent (such as sodium hypochlorite).



What it indicates:

Do not iron.

What it really means:

Use a steam iron to remove creases, or take garment to a dry cleaner's.



What it indicates:

Do not machine-dry.

What it really means:

Dry the garment on a washing-line or leave in a warm place, then leave to dry.



What it indicates:

Dry-clean only.

What it really means: Always take delicate fabrics to a dry cleaner's or wash by hand (at your own risk).

Jérôme Stéfanski, with help from Kristel Geets

get an actual stain on your clothes? Too many people use some old-wives tale remedy, such as milk or lemon juice, just to avoid taking it to a professional. I can't tell you how disastrous that usually is. It's like letting your five-year-old repair your Aston Martin."

"Again, dry cleaning is a practical science – using chemicals to remove other chemicals from fabrics, without creating color loss or fabric damage," says White. "Therefore, in order to properly treat a stain, the stain properties have to be accurately identified, as do the fibres or fibre blends of the garment, and the dyes.

STAIN CATEGORIES

"Stains are broken down into three basic categories: tannin-based or plant matter, such as wine, juice or ketchup; protein-

based or animal matter, such as milk, blood or perspiration; and oil-based, such as grease, oil or petroleum jelly. All of these staining substances can have dire effects on apparel if not treated by an expert."

White continues: "Fibres are broken down into three basic categories for the purpose of dry cleaning and stain removal: cellulosic or vegetable, such as cotton and linen; protein or animal, such as wool or silk; and synthetic or man-made, such as acetate and nylon. All three categories of apparel fibers have strengths and weaknesses when combined with staining matter. It is vitally important to take your fine garments to what we refer to as Couture Care Specialists – professional dry cleaners with years of experience and the

technical know-how to deal with high-end fabrics and styles. Everything from the cleaning to the finishing can make or break a good suit over time. Your suit is an investment, and we like to think of dry cleaners as akin to service departments in the automotive industry. And as with mechanics, you get what you pay for."

Michael D'Elicio

This article was kindly provided by World's Best Cleaners – an independent accreditation organization that objectively certifies the top garment-care specialists around the world. A list of Certified Couture Care Specialists can be found at the WBC site: www.worldsbestcleaners.com