

## “SELECTING A DRY CLEANERS & KEEPING COSTS TO A MINIMUM”

After you’ve spent your hard-earned money on the perfect outfit, you need to give some thought to who you are going to entrust with its cleaning. And if the garment has a “dry clean only” label, take that advice seriously.

Some fabrics, such as silk, acetate, rayon, and wool, are damaged by water. Water absorbs into these fabrics, weakening their strength and elasticity. Dry cleaning uses chemicals that clean the surface of the fabric without penetrating into the fiber.

That means taking shortcuts by trying to wash them at home will only damage the fabric and shorten its life.

Dry cleaners can’t work miracles either — if you’ve already washed a dry-clean-only garment in water, the cleaner isn’t going to be able to restore it to its previous condition.

When it come to dry cleaners, cheapest isn’t always best. Expect to spend a certain amount to maintain these garments in their best condition. Some dry cleaners won’t accept some clothing in colors — such as deep red, deep navy, and some blacks — that might bleed. Fabric bleeding is a manufacturing problem that might have been caused by improper dyeing techniques.

Not every dry cleaner is right for every garment. Some items, including fur or leather coats and anything with sequins, need to be taken to speciality cleaners who will charge extra for this service and extra care.

When picking a dry cleaner, look for certified or licensed cleaners who follow industry standards set by the International Fabricare Institute or the Nation Cleaners Association.

Check out advertisements in publications such as newspapers and yellow pages, or ask a trusted friend or relative if they can recommend a dry cleaner.

After you’ve selected cleaners that might possibly get your business, visit each one. See how they handle garments. Do they put tissue in the neck and sleeves? And don’t be shy about asking questions: Do they guarantee their work? How long have they been in business?

Dry cleaners must follow environmental regulations and governmental guidelines because of the chemicals involved in the process. That contributes to the cost of the service. But a good dry cleaner that will clean these more delicate fabrics without damaging, shrinking, or discoloring them is worth taking the time and effort to find.

Once you have selected a Dry Cleaners follow these tips:

Don’t let the words “dry clean only” keep you from buying the perfect outfit. With a little care and common sense, dry-clean-only garments can be worn and enjoyed for years — at less cost than you might think.

Manufacturers use these fabric — such as silk, rayon, acetate, and wool — because they are suitable to certain designs and because consumers like them. Water weakens these fabrics,

even if the damage isn't immediately visible, which can shorten the life of the garment over time. Dry cleaning helps these fabrics ---- and garments made from them — stay at their best by using chemicals that clean the surface while not penetrating into the fiber the way water does.

While dry cleaning adds to the cost of the garment, the accumulation of those costs can be reduced by taking extra care at home. For example, if something drips onto the garment and is not absorbed into the fabric, wipe it off with a little water or a disposable cleaning sheet. Other steps can help keep dry cleaning costs to a minimum, such as:

- hanging up the garment as soon as you take it off; don't toss it on the bed or chair or leave it crumpled on the floor;
- brushing off any dry debris such as powder or chalk dust;
- spot cleaning if necessary;
- protecting these fabrics from personal care products such as deodorant, makeup and cologne;
- giving these garments a light pressing between wearings; and
- hanging wool or rayon garments in a steamy bathroom to remove wrinkles.

And here are a few don't:

- Don't cram them tightly into a closet.
- Don't store them in plastic bags between cleanings. Fabrics need to breathe, so make sure your closet has good circulation.
- Don't fall for claims that certain cleaning products can be used in place of dry cleaning services. Studies have shown these products are not effective in cleaning, although they do refresh garments.

If you keep these steps in mind, you should save quite a bit of money at the dry cleaners. In fact, if you take a little extra care with these garments, you should be able to wear them from two to six times between trips to the cleaners.

More information on this subject is available at the International Fabricare Institute's website at <http://www.ifi.org>. Click on the link to Consumer Information.

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