

Daily Union – Saturday, January 17, 2015
Vol. 3 Issue 3: See Spot Go – Clothing Care

The average American household spends \$121.00 per month on clothing or \$1,452 annually. With this much money invested, you would think that we should know how to take care of the clothing we purchase to make our investment last as long as possible. Sadly, that is not usually the case. People often toss garments because of missing buttons, broken stitching or stains.

Although I can find no good way to communicate construction repairs in a newspaper article, I can help you know more about how to tackle the clothing problem we all share: spots and stains.

The most helpful tip I can provide is that you need to take care of stains or spots as soon as possible. A fresh stain is much easier to remove than one that has been on clothing for a length of time. They are even more difficult to remove if you have washed and dried the garment before trying to remove the stain. If the stain is on a non-washable fabric, your best bet is to take it to the dry cleaners as soon as possible. You will need to tell them what caused the stain and what the fiber content is of your garment.

If the garment is washable, you will need to determine what the recommended washing instructions are. Clothing care labels are required by law. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) enforces the Care Label Rule which requires manufacturers and importers to attach care labels to garments. Words and symbols are used to tell consumers how to care for the clothing. The Care Label symbols provided in the chart created by the American Cleaning Institute in cooperation with the FTC can help you know what treatments, water temperature, and drying conditions are suited to the fabric content of your garment.

Your Guide Fabric Care Symbols

MACHINE WASH	BLEACH	TUMBLE DRY	DRY	IRON	DRY CLEAN
TEMPERATURE		HEAT SETTING		TEMPERATURE (Dry or Steam)	
Cool/Cold	Any Bleach (when needed)	No Heat	Line Dry/ Hang to Dry	Low	Dry Clean
Warm	Only Non-chlorine Bleach (when needed)	Low	Drip Dry	Medium	Do Not Dry Clean
Hot	Do Not Bleach	Medium	Dry Flat	High	
CYCLE		Any Heat	Dry in the Shade	OTHER	
Normal		CYCLE	Do Not Dry	No Steam	
Permanent Press		Normal	Do Not Wring	Do Not Iron	
Delicate/Gentle		Permanent Press			
OTHER		Delicate/Gentle			
Do Not Wash		OTHER			
Hand Wash		Do Not Tumble Dry			

Courtesy of: American Cleaning InstituteSM

Developed in cooperation with the Federal Trade Commission.

Visit our web site! <http://www.cleaninginstitute.org>
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Once you have read the care label, there are some precautions you need to take before you begin. If you plan to use a stain remover, test the garment on an inside seam or nonvisible area. Apply the product and let stand for 2-5 minutes, then rinse. If the color on this part of the garment changes, don't use the stain removal product.

When you have determined if the stain remover is safe on your garment, place the stained area face down on a clean paper towel. Apply the stain remover to the underside of the stain. This forces the stain off the fabric surface rather than pushing it through your fabric. Do not mix stain removal products together. This is one case where more is not better. Some chemicals can mix together and create noxious fumes – such as ammonia and chlorine bleach.

Wash your garment according to the directions on the care label. Use the water temperature recommended by the stain removal products and detergents. It is also important to wash heavily stained garments by themselves. You don't want the stains from one garment transferring to another in the laundering process.

Avoid using hot water on stains of unknown origin. Hot water can set the stains and make them permanent. Bar soaps should not be used on a fresh stain. They often have the opposite effect you want and will make the stains permanent.

Rubbing should be used with durable fabric only. Be aware that rubbing can often spread the stain as well as damage the fiber, finish, or color of the fabric. If the fabric is durable, you can gently rub the stained part of the garment under running water to remove dried food, protein, or oil stains.

If you are unsure how to treat a stain, there are many resources available to help you. The University of Illinois Extension Service has developed an interactive online resource to guide you through the steps. This helpful tool, found at <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/stain/>, provides an A-Z listing of stains and how to remove them from fabric. You can search for a specific type of stain or access their general laundering information.

In addition, the American Cleaning Institute (ACI) offers a wealth of information on laundering, cleaning agents, and more. You can also find health and safety information in addition to household cleaning tips at <http://www.cleaninginstitute.org/>.

The Geary County Extension office also has several free printed publications related to laundering and household cleaning. Contact us at 238-4161 if you want more information. Until next time, keep living resourcefully!