

Laundering New Quilts

Stains such as body oil and general stains must be removed. As in other garments, soils trapped in the fibers tend to be abrasive like sand paper and can be more damaging than the cleaning process itself. Frequent cleaning is more important to the longevity of a quilt or comforter than to allow excessive soils to build up and clean infrequently, which may result in a much more aggressive cleaning process.

When laundering a quilt, chose a neutral detergent such as Orvus, Ivory Snow dishwashing liquid or any one of the many neutral detergents available to our industry. Avoid alkaline or built detergents. When working with antique quilts and quilts of multiple colors, spot-test first to make sure no bleeding of dye occurs.

1. 1. In an inconspicuous area, gently rub a wet, white, terrycloth towel over the surface to see if any color rubs off. If color rubs off, the dyes will very likely bleed even when cleaned in cold water. This risk must be discussed with the customer. Remember, the hotter the water, the faster (and more extensively) the dyes tend to bleed. If they do not bleed, move to step 2.
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3. 2. In the same area, using the same terrycloth towel, apply water and a drop of neutral synthetic detergent, and rub gently. Since adding a neutral detergent increases the chance for dye bleeding, the item should be color safe if the color does not bleed. Remember the warmer the water, the more chance for dye transfer to occur. Use cold water only, for the best results. By testing with a drop of protein formula and use of the steam gun will give you the best idea of whether the dye will bleed, or not bleed to water.

General tips:

Make sure the water has no chlorine content.

DO NOT allow the quilt to soak in dirty water. If the water becomes dirty, drain and re-fill with clean water. Make sure the final drain after the rinse is running clear so the detergent is thoroughly rinsed out of the quilt. After wet-cleaning has been completed, remove the quilt or comforter from the machine. Do not allow it to remain wet for a long period of time or dye transfer may take place. Some dyes tend to migrate the longer they are in contact with water.

Keep in mind the extra risk involved when processing a valuable antique quilt and family heirlooms. You may want to contact a textile conservator if you do not have a good comfort level with the time in hand.

The following information is more specific to fragile and/or antique quilts. Drying an antique quilt in a dryer is extremely hard on it because of the tumbling action. It can also cause crocking,

which is a loss of color generally caused by friction, and streaking of the colors. A wet quilt should never be hung to dry. Hanging a wet quilt can weaken the fabric used, and tear it from the weight of the water. The best alternative is to dry flat. Aware that this is next to impossible in most dry-cleaning plants. Devise an overhead hanging system made from PVC or the like. If you can support the weight at several places, the risk is decreased, but there is still stress on the fabric. If you build a device using a type of lattice or a grid pulled up by a wench, to dry through both sides, dry time would be decreased and the possibility of damage miniscule. For the least amount of risk the item should be dried FLAT with air circulation around the entire item.

Care of Cotton Quilts with Cotton Batting:

Fluorescent light and sunlight can affect colors on cotton quickly. If drying is done under direct light, sandwich the quilt between two sheets for protection from the light. If this method is used, oscillating ceiling fans must be installed to help dry the piece. When the quilt is almost dry, place it in the dryer, on air, to fluff the fabric using absolutely no heat. As you can see, carefully processing valuable and sentimental antique quilts can be a challenge.

Common sense must be used when cleaning these items as it is impossible to know the strength of the piece in hand. Handle with care.

1. 1. Fill the washer with 80 – 85° F. water. (27 – 30° C.) A washer without a center post is preferred.
1. 2. Dissolve one Tablespoon of Orvus Paste, ¼ cup Ivory dishwashing liquid or ¼ cup of neutral detergent in the bath before entering the quilt.
1. 3. Gently agitate for 15 minutes. If it is a fragile quilt, soak for 10 minutes and do not agitate.
1. 4. Spin and repeat steps 1 – 3 if necessary for heavy soil removal.
1. 5. If possible, remove the quilt and fill the washer again.
1. 6. Rinse thoroughly by gentle, hand agitation.
1. 7. Gently spin and lay flat to dry.
1. 8. When the item is just about dry, fluff in a dryer on a low temperature.

Care of Cotton Quilts with Wool Batting:

Many of today's wool battings are made to be washable without excessive shrinkage, using the proper procedures.

Alkaline-based detergents can shrink wool fibers even in cool water. Use a neutral detergent that

does not contain enzymes or fabric brighteners. As mentioned before, Orvus, Ivory Snow, or any one of the many neutral detergents available to us can be used successfully on wool. Do not use store bought detergents that contain bleaches as this may have an adverse effect on wool.

To eliminate additional shrinkage, it is best to keep the wash water temperature and the rinse water temperature as close as possible. A cold-water rinse is best for wool. Going from a hot wash temperature to a cold rinse is one common cause for shrinkage in fabric.

Steps for washing a wool quilt or comforter containing a wool batting.

1. 1. Make sure there is no chlorine present in the water when working with wool, as chlorine disintegrates protein fibers. Wool and silk are both protein fibers.
1. 2. Fill the washer with 80 – 85° F. water. (27 – 30° C.)
1. 3. Thoroughly dissolve 1 Tablespoon of Orvus Paste or ¼ cup of Ivory dishwashing liquid or ¼ cup of a neutral detergent in the bath before entering the quilt.
1. 4. Manually move the piece by hand in a top loading washer or large sink, or gently agitate for 30 – 45 seconds.
1. 5. Soak for 4-5 minutes.
1. 6. One minute of light extract.
1. 7. If heavily soiled, drain and repeat the wash process.
1. 8. Rinse on a gentle cycle for 30 – 45 seconds and extract lightly to remove excess water. Light extraction should not damage the wool, but there is no guarantee. It greatly reduces the dry time. The more agitation the wool batting is subjected to, the greater the possibility for shrinkage.
1. 9. Lay flat to dry on a clean sheet and block. The dryer causes excessive agitation, and heat causes shrinkage and felting. If possible dry flat until mildly damp, then tumble for a few minutes on air to fluff and soften the outside fabric as well as the batting.
1. 10. When barely damp, fluff in dryer on air.

The more quilting done on a quilt or comforter where wool batting is used, increases it's serviceability and reduces its' chance of shrinkage. Interestingly, if a quilt is quilted too closely, the air space within the fibers is flattened and will result in less warmth provided.

Care of Cotton Quilts with Polyester Batting:

1. 1. Fill the washer with 80 – 85 F. water. (27 – 30 C.)
1. 2. Thoroughly dissolve one Tablespoon Orvus Paste or ¼ cup Ivory dishwashing liquid or ¼ cup neutral detergent in the bath before entering the quilt.
1. 3. Gently agitate for 15 minutes.
1. 4. Lightly extract, remove if possible and fill with water again.
1. 5. Rinse with little agitation and extract lightly.
1. 6. Dry on a permanent press setting until just about dry. For best results, allow to air dry entirely as to not damage the polyester batting.

Polyester batting is heat sensitive and drying on a high heat (to dry faster) will only result in a claim. The batting becomes very brittle and shrinks, which gives the quilt or comforter an entirely different appearance and hand.

Storage Tips for Consumers

1. 1. Avoid attics and basements where extreme temperature changes take place.
1. 2. Store between 60 – 70° F in a fabric bag or sheet that has never been exposed to chlorine bleach.
1. 3. Store in an area where there is approximately 45% - 60% humidity. High humidity encourages mold and mildew.
1. 4. Store away from outside walls since this eliminates the change in temperatures.
1. 5. Store in a dark area with good air circulation and remember to refold often, about every six months.
1. 6. Do not store in plastic bags, since this cuts off air and emits harmful by-products as it ages. Static electricity is also generated by plastic, which attracts dust.
1. 7. Wrap in de-sized, unbleached muslin. Purchase unbleached (natural color) muslin and wash it at least three times to remove the sizing. Do not use a white sheet that may have been washed with chlorine bleach at one time. This may create damage to the textile it is covering at some point in time.
1. 8. Quilts should be folded, even though folding also creates stress on the quilted fabric, stitches, and batting. Rolling muslin or rolling acid-free tissue in every fold can reduce this stress. All items stored in this manner should be re-folded and aired out frequently (every six months) to avoid permanent creasing or tears resulting from

stress on the fabric.

1. 9. Do not hang antique quilts (even dry ones) for a long period of time as this creates stress on the fabric from the unsupported weight.

If you and your customer have the space, quilts can be rolled for storage. Roll loosely with the front (top) to the inside if it is a pieced quilt, as this will place less stress on the stitches. Before rolling, cover the tube with the acid-free tissue or de-sized, unbleached muslin. After it is rolled, cover with the same muslin sheet.

Because quilts can be valuable not only in art form, but in their sentimental value as a family heirloom, extra care must be taken. A new or antique quilt can be ruined easily by improper handling, cleaning, and storage.

Fusible Non-wovens

Fusible, otherwise known as fusible interfacing, adds shape and body to garments.

A fusible is a fabric that has been coated with a heat-sealable, thermoplastic adhesive. It may also be a thin, web-like structure made from thermoplastic fibers applied to the back of a fabric and then bonded by heat and pressure.

Fusibles eliminate a certain degree of stitching for the manufacturer, usually on coat and jacket lapels. In recent years, more fusibles are used to increase productivity in manufacturing. It is important the proper techniques and the correct selection of fusibles are selected or problems will occur for the drycleaner and the consumer. The layers may separate and shrink differently during cleaning and may bleed through to the surface fabric. This may result in a change in appearance and in the hand of the garment.

Many non-wovens are also used for disposable goods, such as diapers. Non-wovens are less expensive to produce than woven fabrics for disposable items in particular.

Felt

True felt is a web of wool or part-wool fibers held together by interlocking of the scales of the wool fibers. Primitive people made felt by washing wool fleece, spreading it out while it was still wet and beating it until the fibers matted together like a fabric. Today, different processes are used for making felt from various fibers.

Felt is stiff and less pliable than other structures. They are not as strong as other structures and do not ravel or fray needing no seam finish. It has industrial uses as well as some clothing uses. It can be used for insulation, padding, soundproofing, various crafts, and polishing. Felt also has wide use in products such as clothing decoration, hats, and pennants.