

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Care Labeling Rule?

The Care Labeling Rule was issued by the Federal Trade Commission in 1971 to help consumers with clothing care. The rule states that manufacturers must tag their clothing with at least one safe cleaning method. Beginning July 1, 1997, manufacturers may use certain care symbols in place of words on labels. These symbols and their meanings are explained on the reverse side of this publication. Symbols and their written meaning will be required for eighteen months. After January 1998, only symbols can be used by the manufacturer.

What information is required on the care label?

Care labels for textile wearing apparel must provide either washing or dry cleaning instructions. Only one safe method of care is required to be provided by the manufacturer. The label must also warn you against any procedure that might harm the item during reasonable care. For example, the label must say whether any step of the care method — washing, bleaching, drying, ironing or dry cleaning — could harm the garment or other garments cleaned with it.

Are there any other symbols?

The symbols shown on the reverse side of this publication are approved for use throughout North America. There is not an internationally recognized care label system at the present time. Clothing manufactured in countries outside North America may use different symbols.

Does washable also mean my garment can be dry cleaned?

Not always. Only one safe method of care has to be listed on the label by the manufacturer. The label does not have to warn about other cleaning methods which might prove unsafe. For example, clothing labeled "washable" may not dry clean well.

What if the care instructions don't work?

If you followed the care instructions on the label and problems result, return it to the store where you bought it. Dyes that run after following the the manufacturer's washing instructions and other problems which result are the responsibility of the manufacturer. The safe cleaning method listed on the care label is, in effect, a care warranty. Ask the store for an exchange or refund. If the store will not help you, ask for the manufacturer's name and address and write directly to the company, describing your problem.

You can also contact the Federal Trade Commission by writing to: Consumer Response Center, Federal Trade Commission, Washington, DC 20580. Although the FTC cannot resolve individual disputes, the information you provide may indicate a pattern of law violations requiring action by the Commission.

Other publications by The University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service:

- PB 1301 *Spot and Stain Removal*
- PB 1517 *Machine Wash vs. Dry Clean Only*
- PB 1518 *Understanding Care Labels*
- PB 1207 *Care and Storage of Textile Heirlooms*

To request a copy of any of the above publications, please contact your county Extension office.

The chart on the reverse side of this publication illustrates care symbols accepted by the Federal Trade Commission as part of a conditional exemption to the FTC Care Labeling Rule (16 CFR 423). This chart is referenced from ASTM D5489-96c, Fig. 1, Commercial and Home Laundering and Symbols.



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Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914. Agricultural Extension Service Billy G. Hicks, Dean

Care Label Symbols

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As of July 1, 1997, care labels may come with a new feature — symbols or pictures. These symbols will quickly help you determine how to clean your clothes. Through 1998, the care label must include written instructions with the option of using symbols as well. After 1998, either written instructions or symbols must be provided, but not always both. Below is a quick guide to help you learn the new symbols.

Guide to Apparel/Textile Care Symbols		Warning Symbols												
 Wash	Machine Wash Cycles  Normal  Permanent Press  Delicate/Gentle  Hand Wash	 Do Not Wash  Do Not Wring												
	Water Temperatures <table border="1"> <tr> <td>(Maximum)</td> <td>(200F)</td> <td>(160F)</td> <td>(140F)</td> <td>(120F)</td> <td>(105F)</td> <td>(65F-85F)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Symbol(s)</td> <td>95C ••••</td> <td>70C •••</td> <td>60C ••</td> <td>50C ••</td> <td>40C •</td> <td>30C •</td> </tr> </table>		(Maximum)	(200F)	(160F)	(140F)	(120F)	(105F)	(65F-85F)	Symbol(s)	95C ••••	70C •••	60C ••	50C ••
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 Bleach	 Any Bleach When Needed  Only Non-Chlorine Bleach When Needed	 Do Not Bleach												
	Tumble Dry Cycles  Normal  Permanent Press  Delicate/Gentle  Line Dry / Hang to Dry  Drip Dry  Dry Flat  In the shade (added to line dry, drip dry or dry flat)		 Do Not Dry (used with Do Not Wash)  Do Not Tumble Dry											
 Dry	Tumble Dry Settings  Any Heat  High  Medium  Low  No Heat/Air	 Do Not Iron  No Steam (added to iron)												
	Iron — Dry or Steam  200C (390F) High  150C (300F) Medium  110C (230F) Low													
 Iron	Dryclean - Normal Cycle  Any Solvent  Any Solvent Except Trichloroethylene  Petroleum Solvent Only	 Do Not Dryclean												
	Dryclean — Additional Instructions  Short Cycle  Reduced Moisture  Low Heat  No Steam Finishing													
 Dryclean														

As a minimum, laundering instructions include, in order, four symbols: washing, bleaching, drying and ironing. Drycleaning instructions include one symbol.