

FashionableCare™

Guide to Knit Care



Fall/Winter 2010

Margaret's Specialty Services

- 
LEGACY *Gown Preservation®* Gown heirloom preservation service
- 
ACADEMY *Gown Service™* Pressing and/or cleaning prior to the wedding
- 
COUTURE *Fine Alterations™* Fine alterations including bridal
- 
VINTAGE *Textile Restoration™* Restoration of yellowed or damaged vintage items
- 
VALET *Delivery Service™* Complimentary delivery in our delivery regions
- 
CLEAN *By Mail™* Nationwide courier service
- 
HERITAGE *Household Service™* Cleaning of draperies, comforters, slip covers & furniture
- 
PULITO *Purse Service™* Cleaning of purses, handbags & luggage
- 
PATENT *Leather & Suede Care™* Cleaning, dyeing & conditioning of leather & suede items
- 
FRENCH *Hand Laundry™* Mending, cleaning & finishing fine table & bed linens
- 
TEXTILE *Restoration Service™* Smoke & odor removal from clothing & household items
- 
VESTITO *Bridal Gown Storage™* Bridal gown storage in a secure, climate controlled environment
- 
NUOVO *Leather Repair™* Shoe, purse, luggage & leather repair

FashionableCare™

Fashionable Questions... Careful Answers

Fall/Winter 2010

Guide to Knit Care

Knitwear continues to be a popular method of garment construction. Due to its ability to stretch and give during wear, as well as provide warmth while breathing, knitwear serves both function and style. Knitted garments can be found everywhere from a basic underpinning to a couture creation on a Paris runway. This issue of FashionableCare provides some insight into the utility and care of knitwear.

PURCHASING

Informed purchasing decisions are important to get the most out of your knitwear. Over the years, Margaret's has accumulated a wealth of experience and knowledge relating to knitwear that we are pleased to share with you in this newsletter.

When purchasing garments with specialty buttons, be sure to ask your sales representative for extras. For many designers, buttons are integral to the intended style and look of a garment and are often specially made just for a season and then discontinued. It can be close to impossible for a seamstress to find replacement buttons.

If you are considering separates or ensembles, be sure to purchase matching garments within the same season. Dye lots are never exactly the same and from season to season, can vary dramatically. This same guideline also applies when purchasing white garments, especially white wool. Sheep wool is never as white as many of the bright white garments produced today. You cannot dye an item white. The process of brightening involves adding optical brighteners to enhance the fabric brightness. These brighteners are sensitive to ultraviolet light that can cause them to yellow with age. It is important with white wool that in order for separates to match, they are the same age and have experienced the same UV exposure and cleaning history. Brightening yellowed wool can be performed only by the finest of fabricare specialists and can be extremely challenging if the contrasting color trim is used in the construction of the garment.



ALTERING

Altering knits is generally more expensive than altering woven or non-woven garments. The finishing off of hems on knits can be a complicated process. It involves more than surging the fabric and using a blind stitch to secure it (a typical procedure for garments constructed of woven material). Sleeves of knits are often shortened by an expensive process of lifting from the shoulder. Re-knitting to reproduce the original knitted finish can be a painstaking process and requires an experienced seamstress capable of crocheting.

The good news in knit alteration is that many adjustments can be accomplished with the relatively inexpensive process of blocking. This blocking process is described in detail later in this newsletter. When utilizing blocking, most garments can be enlarged a size to a size-and-a-half or reduced in size by a half. Depending on the weight and construction of the knit, these guidelines may not hold. For example, a cardigan with a zipper cannot be lengthened without replacing the zipper, which can be quite costly. Whenever having an item altered, always ask to have the trim, selvage, and any excess material returned to you to keep. Spare material may come in handy to repair insect or other damage at a later date. Insect damage causes and remediation techniques are covered in our FashionableCare newsletter entitled “*What’s Bugging You*” available on our website.

WEARING

Fine knits are not only stylish but practical to wear. Knitwear in general is comfortable due to the desirable properties of breathability, hygroscopy, stretchability and wrinkle resistance. The hygroscopic properties particularly apply to wool and wool blends. Wool can absorb up to 30% of its weight in moisture content, keeping you cool and comfortable.

Knit garments also wear well between cleanings. The texture of the knit tends to hide any minor stains, unlike silk and satin, which will show the slightest of stains. Knits tend to un-wrinkle themselves when hung or laid out properly between wearings and usually retain that “just pressed” look, unlike cotton, silk and linen. On the downside, excessive tension may often result in sagging and an improper fitting garment. Some of the softer low twist yarns may snap and break resulting in a hole, open seam or detached collar.



Hairspray is a drycleaner’s nightmare because it can cause invisible stains which miraculously appear from the heat of the drying cycle. An important tip to remember is to cover your shoulders with a towel when applying hairspray.

SEASONAL STORING

Do not overcrowd your closets. Clothes need to breathe. Crowded closets with minimal airflow and dark spaces, can promote mildew growth and create nesting places for insect larvae to feed on fabric. Worn and stained clothing provide a homing signal for insects. Consider donating, reselling or utilizing off-site storage such as Garde Robe, to free up space in your closet, as discussed in the “Long-Term Storage” section in this newsletter.

It is doubly important that items be stain-free before returning them to the closet. Recent or fresh stains may be easy to remove, however soiled items returned to the closet may not be discovered for months. This makes stain removal difficult and sometimes impossible. Carefully inspect the item for soil in good lighting before storing. Be sure to have stained garments cleaned before returning them to the closet.



Breathable Sweater Bag

Hang all recently worn items to dry before placing them back into your closet. Fabrics retain moisture and it may take a day or two for them to dry to the relative humidity in the house. Leather and suede garments can retain excessive amounts of moisture and can take up to three days to dry out. However, do not accelerate the drying process with a hairdryer or by placing in a dryer. Let the garment give up its moisture naturally. Do not expose items to direct sunlight as excessive exposure to UV light can be detrimental to the garment as well.

Fold and shelf knits to help them keep their shape. This is particularly important for seasonal and long-term storage. Knits hung under their own weight suffer from the unequal distribution of support by hangers. This can cause distortion and result in a garment that no longer retains its original fit. We recommend the breathable sweater bag (pictured above), first introduced to the dry cleaning industry by Margaret’s Cleaners. This unique invention provides a breathable environment for knits and also creates a barrier to prevent insect damage. The bag has a window for quick identification of the garment.

Use the proper hanger for knits that are hung for short-term storage. A padded or broad shoulder hanger will prevent the telltale “rabbit’s ear” signature of a wire

hanger. Clip hangers for skirts provide better support than safety pins. Folding a long dress at the waist over a suit strut hanger may be easier on the knit than hanging from the shoulder.

Never store clothing in plastic bags. The poly bags from the dry cleaner are great for packing in wardrobe bags for travel and the vinyl zip-up bags from department stores are convenient for travel. However, neither provide breathability, and plastics can outgas, resulting in fume fading or yellowing of the garment.

Store all your finest garments in zip or snap-closure breathable bags. A variety of bags perfectly suited for storage is available from Margaret's Boutique Wardrobe Products. The ideal storage bag is breathable, has no digestible protein for insect consumption, has a zipper or snap closure, and a transparent window, so that the contents can be seen without opening the bag.

As previously discussed in the "Wearing" section of this newsletter, be absolutely sure leather and suede items are completely dry before placing them in the closet for seasonal or long-term storage.

LONG-TERM STORAGE

As previously discussed, soiled garments must be cleaned before storing to prevent permanent staining and insect damage. Over time invisible stains caused by oils from salad dressing and hand cream can oxidize and turn the fabric yellow or brown. Sugars from fruit juice, wine, and cake icing will caramelize as well. Underarm perspiration and hairspray can be nearly invisible, but after being in long-term storage, the yellowing and weakening of fabric can turn a once treasured blouse into an item ready for the rag pile.

Cedar and lavender are useful for keeping stored items smelling fresh. Cedar chest and cedar lined closets can help to prevent insect damage when properly maintained.

Information about cedar, lavender and moth balls is provided in our FashionableCare issue, "What's Bugging You." It's imperative to know that the purpose of moth balls is to preserve items never to be worn again. The products are toxic and the odor can be nearly impossible to remove.

Once again, breathable sweater bags and garment bags for hanging items are your best bet. Folding knits for long term storage is a must.



Garde Robe Storage

Our Garde Robe Luxury Wardrobe Storage service is an ideal solution for protecting your treasured items while freeing up space for your current seasonal wardrobe. Garde Robe offers archival off-site storage in a climate controlled facility. The seasonal switch option in effect, doubles the size of your home closet by switching those items in storage twice a year between spring/summer and fall/winter garments. Garde Robe members enjoy 24/7 visual access to their Cyber Closet. With a mouse click or iPad touch, your precious items will be delivered to your home or specified location, freshly steamed and ready-to-wear.

TRAVELING

Knits are perfect for traveling. Their wrinkle resistance, stretchability and breathability are a comfortable choice when you are confined to a sitting position for hours on end.

Knit garments pack well. Upon arrival, hang an item for a few hours and most of the travel wear will fall out. Place plastic dry cleaner's bags over individual knit blazers before hanging in a wardrobe bag. Stuff a little tissue in the sleeves and they will arrive in excellent condition. Sweaters, skirts and slacks are best folded to keep their shape during travel.



One last piece of travel advice, never entrust a hotel valet with the cleaning of your knitwear. Knits need to be properly cleaned. Often, they are thrown in a dry cleaning machine with wool suits and pants. Knits require cleaning in a net bag on slow speed. Have them cleaned by a reputable cleaner when you arrive home.

CLEANING

The two most frequently asked questions regarding the cleaning of knitwear are, "how often should they be cleaned?" and "can I wash them at home?" We recommend cleaning knitwear at least once a season and/or shortly after being soiled. As previously discussed, invisible stains oxidize with age, making them more difficult to remove. When taking knits in for cleaning, request that they be measured and blocked. Knit blocking is discussed in the next section of this newsletter. If you have had any custom blocking previously done to the knit, be sure to let your cleaner know. Also, point out any known stains and identify the origin. When the source of the stain is known, there is a better chance of removal.

If the garment being cleaned is multi-pieced, let the cleaner know to assure successful color tracking. We do recommend cleaning white wool knits together to assure similar optical brightness. Often color separates do not have to be cleaned at the same time.



Wet Cleaning

Wet cleaning can be successfully accomplished at home if the care label permits. We strongly recommend hand washing as opposed to machine washing. The question of which detergent to use is an often-debated subject. A very safe detergent to use is Ivory Snow Flakes because it is a neutral lubricant. As a warning, not all garments are washable. Be careful not to wash multi-colored garments because colors may bleed onto one another. If you question whether or not an item is washable, let a professional handle it.

When hand washing knitwear, keep these basic rules in mind. Never let the garment sit in water without being gently agitated. Only undertake hand washing when you have the time to see the process through to its conclusion. We recommend washing one garment at a time unless the items are similar.

When you are ready to wash your knitwear, start with a clean tub or sink. Fill the tub with about six inches of luke-warm water and use only enough Ivory Snow Flakes to develop a few suds when you agitate the water. Place the garment in the bath and gently lift and lower it, careful not to twist the material. The cleaning should only take a few minutes. Empty the tub and gently press out excess water without wringing the item. Now, fill the container with fresh water, place the item back in and keep the item moving to rinse. Gently squeeze out excess water without wringing it. Rinse the garment a second time to remove all the soap.

Lay the item flat on a dry towel. Pat the top with a second dry towel to accelerate the drying process. Do not let the garment lay on a wet towel. It's best not to start your hand washing experience with your most precious items. Practice with non-treasured items. Good luck and remember, if you are not sure about washing an item, leave it for the experts to clean.

BLOCKING

Knit blocking is the process of changing the size or shape of an item or returning it to its original dimensions by redistributing the knit weave. No alterations are involved. Blocking is accomplished through an iterative (repeating) process of passing steam through the knit material to relax it, shifting and distributing the material to the desired dimen-

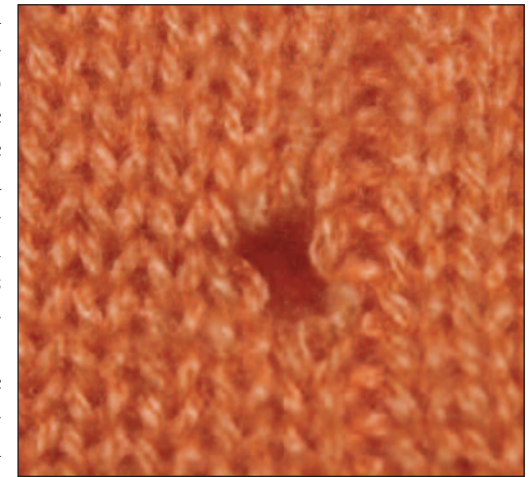


Knit Blocking

sion, and tamping and cooling the knit to lock in the new shape. Working iteratively in both dimensions is necessary to produce a stable result. A professionally blocked knit will hold its dimension through cleaning unless it was over-stretched from previous blocking. Typically, it is possible to reduce knits a half-size or increase a size-and-a-half without over blocking.

REPAIR & RESTORING

Fine wool knits left unprotected can be a breeding ground for insects causing extensive damage to fabric. Re-knitting and darning are two repair techniques that can be used to repair holes. Re-knitting is a process of grafting yarn onto an existing piece by using the original knitting sequence or pattern. This type of repair produces the best result and is the most expensive. Darning is hand knitting over the top of damaged material by mimicking the original knit pattern and is less expensive to do.



Before & after reknitting a cashmere sweater. Thread marks location of the original hole.



Knit garments are also subject to snagging during wear as the result of abrasion from jewelry and handbags. Do not cut a snag to hide it. In an emergency, the minimal repair technique is to pull the snag through to the inside and weave the excess yarn into the underside of the garment to secure. This will prevent further damage to the garment. Fine knitwear specialists can easily take care of snags for a reasonable cost.

Additional restoration processes may include brightening to restore the original brightness or dyeing to change or restore the color. It is best to leave these more complicated processes to the professionals.



Before & after of snag repair



Margaret's Credentials & Awards

About Margaret's

Established in 1953, Margaret's is a family-owned business with four generations of dry cleaning experience. As the premier dry cleaner in Southern California and service provider for over 100 garment retailers, Margaret's is one of the top couture cleaners in the nation and the only Five Star Certified Couture Cleaner™ in Southern California.

AWARDS

- Award of Excellence* — Dry Cleaning & Laundry Institute
- Best of La Jolla* — La Jolla Light Readers' Poll
- Best of San Diego* — San Diego Magazine
- Best of La Jolla* — La Jolla Village News Readers' Poll
- Most Influential Dry Cleaner* — Methods for Management
- Best Family Owned Business* — San Diego Business Journal
- People's Choice Award Winner* — BridalInsider.com
- Bride's Choice Award Winner* — WeddingWire.com
- Best Of San Diego* — BestOf.com

CERTIFICATIONS

- Certified Cleaner for Kale Handbags
- 5-Star Certified Couture Cleaner
- Award of Excellence & Master Spotter
- Certified Environmental Dry Cleaner
- Certified Master Dry Cleaner

MEMBERSHIPS

- Better Business Bureau
- ASID (Am. Society of Int. Designers)
- Association of Bridal Consultants
- Dry Cleaning & Laundry Institute
- Methods for Management
- Leading Cleaners Internationale
- Assn. of Wedding Gown Specialists
- Sanitone Certified Master Dry Cleaner

About FashionableCare™

FashionableCare™ is a publication of Margaret's Cleaners. The purpose of this effort is to provide accurate and needed information to the public and retail garment industry regarding the proper care and use of high fashion garments and handbags.

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