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THE BEAUTY EXPERT

HOW TO KEEP YOUR CLOTHES LOOKING NEW

By John Mahdessian

Celebrities can wear designer clothes once and leave them crumpled on the floor, but the rest of us would like to wear them many times. I've dry-cleaned couture for fashion editors, socialites, and even the designers themselves, and I know a few simple practices to keep future heirlooms from looking tired.

- **Maintenance matters.**

Ask your dry cleaner to use a lower temperature and a shorter cycle than usual to protect frequently treated (more than once per month) items from overprocessing. Request that your whites be cleaned in new or recently distilled solvent because if the solution is dirty, the white fabric picks up that residue. You could even ask for a sample of the solvent to judge for yourself - it should be completely clear. And you must take special-occasion pieces to your cleaner after each outing - even if they look spotless. A silk dress may not immediately show underarm stains, but months later, even barely traceable oils and perspiration could discolor the material.

- **Read labels.**

Note the fabrics and their cleaning requirements, and don't hesitate to give your cleaner instructions. Gabardine, wool, polyester, microfiber, Lycra, and spandex-enhanced fabrics can become shiny if ironed too hard or with too much heat, for instance, so request that they be pressed by hand or with an iron shoe, which protects them. Dry-cleaning solvent also wears off the waxy finish of a waterproof coat, so ask for it to be reapplied.

- **Out, damned spot.**

Be vigilant about stains. The longer they have to settle, the more difficult they are to remove. Take the soiled item to your cleaner quickly, tell him what caused the stain, and ask for a pre-spot treatment. If the item is machine- or hand-washable, pretreat at home: equal amounts water and dishwashing liquid for oil stains; four parts soap and water and one part clear vinegar for organic stains like fruit, tea, and dirt; six parts soap and water and one part ammonia for protein stains like blood and milk. When in doubt, bring the garment straight to the dry cleaner.

- **No wire hangers.**

Plastic or wooden hangers are preferable to wire, which can distort clothes. Allow at least a half-inch between hangers - squishing your clothes can wrinkle them. Remove the cleaner's plastic wrap - it's only there to shield clothes during transport and encourages condensation and mildew. But do keep the paper on the tops of the garments - it protects fabric from dust.

Mahdessian is the president of Madame Paulette, a high-fashion cleaning service in Manhattan.





Bring broken zippers, torn linings, and loose buttons and seams to your dry cleaner for repair.



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Leaving a half inch of space between hangers prevents clothes from wrinkling.

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★ **WHAT'S INSIDE** ★

Model Karolina Kurkova is doted on by stylists; she doesn't need to haul around beauty products. What she *does* carry, though, is revealing. We peeked inside her Marc Jacobs bag backstage at the MaxMara show in Milan.

Guerlain Terracotta bronzing powder. "I look too pale without it."

By Terry skin enhancer in Midnight Mauve. "It's a rosy, sheer tint, and it's not greasy."

Smith's Rosebud Salve. "You can tell how much I use it."

Motorola cell phone. "I don't call or pick up if I'm working."

Four Seasons Hotel Milano key card. "I like the Four Seasons—great service, high ceilings, and lots of light."

-DANIELLE PERGAMENT

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Karolina Kurkova's Marc Jacobs handbag