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Michigan State University Extension Service  
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# TEXTILE CARE...

## GIVE LABELS A TRY BEFORE YOU BUY

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY



BY BERNETTA KAHABKA

*Extension Clothing Specialist*

WOULD YOU LIKE to be more expert at shopping for clothing? Some clothing buys are very satisfactory—others much less so. Why? How can you eliminate guesswork and error when shopping for clothes?

Your first step is to look at textiles (and the merchandise of which they are made) in terms of what you really expect them to do for you.

*This is performance.* Satisfaction comes from selecting clothing which *performs* in the way we wish.

*Performance* may mean different things to each of us and will also vary with the item of clothing we're looking for.

*Performance* in clothing may relate to:

*No fiber, fabric or garment will satisfactorily meet all of these at one time.*

**APPEARANCE**  
**EASE OF CARE**  
**DURABILITY**  
**COMFORT**  
**ECONOMY**

*One or more of these performances will be more important to you with a given item of clothing.*

The kind of *performance* you expect from blue jeans varies considerably from the *performance* you expect from a man's dress shirt. Similarly, you cannot expect the "appearance" factor of a silk shantung dress to be equalled by the "durability" factor.

### ABOUT LABELS

We see an array of tags and labels attached to clothing articles. Of what use are they?

They can help you judge expected performance, especially those *performances* concerned with use and

care. To do this we need to learn to recognize names and guides and what they stand for.

This folder is designed to help you:

Get acquainted with *some* of the meaningful terms and directions found on labels and tags attached to clothing;

Interpret them so that you can get more satisfaction from the money you spend on clothing.

### CLUES TO CARE ON LABELS

Federal legislation (*The Textile Fiber Products Identification Act of 1960*) provides that each label must state generic (FAMILY or GENERAL CLASS) name of a fiber or fibers as well as their percentage within the fabric, for example 65% Dacron (polyester) and 35% cotton. There are many tradenames associated with some of the generic or family names.

COTTON is a family name.

ACRYLIC is also a family name. On labels, acrylics are further designated by trademarks like Acrilan, Creslan, Orlon, Zefran.

Trademarks further identify a fiber with the manufacturer, seller or producer.

Remembering all the trademarks would be difficult. It is important, however, for you to recognize generic or FAMILY names and what they mean in terms of use and care.

Here are some clues to use and care in relation to generic or FAMILY names. You'll notice that they are grouped together according to similarity.

# CLUES TO FABRIC USE AND CARE

GENERIC NAME (family)	GENERAL CLUES TO CARE	OTHER CLUES	GENERIC NAME (family)	GENERAL CLUES TO CARE	OTHER CLUES
<b>COTTON</b> <b>LINEN</b> <b>RAYON</b>	Remove oily stains before washing; washing may set these stains permanently. Laundry wash-and-wear along with untreated cottons in hot water. Before washing rayon, be sure the label says it is washable.	These fibers add to dressing comfort because they absorb body moisture.	<b>ACETATE</b> <b>TRIACETATE</b>	Remove oily stains before washing; washing may set these stains permanently. Use low temperatures in drying and pressing. Water stains can be wiped off easily. Avoid contact with acetone and paint removers; they may dissolve the fiber. Moth and mildew-resistant.	Acetate does not absorb moisture as much as rayon. Solution dyed acetate is resistant to fading from washing, perspiration, sunlight and atmospheric gases. Triacetate is not as heat sensitive as acetate, is resistant to wrinkling and fading, retains pressed pleats.
<b>SILK</b> <b>WOOL</b>	Remove oily stains before washing; washing may set these stains permanently. Avoid high temperatures. Use cool temperatures in washing and pressing to help prevent yellowing. To prevent felting of wool, use low agitation in washing machine and avoid rubbing when wet. Do not use chlorine bleach.	Drycleaning is preferable.	<b>GLASS</b>	Handwash glass curtains. Avoid wringing, rubbing or crushing glass curtains. Need no ironing. Do not machine wash or dryclean.	Extremely strong, resistant to sunlight and atmospheric fumes, does not burn. Does not shrink or stretch.
<b>RUBBER</b> <b>SPANDEX</b>	Do not expose garments containing rubber to oils, fats, lotions, or creams, or to excessive sunlight or heat. Wash frequently to remove body oils. Avoid constant overstretch. Do not use chlorine type bleach on garments containing spandex. Spandex is resistant to body oils, perspiration, and detergents.	Thoroughly rinse to remove soap or detergent used in laundering. Spandex can be machine washed (not over 140° F) and machine dried (not over 180° F).	<b>AZLON</b>	Weak when wet and requires careful handling.	Not widely available at present. Limited in strength and chiefly used in a blend because it helps to retard pilling.
<b>ACRYLIC</b> <b>MODACRYLIC</b> <b>NYTRIL</b> <b>NYLON</b> <b>POLYESTER</b>	Remove oily stains before washing; washing may set these stains permanently. Water borne stains can be wiped or washed off easily. Use low temperatures in drying and pressing. Press clothing lightly. Not necessary to block sweaters. Moth and mildew-resistant.	Resistant to shrinking and stretching. Thermoplastic (can be heat set) and more affected by heat than the natural fibers. Absorb little moisture. Modacrylics have less tendency to pill than acrylics. Avoid steam pressing Verel and Dynel (Modacrylic). White nylon has a tendency to pick up color even from wash-fat colors. Nylon may be weakened by long exposure to strong sunlight. Polyesters are more resistant to damage from sunlight.	<b>METALLIC</b>	Normally washable in items such as sheets and bathtowels.	Avoid abrasion and flexing.
			<b>OLEFIN</b>	Very sensitive to heat. Use low (not over 200° F) temperatures.	Used for seat covers, upholstery fabrics and some industrial purposes.
			<b>VINAL</b>	Heat sensitive—use low temperatures.	Resistant to abrasion and tearing. Used in rainwear and swimwear.
			<b>VINYON</b>	Very heat sensitive—will melt at normal ironing temperatures.	Resistant to acids and alkalis—wide industrial use.



### FIBER CONTENT JUST ONE CLUE

Reliable manufacturers recognize that performance depends upon yarn construction; fabric weave or knit; finishes; dye or design application; garment design, construction and trim,—in addition to fiber content.

The question today is not what miracles a fiber can perform but *what the clothing will do*. There is other information on labels to help us interpret performance. There are trade names for yarn processes.

*Some examples*

HELANCA (stretch yarn)  
 TYCORA (bulk yarn)  
 TEXTURALIZED (bulk crimp yarn)  
 SAYELLE (self-blocking)

There are trade names for textile finishes.

*Some examples*

BELFAST (wash-and-wear)  
 SYLMER (water repellent)  
 SCOTCHGARD (stain repellent)  
 SHIRFORIZED (shrinkage controlled)

Furthermore by eye and by hand you can, to some extent, evaluate performance by checking the closeness of weave or knit, the quality of sewing construction.

### VOLUNTARY PERFORMANCE LABELING

Much work is being done voluntarily by the textile and clothing manufacturing industry and other interested groups to provide textile products manufactured and labeled toward performance satisfactions. Some of these labeling programs are just beginning to appear. The examples on this page are but a few examples from the entire industry.\*

\* For purpose of clarification, it is necessary to list brand names of some textile products and processes in this bulletin. No endorsement of these products is intended nor criticism implied of similar products which are not mentioned.



### COLOR CODING FOR CARE

**Green striped tag**—WASHABLE—indicating that the fabric requires normal care and will not shrink, fade, or bleed when laundered by machine at home or by a reputable commercial laundry.

**Amber striped tag**—MACHINE WASHABLE AT WARM SETTING—meaning that the fabric may be safely laundered by machine at home at the lukewarm setting of 105° F., and will not shrink out of fit or have any noticeable color change.

**Red striped tag**—DRYCLEANABLE—indicating that the fabric may be safely dry or wet cleaned by any reputable cleaning establishment, and will resist fume fading and will not soil the body or other garments worn with it due to color migration caused by perspiration.

TEST MEASURED PERFORMANCE



**SANFORIZED plus**  
TRADEMARK

**Checked Standard of Shrinkage and Wash-and-Wear**

The fabric in this garment was regularly tested during production and meets exact standards for shrinkage\* and Wash-and-Wear performance.

**ELECTRONICALLY TESTED**

\*Fabric shrinkage less than 1%

This label indicates the performance expected of wash-and-wear fabrics in relation to:

Smoothness after washing (this does not necessarily mean that ironing will be eliminated but that ironing time will be shortened).

- Resistance to wrinkling.
- Resistance to shrinking.
- Resistance to tearing.
- Resistance to wear.

**Recognize—Interpret—Judge—Use Wisely**  
for clothes shopping satisfaction

**IT'S UP TO YOU TO FOLLOW THROUGH**

WHEN COMPLETE INSTRUCTIONS ARE GIVEN FOR CARE, FOLLOW THEM FAITHFULLY THROUGHOUT THE LIFE OF THE GARMENT TO GET THE MOST SATISFACTION FROM YOUR PURCHASE.

**INFORMATIVE LABELING:  
A SERVICE TO YOU**

You are a part of a team with producers, manufacturers, retailers, educators, and other consumers in supporting informative labeling. You can begin NOW!

1. Look for those PERFORMANCE qualities which are most important to you for the money you have to spend.
2. Use any product you buy as it was intended to be used, and care for it as suggested.
3. Save labels and return the garment if you have a legitimate complaint. With courtesy, please!

For other information on buying and caring for textile products, you may be interested in the following bulletins:

- 400 *Using Modern Laundry Aids*
- 401 *Problems in Textile Care*
- 402 *Easy Care—Do I Select It At The Store?*
- 404 *Keeping Clothes in Service*

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