

Colour Loss

White IS a Colour

Most people do not think of white as a colour, but it is. Many fabrics naturally have an off-white or yellowish cast. It is not uncommon for white fabrics to be treated with an optical brightener during manufacture to further enhance their whiteness. Some brightening agents are unstable and may lose their whitening ability when exposed to sun or artificial light. When this happens, the fabric may reflect a more yellow, gray, pink, or green cast. For example, a white sweater placed in direct sunlight may turn yellow on the exposed portion while the area not exposed remains white. Brighteners are more sensitive to light exposure when garments are wet.

Yellowing also may occur when chlorine bleach comes in contact with certain chemicals and resins used to impart a "permanent press" quality. Avoid this circumstance by following non-chlorine bleach care label instructions.

Normal aging, oxidation, and exposure to atmospheric soils of whites are the most common causes of yellowing.

The results from aging, oxidation or other circumstances sometimes can be reversed by professional cleaning processes using optical brighteners.

Now, the Good News!

As a general rule, you can assume a properly cared-for white garment will retain reasonable whiteness for approximately its normal life expectancy and that colours will retain their depth or brightness. Not all coloured fabrics are created equally. Although colour performance has improved with modern technology, failures may still occur. Here are some things that we have to be aware of.

Care Labels

The ACCC requires manufacturers to attach a permanent care label to textile garments providing directions for their care. That care label is intended to provide both consumers and garment care specialists guidance on how to care for a garment. A garment labelled "Dryclean" should have dyes that can withstand drycleaning, and "Washable" garments should have dyes that will perform well when washed. The best way for manufacturers to determine care procedures is through testing. Unfortunately, this is not always done and sometimes can mean less than satisfactory cleaning results.

Here are some tips to ensure the best colour performance of your garments:

- Always read and follow care instructions.
- Protect white and coloured garments from excessive exposure to light.
- When in doubt, ask us before you do anything.

Washable & Water-Based Dyes

Some dyes are water-soluble resulting in discoloration when laundered or exposed to rain, perspiration, or water. Since many stains require water and water-soluble agents for removal, even drycleanable items should have water-resistant dyes.

Water can also cause problems with sizing that is applied during manufacturing to provide body in fabrics such as rayon. Water spills may cause sizing to migrate and form dark rings or streaks as they dry. This occurrence is particularly difficult to remedy on drycleanable fabrics because it requires additional water to remove the sizing disturbance.

Colour Loss in Drycleaning

A dye that is soluble in drycleaning may fade during care. If two or more dyes

have been used and only one is soluble, there is a good possibility of a dramatic colour change. For example, if a yellow dye component of a green garment were to break down, you could be left with a blue garment! There is no way of knowing this in advance. Another dramatic example of colour failure could be a blue garment that retains its colour, while its blue and white surface-print may fade so that the blues no longer match. Occurrences such as this example are rare, but they can happen in the first cleaning or progress with each subsequent cleaning.

Fading

Fading may occur in household items such as bedspreads and curtains. Often the fading may not be noticeable until the item is compared with a matching item. We recommend that all matching items be drycleaned or laundered at the same time to ensure colour uniformity.

Dye Deterioration from Light and Chemicals

Most dyes eventually fade with exposure to sun or artificial light. Colour failure may occur rapidly on exposed areas of garments such as shoulders, collars, and sleeves. Particularly sensitive are blue, green, and lavender dyes, especially those used on silk or wool fabrics.

Be careful not to expose fabrics to alkaline toiletries such as toothpaste or shampoo. Hairspray, perfume, and deodorant contain alcohol which may cause colour loss on silk or rayon. Even the acidity of lemon juice affects some dyes. Colour loss as a result of these

situations might not be visible until after the garment is cleaned. Bleach, a component in many household cleaning products and skin or hair preparations, is one of the most common causes of colour loss and fabric damage.