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How to wash wool and cashmere

I've partnered with The Laundress to share how to properly care for your knits at home. It's finally "sweata weatha" and I'm happy to report that I have zero plans to do any dry cleaning this year. It's estimated that 90% of all "dry clean only" items can be laundered at home, and that is certainly true for all of the cashmere and wool sweaters I wear. Not only does it save tons of money and time, it's also better for garments, the environment, and you. Not sure if you can launder the item at home? Here's a helpful guide. I love The Laundress products because they are plant-based and animal-cruelty free, and their formulas are highly concentrated so they last for a long time—a little goes a long way. In my IGTV video, I'm showing you how to properly care for your treasured knits at home so you can keep them looking great for years and years. You can also snag the tools you need (like my favorite Wool & Cashmere Shampoo) from The Laundress at 25% off with my code NATALIE25 through 10/20. Here's the process I follow when washing my wool and cashmere sweaters at home: PREP + PRE-TREAT Treat any stains before laundering. Use Wash & Stain Bar on harder to reach areas (armpits, necklines) and to dirt, grease, and oil based stains, or Stain Solution for tannin and protein stains (wine, fruit, coffee, ink, etc.) If your item has an odor, mix Scented Vinegar with tepid water and soak for 30 minutes before laundering. LAUNDER Decide whether to hand wash in a basin or use the machine (make sure to use mesh bags and wash on low spin in cold water if you use the machine) Use a little bit of The Laundress Wool & Cashmere Shampoo to clean the garment. It's a pH balanced, plant-based formula for washing knits like wool, cashmere, mohair and blends. It's also scented in cedar, which is a natural bug repellent. FINISH Always hang knits to dry on a drying rack or lay flat. To speed up drying, you can lay flat on a towel and roll the towel to absorb the water quicker. Once dry, de-pill sweaters using the Sweater Comb for fine-gauge knits or the Sweater Stone for chunkier knits. The Cashmere Brush can be used to remove lint. MAINTENANCE Only wash your sweaters when necessary. To freshen knits in between washes, spray Wool & Cashmere Spray. It has antibacterial properties and a Cedar scent that removes removing odors and is a natural bug repellent to protect knits. I hope this helps you care better for your quality knits so you can wear them and love them for years to come. It's sweater season and that means that you probably have a couple that might need to head to the dry cleaners. There's a safer, no chemical, cheaper and better way – wash them at home. Here's how to wash your sweaters at home: Use a mild, liquid detergent (I like the Wool & Cashmere Shampoo by The Laundress) Pre-Treat any spots with the detergent Gently rub the detergent into the stain Place sweater(s) in washing machine Wash on gentle/delicate or a wool setting and in cold water - this is extremely important, failing to wash on cold and gentle/delicate can ruin your sweaters! Once the washer has finished its cycle, remove the sweater(s) and place on a clean, large bath towel Roll the sweater up in the towel and 'block' it - I step on the sweater while it's rolled up in the towel a bit to absorb any excess water Then I place the sweater flat on top of the dryer to dry Alternatively you can also use a drying rack to dry your sweaters Once your sweaters are dry, fold and put them away! Instead of dropping your sweaters off at the dry cleaners, try this simple technique to wash your sweaters at home. I love talking about laundry! Here are a couple other posts you might find helpful - just click on the image to go straight to the post! Posted Under: laundry We created our Cashmere and Wool Wash so that you can feel confident washing your most delicate knitwear at home! Crafted with our proprietary formula and delicately fragranced with Himalayan Cedarwood and Orange Oil, this will leave your knitwear refreshed and nourished. Follow this guide to hand washing knitwear at home. 1. Fill a basin with cool water and add 2-3 caps of our Cashmere and Wool Wash. 2. Turn the garment inside out, gently submerge it and agitate the water with your hands to distribute the soap and water. It is normal for a little dye to be released. Soak for up to 30 minutes. 3. Rinse with fresh water until the garment is free from soap and then gently press between your hands or against the sink. 4. Absorb excess water with a towel and leave to dry flat on a drying rack. To summarise, wool and cashmere can be delicately hand washed at home with the right product and technique. In fact, we believe that washing your knitwear at home can provide better results than dry cleaning, and will prolong the lifespan of your favourite garments. Give your garments some love by hand washing with our Eco Wash for Cashmere and Wool! SHOP NOW Disclaimer: Our recommendations for washing 'dry clean only' items are intended solely for use with Clothes Doctor Cashmere and Wool Wash. Remember to always test the product on a hidden part of the fabric before washing. And whilst we are happy to provide advice, any attempts to wash 'dry clean only' items are done so at the risk of the reader. If you are unsure, its best to seek specialist advice. Feel free to contact us on workshop@clothes-doctor.com for more information or help. Every year, there's that magical day that signals the beginning of fall. It may happen at different times in different places, but something in the air changes — a smell, a certain crispness — and you immediately know it's time to unearth your sweaters. Or, maybe you've been hunkered down in your sweaters since March of this year; no one could blame you. Either way, it's safe to say that the cozy pieces we turn to for warmth and comfort could often use some TLC at the turn of the season. It's the least we can do to keep them fresh and extend their lives. And extending the life of luxe fabrics like cashmere is key, especially now. Cashmere and wool are great sustainable choices since they're natural and biodegradable (unlike synthetics including polyester and acrylic), but their production isn't always light on the planet. A rise in global demand for cashmere has led to overgrazing, which, especially when combined with climate change, prevents regrowth and damages the land. Likewise, industrial scale wool production can result in land clearing. Forward-thinking designers like Stella McCartney are innovating more sustainable options, like the brand's re-engineered cashmere, but one of the best ways to reduce impact is to extend the life of well-made pieces that already exist. Caring for your cozy cashmere and woolens means you can wear them for longer or sell them when you're ready for something new-to-you. This keeps items in the circular economy, from closet to closet, instead of from closet to landfill. For example, by consigning just one wool sweater or buying it resale, you can save 101 liters of water and 4.13 kilograms of carbon. Caring for something delicate like cashmere or shrinkable like wool can be intimidating, but it's definitely doable — especially with a guide from a pro. Which is just what we got when we asked TRR Associate Fashion Valuation Manager Chris Chavez for his go-to tips, which emphasize sustainable cleaning methods to boot. Read on, and your sweaters, scarves and coats will be soft and sparkling clean in no time. How To Wash Cashmere You've splashed out on a luxurious cashmere sweater, but you don't need to use excess water to keep it looking great. Much the way denim collectors treat their prized jeans, you don't have to wash your cashmere after every single wear. "Limiting water consumption is my favorite way to launder clothing sustainably," says Chavez. "If you lay your worn garment flat in an area with good air circulation, you should get a few extra wears between washes." You can also spot-clean if it's just a small stain that has befallen your beloved cashmere sweater or coat. For this, Chavez recommends using a baby shampoo. "Just dab the stain with a microfiber cloth and remove as much discoloration as possible," he says. When it's time for your cashmere to take the plunge, just remember it's all about being gentle. "No heat! No agitation!" warns Chavez. "This can actually cause the scales of the fiber to open up and catch with each other, creating felt. This shrinkage is mostly irreversible, so avoid it at all costs." He also recommends a delicate-friendly detergent. "If you're trying to avoid harsh chemicals, baby shampoo is a good alternative. Just be sure to avoid fragrances and moisturizers." Next, launder your piece by hand in a container of cool or lukewarm water. "Remember to not stretch or rub the fibers together. Imagine it like a light massage for your sweater," he says. "Next, dispose of the dirty water, and rinse your sweater in the basin until the water runs mostly clear. To dry the piece, lay it flat on a large towel and roll the sweater in it to avoid unnecessary stretching. The cotton from the towel should absorb the moisture and then you can lay the piece flat to finish drying. Cashmere and wool tend to stay in the shape you dry them in, so make sure it's nice and flat." How To Store Cashmere Not all cashmere pieces are created equal, and storing them in a way that will preserve their shape depends on how they are constructed. "A good rule of thumb is to see if the garment will stretch," explains Chavez. "If the garment has quite a bit of room to expand (like a sweater or a hand-knit scarf) then you want to lay it flat so that it doesn't expand on the hanger. For your cashmere pieces that are more stable (think a cashmere coat), those can be hung on a wooden hanger. Wire hangers can lead to creasing and warping of the garment, and are best avoided. If you're concerned about moths, silverfish, or other creepy crawlers, the best way to avoid them is to place your cashmere items in a plastic container with a lid. Your coats should be safe in the designer's plastic garment bags." How To Wash Wool Wool is a versatile fabric, used for knitwear, suiting and beyond, so cleaning methods vary. "When it comes to wool suiting, look carefully at the care label," says Chavez. "There are versions of wool that are machine washable like a 'super wash merino.'" Of course, some wool clothing will be labeled "dry clean only," but be wary of how often you take your pieces to the cleaners. "I would not rely on dry cleaners for wool pants and coats too often" says Chavez. "Dry cleaning chemicals can actually leave a film on wool, coating the fibers with a finish that can't be removed. A suiting brush is great to brush off your pieces for a freshen-up instead of taking them to the dry cleaners. The fibers of the brush actually loosen up any debris in the suit and can be very effective." For most other pieces, it's best to treat wool as a delicate and avoid the agitation of a washing machine by hand-washing. "Woolite is a classic for a reason, and they now make versions that are safe for dark colors. But if you need to use a washing machine, I suggest using a garment bag or mesh bag to limit the amount of agitation," notes Chavez. To avoid too much washing, or for a quick spot-clean, Chavez recommends a household go-to. "Vinegar is highly effective in removing odors from garments if you use a diluted solution (equal parts vinegar and water) and spray directly on the areas of concern — then let the piece dry flat on a towel." How To Store Wool There are many enemies to wool that threaten fading fibers, stretching and holes. Avoid them by taking the extra step to make sure your cozy staples are stored properly. "Wool items and most clothing should be stored in a dry, dark area," says Chavez. "Sun exposure can cause wool to fade and the fibers to become brittle. Those brittle fibers can break and lead to holes." Speaking of holes, there's one tempting sweater solution that should be avoided. "Don't shave your wool! I know you can shave to remove pills, but that causes the fabric to thin and eventually you will have a hole where you shave your fine garment. If the yarns are thick and the pills won't affect the background, remove them with a pair of small scissors and a comb very carefully." Like cashmere knits, wool sweaters and other knitwear should be laid flat. "Often you find hanger marks on sweaters that could have easily been avoided by keeping the piece flat," says Chavez. Wear, Care, Sell: Earn The Most For Your Cashmere & Wool Taking good care of your cashmere and wool items not only ensures they'll keep you cozy and chic for as long as possible, it also means you'll earn more and sell faster if you decide to consign. "Knits in excellent condition (with no signs of visible wear) sell the fastest," says Associate Merchandising Manager Hayley Purse. "And women's cashmere and wool knits in very good condition sell at a 35% higher price point than those in good condition." Similarly for menswear, condition plays a big part in how fast items sell, and how much you'll earn. "Men's cashmere and wool scarves in pristine or excellent condition sell 12% faster and are priced 30% higher than those in very good or good condition," says Senior Men's Merchandising Manager Aaron McWilliams. Men's sweaters in excellent condition (with no signs of visible wear) also sell the fastest, but if you have items that you never got around to wearing, let alone washing, those can earn you the most. "Men's cashmere and wool sweaters in pristine condition are priced 50% higher than those in good condition." Investment pieces and worth investing the time in to care for, for your closet and your wallet. Have cashmere or wool items you're ready to sell? Got started here. If you live in a colder climate, wool and cashmere are probably standbys in your closet during the fall and winter months. From gloves to scarves to sweaters, these materials make for both warm and stylish attire. Many wool and cashmere items, though, suggest dry cleaning, which can quickly get expensive. If you're on a budget, you might have considered washing your wool and cashmere wardrobe at home in the past but decided not to for fear of ruining things you love to wear. Not to fret; this guide is here to help! As you continue reading, you will discover how in how you can clean wool and cashmere clothes at home without damaging them in any way. It might be a good idea to print this guide and hang it in your laundry room so you can reference it as needed until you feel comfortable with the process. Prepare Your Clothes to Be Laundered The first thing you need to do, which might not be necessary in all cases, is getting your wool and cashmere clothing ready to be washed. The worse condition an item is in, the more prep work will be required. If some areas are pilling, use a lint brush or a fabric shaver to remove the fuzz. If the item is particularly smelly, spray it with distilled white vinegar. Finally, if there are noticeable stains, use a mild dish detergent (like Ivory) to pre-treat them. Hand-Washing Wool and Cashmere If you opt to hand-wash your wool and cashmere clothes, the first step is to fill a sink with cool water and detergent of your choice (do not choose something harsh or heavy duty for these items). Then, swirl each article in the water until it is fully saturated. After you are satisfied that the item has been cleaned sufficiently, press as much water as possible out of the item; do NOT wring it! The best way to drain an item is to lay it on a bath towel and roll the towel up, pressing gently as you go. Machine Washing Wool and Cashmere If you decide to try machine washing your wool and cashmere clothes, you must first make sure any buttons, zippers, and other closures are shut. Then, turn the item inside out (unless it is a scarf) and put it into a pillowcase. After tying the pillowcase, run the item(s) through your washer on a cold, delicate cycle. Drying Your Items Wool and cashmere clothing should never be put in a dryer. Instead, lay each item flat on a dry bath towel for 12-24 hours per side. If any articles wrinkle, use a fabric steamer on them before returning them to your closet. Once you learn how to wash wool and cashmere items at home correctly, you will find that it doesn't take much time. In fact, you'll probably save time compared to visiting your local dry cleaner on a regular basis! You will also assuredly save money. Both of these benefits make it well worth the minor learning curve you will initially experience.

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