

- Dry cleaning



# inside the GH Cleaning Lab

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Our cleaning dynamo shares her tips and tricks to tackle your toughest cleaning challenges and all your trouble spots.



## Does frequent dry cleaning harm clothing?

— Maddy H.

**A: Honestly, the opposite is true.** Dry cleaning removes odors and soils like sweat and body oils that you can't always see. If you skip cleaning for too long, these villains can build up and weaken some fibers over time. Plus, professional steaming and pressing helps refresh and restore shape and appearance. But you don't have to get an item dry-cleaned after every wearing, which can get expensive. If it has stains or something was spilled on it (even if you don't see a stain), it needs cleaning. Otherwise, consider factors such as how often and how long you've worn it and whether it's an inner or an outer layer (inner ones need more frequent cleaning). Always have items dry-cleaned before storing them for the season.

## Dry Cleaning Myths, Busted

**MYTH 1**  
**✗ Clothes don't get wet.**  
Dry cleaning is a bit of a misnomer. Items get wet, but not from water. Usually garments are saturated with and tumbled in solvent-based solutions to remove soils and stains. Then they are rinsed in fresh solvent, dried, pressed and wrapped. Water may be used on water-safe fabrics.

**MYTH 2**  
**✗ Cleaners can erase any stain.**  
There's no magic wand when it comes to removing stains, even for the best dry cleaner. While professional techniques that surpass what you can do at home, some marks may be impossible to remove without damaging fabric. If a stain remains, ask if the business can try again with no additional charge.

**MYTH 3**  
**✗ Harsh chemicals are the norm.**  
Perchloroethylene, the most well-known solvent, is considered hazardous to humans and the environment and is falling out of favor. In its place, more shops are choosing alternatives like liquid silicone, liquid carbon dioxide and hydrocarbon. Many offer water-based cleaning too.

### EXPERT ADVICE 4 Tips for Better Dry Cleaning

What happens to your garments once you hand them over to the dry cleaner can be a bit of a mystery. Most professionals do a good job, but there are a few things you can do to help ensure that your clothes are treated well. For tips on getting the best results, I chatted with Jerry Pozniak, a second-generation dry-cleaning specialist and CEO of luxury dry cleaner Jeeves New York. Here's what he advises:

**Choose a qualified shop.**  
Look for a clean, well-kept facility whose staff members are willing to answer your questions and explain how they'll address difficult stains. A good dry-cleaning business stands behind its work and is willing to offer reimbursement if needed.

**Think before wetting a stain.**  
Sponging a fresh stain with water may be your first instinct. But when this is done on some fibers, such as silk and rayon, hard-to-remove rings can be left behind. For stains on non-washable fabrics, blot (don't rub) with a clean cloth or a paper towel and let the dry cleaner do the rest.

**Bring clothing in promptly.**  
At the dry cleaner as at home, the faster a stain is tackled, the more likely success is. Try to get an item to the cleaner within two days after it gets stained, and point out spots and areas needing extra attention.

**Read labels before buying.**  
Sequins, trim and even pleats make cleaning and pressing more difficult. If an item must only be dry-cleaned, it may cost more to clean than it's worth.

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