

Acetate - Facts

Acetate Fabric Facts Acetate fiber was designated in 1952 as a fiber different from rayon. Both consumers and drycleaners benefited from the Federal Trade Commission ruling because the characteristics of rayon and acetate are different. Acetate was the first man-made fiber to be used as a silk substitute. Acetate is widely used in blends with silk as well as with rayon, nylon and wool. Acetate blends are used in fabrics of satin, taffeta, velvet and crepe. Acetate is used in men's and women's wear such as shirts, blouses, slacks, jackets, skirts and home furnishings.

Fabric Problems The silk-like look of acetate causes many problems because it is mistaken for silk. Acetate is affected in pressing and ironing by heat over 355° F. Shine, glazing and fusing will result. Hand ironing, even with a Teflon shoe, may not be safe. Unlike most fabrics, acetate will be affected in finishing by steaming and spraying. Acetate and blends will deluster. Acetate velvet, unlike other velvets, will flatten permanently and deluster from heat, pressure and water. Unlike other thermoplastic fibers, acetate is readily affected by many chemicals. Dyes used on acetate fabrics are sensitive to alcohol. Discoloration may result from liquor, antiperspirants, cologne and perfume. The heat in dry cleaning may worsen the damage caused by alcohol. Fading may result from light and atmospheric gases. Fading can occur even in a relatively pollution-free environment because of fumes from home heating and the garage. Some glues and acetone (nail polish) will cause holes in acetate. Like other thermoplastic fabrics, acetate must be properly heat set in manufacture to prevent shrinkage, stretching, wrinkling and loss of pleats.

Identification Acetate can be identified as a thermoplastic fiber by the burn test. The hard bead is difficult to crush. A more conclusive test is to snip a sample of the fabric from an unexposed seam. Saturate the sample with acetone. If the fabric fully or partially dissolves, it is acetate or a blend.

Inspection Examine acetate and blends for light or atmosphere fading. The dyes tend to discolor to a reddish tint. Examine the shoulder and sleeve area and compare it with an unexposed area to detect fading. Examine neckline or bosom for color loss due to alcohol, perfume and underarm areas for discoloration from perspiration or deodorants. Examine acetate velvets for flattened areas. Shirts that are labeled acetate or blends should not be sent to commercial laundries because the heat used will adversely affect acetate.

Drycleaning The weaker fiber in blends determines the cleaning procedure. For example, if acetate is blended with silk, use the procedure for fragile silks. Place acetate knits in a net bag. Run for no more than 5 minutes. Keep solvent temperature at or below 85° F to prevent wrinkling and dye bleeding. Reclaim or dry at no more than 140 ° F. Do not leave acetate garments in a hamper or basket or hard wrinkles will occur.

Spotting Hold the steam gun at least six inches from acetate fabric to avoid distortion, fusing or changing the yarn texture. Limit mechanical action by tamping lightly with the spotting brush or preferably tamp with the brush wrapped in cheesecloth on fragile fabrics. Do not use a bone or spatula which will alter or flatten the yarn. Do not use general formula if it contains alcohol. Do not add water to paint remover when used on acetate. Do not allow paint remover to dry on acetate because it picks up atmospheric moisture resulting in discoloration. Test acetic acid before using it. Acetic acid over 28% can dissolve acetate fabric. Lower concentrations of acetic acid may cause dye and color loss especially when heated. Garments prespotted with moisture must be hung to dry to avoid dye loss in dry cleaning.

Wet Cleaning Acetate is usually safe to wet clean except velvet and pile fabrics. Blends, such as acetate blended with silk, may cause problems. The fabric may bleed due to the silk content. Use a mild detergent in water at body temperature. Do not wring the garment. Instead, squeeze it. Do not use steam before the garment has dried. Delustering or color loss may occur.

Finishing Steam acetate fabric lightly. Limit top buck pressure to avoid shine. Be alert for moisture leaks in the equipment or delustering may result. Do not spray moisture on the fabric while steaming. Hand irons must be cool for touch-up even if covered with a Teflon shoe.

Correction Procedure If an area of acetate is only slightly discolored, correction is sometimes possible. Spray affected area with a mild acetic acid (14%). Hang to dry. Reclean. Caution do not use on multicolored or printed acetates or blends. Bleeding will occur.

Summary Acetate is widely used as a silk substitute. Acetates are heat sensitive. Heat may cause shrinkage, unwanted stretching, loss of pleats or hard wrinkles. Discoloration may result from liquor, perspiration, antiperspirants, cologne and perfume. Acetate is susceptible to fume fading from atmospheric gases and natural or artificial light. To be safe, observe all spotting and finishing precautions. Delustering may result from a careless use of heat and moisture in spotting but especially in finishing.