

Permanent Press



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Probably every family has mens or boys trousers of permanent press in the wardrobe. This wonderful feature is finding its way into many other fields of clothing, and into home furnishings as well. You may be asking yourself some questions about this manufacturing process. Are all permanent press articles equally good? Is the increase in cost worth my while? How should I care for these fabrics? Is it really permanent press or just another bid for my money?

Become acquainted with this near-miraculous feature on today's fabrics. Here is a little history for background.

The United States Department of Agriculture, the National Cotton Council, the Wool Bureau and many commercial experimental laboratories have been working on the concept of permanent press for years. The forerunners were the drip-dry finishes which, although originally featured as "no-iron", did not live up to this promise and were instead demoted to the status of "little or no ironing".

The Southern Utilization Laboratory of USDA in Louisiana developed permanent press for all cotton as an aid to producers of cotton much as USDA research in North Dakota promotes the use of products such as wheat and flax. The Cotton Council had similar aims. The first commercial company to gain a patent was the Koratron Company in California which, with the aid of the Graniteville Company and the Levi Straus Company, placed the first permanent press pants on the market in February 1964. Today many manufacturers are in permanent press production, and all kinds of permanent press clothes are available. You can find pants, skirts, shirts, blouses, raincoats, bathrobes and housecoats, dresses and men's suits. Articles for the home include daperies, curtains, bedding and table linen.

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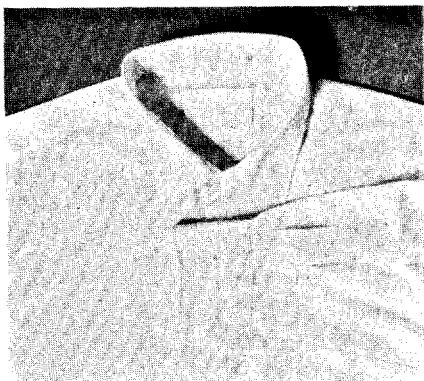
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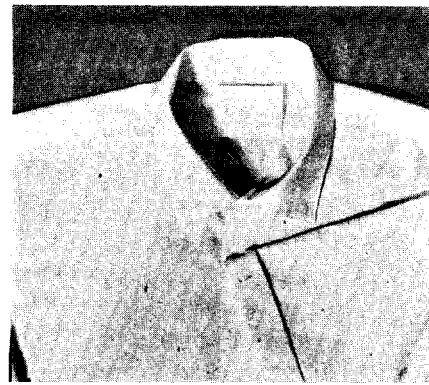
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Because of the public's unhappy experiences with the "no-iron" drip-drys (which really needed ironing) the industry has been trying to maintain high standards for permanent press items, thus hoping to maintain the public's confidence in this new fabric concept. Most manufacturers have been very careful in labeling their wares. Regardless, then, of the process or the trademarks on the labels, look for hang tags noting warranties and guarantees to insure the permanence of the press. Note the care instructions, too, as these will vary, and you will need to follow the recommended care instructions for best results.

There are four processes, each of which will create a permanent press item of clothing or home furnishing. **POST CURE:** The fabric is treated with chemicals, dried, made up into the garment, pressed and then cured in a baking process at about the same temperature one uses to bake brownies 350 degrees Fahrenheit. **PRECURE:** Similar to the method used for creating drip-dry fabrics, the fabric is chemically treated and then cured (heat set) in the flat state. The garment is cut and sewn, then pressed with an extra load of heat and pressure. A heat sensitive synthetic fiber must be present in the fabric. When the higher temperature is used the fiber melts slightly and assumes the pressed position permanently --- a pleat, crease or a flattened seam. **RECURE:** The fabric is treated and cured in the flat state, cut, sewn, and pressed. Then, through the addition of more chemicals, the fabric "forgets" its flat state and can be cured in the new shape. **NO CURE:** When synthetic fibers are woven into fabrics they can be heat-set into any shape desired. The 100% synthetic fabrics, often knitted as tricot, are not as wrinkle resistant as the first three processes, but is the only process where the garment can be altered easily after it is made.



Shirt washed in washer and dried in dryer with no ironing.



Permanent press shirt worn one day shows collar soil but few wrinkles.

How do you know which process you are buying? It is usually impossible to tell, as most large manufacturers are using more than one process. The one used is determined by what they are making. For instance, white clothing tends to yellow if it is made by the post-cure method, so the manufacturer will use the recure or pre-cure method for men's shirts and ladies blouses.

The earliest permanent press pants made were of all cotton, but it was found that the fabric was weakened when the resinous finish was applied. Therefore, fabrics were used containing blends such as 65% polyester, 35% cotton and 50% nylon, 50% cotton. Rayon was found to be useful in place of cotton in some blends. Subsequent revisions in processing have made possible 100% cotton permanent press which maintains the strength necessary. New blends designed for specific purposes are continuing to appear on the market. Today, many blends are available using cotton, rayon, nylon, polyester, acrylic and spandex fibers. These fabrics range from light weight shirting goods to heavier corduroys and poplins.

Different directions permanent press has taken other than on plain woven fabrics include its use in stretch and knitted fabrics. Wool fabrics may also be of a permanent press nature, with creases staying in permanently - even when the garment is rained on!

Advantages of Permanent Press: No ironing is needed if the care recommended is followed. A smaller wardrobe is needed as care is easy, inexpensive and quick. No more standing at the ironing board all day long! Shirts stay neat all day while conventional shirts become more wrinkled as the day goes along. **Disadvantages of Permanent Press:** Clothing costs more. Pants and shirts are \$1-\$2.00 more per garment. Cloth-



Conventional shirt worn one day shows bad wrinkling.

ing is difficult to alter, however, various methods for altering permanent press are in production. Watch for chemicals in a spray can which permit altering and pressing with a steam iron. You may also find only partially cured garments which permit altering and then are completely cured.

Fit may be a problem. As the garment shrinks considerably in the post cure method, sizes may vary a great deal from company to company. Try all permanent press garments on and inspect for unwanted wrinkles permanently pressed in ... particularly the inside of the pant leg.

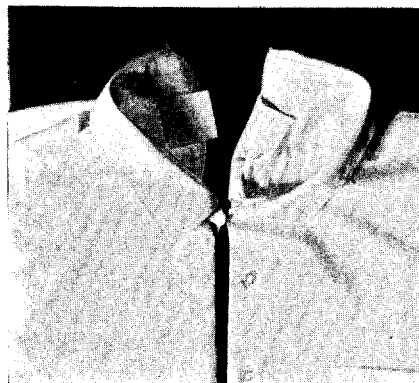
Industry Standards: Maintenance of high quality standards is an important part of the manufacturing of permanent press garments. One company has controls over all of the manufacturing steps until the finished garment is shipped to the retail store. Every batch is checked for colorfastness and permanent press features desired against the American Association of Textile Chemists and Colourists test methods for permanent press. The major mail order houses insist upon one of the two top ratings of these tests as minimum standards for their permanent press items. The tests include: wrinkle resistance, crease retention and seam puckering. Most of the well known fabric manufacturers can be counted on to make a high performance product you would be pleased to wear or use in your home. It is wise to rely upon a well-known brand of fabric made up into a nationally advertised name brand garment and sold by a reliable store or mail order house. Inquire among your friends about satisfactory purchases and visit with the sales person for further information.

Other tags worth looking for are spot and stain repellent finishes such as Scotchgard* or Zepel*, then you won't have problems with hard

to remove grease stains. An American Institute of Laundering seal of approval means that additional testing has been done with satisfactory results. A sanforize label indicates there will be less than 1% residual shrinkage when you wash the item. Be sure you take time to read all of the tags and labels and insist that the item you buy has all of the tags with it, for you will want to keep them to refer to as necessary. Save the sales slip, too, in case you need to return the item to the store with a complaint that the item is not holding up as the tags advertise.

Permanent Press Knits: Although knits tend to be wrinkle resistant, treatment with permanent press methods will add to this feature. More important, perhaps, is the stabilization of the fabric, giving shrinkage control. New uses are seen for knits in permanent pleats and creases and in the development of new surface texture effects.

Yard Goods of Permanent Press: At this date, there are two types of yard goods on the market bearing permanent press labels. One has a card of instructions accompanying each purchase. This card notes that pleats and creases cannot be made permanently in this fabric, but must be pressed in after each washing. Another fabric has a chemically treated paper sold with it. On completion of the garment, pressing is done using the paper, which sets the creases, pleats and flattens seams. In each case, all of the linings, tapes, interfacings and even the zippers must be preshrunk. A good quality of thread must be used to prevent puckered seams. Test seams should be made until a seam is sewn which will not pucker when washed. Take care that unwanted wrinkles are not accidentally pressed permanently in the fabric.



Shirt on left is permanent press. Shirt on right is drip-dry. Both washed in washer, dried in dryer not ironed. Drip dry shirt could not be worn without ironing permanent press shirt acceptable without ironing.

Permanent Press in Home Furnishing: Select permanent press fabrics and readymades for pleats, creases and shape holding that create a fresh look in curtains, draperies and bedspreads. Sheets and other bedding sport "no-iron" tags and should maintain a crisp look all week long until wash day comes.

Caring for Permanent Press Clothes: General laundering directions. How do I wash a permanent press garment? For best results, wash it in an automatic washer and dry it in a dryer. The minute the tumbling action stops take out the garment. If you don't do this, the heat remaining will set in wrinkles.

What if I don't have a dryer? Simply take the permanent press garment out of the washer before the final spin and hang it wet on a rust proof hanger.

Can a permanent press garment be hand washed? Yes, wash as usual and hang wet. Follow the same steps when using a wringer washer. Don't put it through a final wring; simply hang up dripping wet.

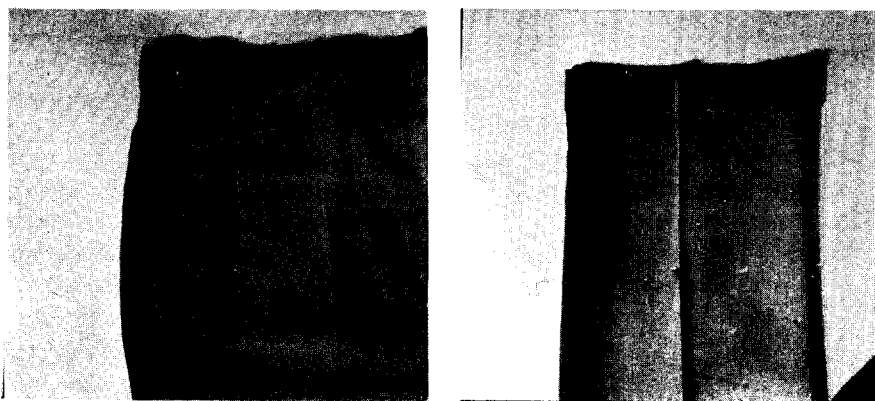
What if the dry garment has wrinkles? Wrinkles will come out if placed dry in the dryer and tumbled, or it can be ironed with the iron on synthetic setting. Steam or dampen if needed.

Can I dry clean permanent press items? Yes, these garments should all dry clean satisfactorily. It is best to either wash a garment all of the time or to only dry clean it.

For best results do not use both methods on the same garment.

These directions also apply to Home Furnishing items. Next are directions for solving for more difficult laundering problems.

Care of Permanent Press: Many of the blends used in permanent press contain manmade fibers that have an affinity for oils. Oils from the skin, hair, makeup or food spills are difficult to remove. Undiluted detergent rubbed into the spot before laundering is helpful. Follow up on stubborn stains with one of the safe spot removers. You may need to rewash the item to remove the resultant ring. A preventive measure would be to spray the item with a spot and stain repellent.



Permanent press dress pants washed in washer dried in dryer need no ironing. Note flatness of seams and sharp creases.