How to Block a Sweater

After investing a great deal of time into finding the perfect sweater, or if you’ve knitted/crocheted your loved one a heartfelt gift, you will want them to look like they are supposed to. This often involves blocking the sweater to the proper dimensions. When you block a sweater, you are setting the stitches and evening out the fabric in addition to preserving the correct sizing. Generally, sweaters can be wet blocked (good for cotton and linen), spray blocked (good for wool and alpaca) or steam blocked (good for wool and alpaca) depending on their fiber content.

Match a blocking technique that is best suited for the fiber type of your sweater.

You should always consult the washing instructions for your fabric type before blocking or washing your sweater. Blocking works well on animal fibers and cotton, but is often unnecessary with synthetic yarns.

To wet block your sweater you will need several colorfast towels and a surface that you can sink pins into. (My secretary uses cardboard covered with a towel.) Soak the sweater in some cool water until it is thoroughly saturated. Use some no-rinse wool wash if the garment needs to be cleaned. (This helps conserve water and reduce hassle!) Lay the garment flat on a towel and roll the towel up. Step on the towel to gently press out excess water. Do this twice if the first towel does not remove all of the excess water. You want the sweater to be damp, but not dripping wet. When you have pressed out as much water as is appropriate, spread your project on a dry towel (or on a blocking board). Smooth out the fabric and gently coax your project into the desired size and shape. If you need extra help stretching your sweater, use some pins to secure the perimeter of the garment. Remember, don’t stretch out any ribbing while you are blocking as it will lose its elasticity.

When knitting or crocheting, if your garment is going to be pieced together, you should block the pieces before sewing them up. This will help you to line up seams and to even out the garment to make the joining easier. After subsequent wearing of the sweater, wash the garment as the yarn label indicates. To recreate dimensions that may have been lost during laundering, reshape the washed garment and dry flat.
To spray block your sweater, you will shape the garment or pieces first and then wet them. Stretch your items out and pin them to the correct dimensions on a blocking board or other colorfast, absorbent surface. (You can use several towels layered over one another to create an appropriate blocking surface.) Once the sweater is secured in the shape that you want, use a spray bottle to evenly dampen the surface and allow to dry completely before you remove the pins. If you don’t have a spray bottle, you may also lay damp cloths or towels on the sweater to achieve the same results.

To steam block a garment, you will prepare it just as you would for spray blocking above. After the item is pinned into place, pass an iron (on the steam setting) or a steamer over the fabric, holding it about an inch above the knitting itself. You don’t want to touch the steamer or iron directly to the fabric because it could flatten the stitches or create an undesirable sheen. If you are worried about touching the knitting with the steamer, you can place a thin towel or sheet between the heat and the sweater.

Q: While replacing a toner cartridge in my printer, I got some toner on my white blouse. What’s the best way to remove the stains?

A: Toner cartridges use in copying machines and printers contain carbon, an insoluble substance which is difficult to remove. However, repeated washing may remove or lighten the stain.

First, shake off any loose particles, then treat the stain with a prewash stain remover or a solution of laundry detergent and water. Wash the blouse, then remove it from the washer and see if the stain is removed. If it isn’t, do NOT DRY the blouse, but pretreat and wash again. Drying before the stain is removed may permanently set the stain. Continue this procedure until the stain is removed or lightened.

“Keep It Clean Brief”

For thorough cleaning and rinsing, clothes need to circulate freely in the wash. Load the washer loosely with dry, unfolded clothes. Do not pack clothes tightly in the washer. Make up a load with items of different sizes. Include no more than two to three sheets or similar large items in one load.
*Don’t Make Your Holidays a Burning Issue*

**Holiday Safety Precautions**

Most of us look forward to the fall and winter holidays as times for celebrating, feasting, homecoming, and gathering, connecting with our deepest spiritual roots, saying goodbye to the old year and ringing in the new.

Yet the record shows a season of Menorahs and other celebratory candles igniting the drapes, Butterballs flaming up from their fryers, improperly installed woodstoves and combusting Christmas trees destroying homes.

We’re dizzy with busyness, easily distracted, preoccupied with changes to our normal routines and habits. It’s cold in many parts of the nation, so we’re revving up furnaces, firing up woodstoves, hauling out space heaters. Freezing weather and ice storms can bring lengthy power outages, so we’re lighting kerosene lamps, oil lamps and candles.

Space heaters create a real danger when people plug them into an extension cord that can’t handle the load, and they overheat, which can cause a fire.

Especially for people new to wood heating, we urge them to have the local fire department inspect it to see it’s installed properly and also that they have a safe, working chimney. For wood heat, we also recommend installing a stack (stovepipe) thermometer and learning how to use it.

And of course, with space heaters, woodstoves, and open flames such as candles, it’s also important to keep combustible materials at least three feet away.

In fact, Christmas week is notorious for generating candle-related house fires. The **Allstate Insurance Company** notes that the median cost for candle fires is almost $50,000.

And do take special care with those Christmas trees, real or artificial. Allstate data peg the median cost of a claim for a Christmas-tree fire at more than $100,000. In fact, a fire involving an artificial tree resulted in the most costly claim in recent years: $4.4 million.

Inventory in November

Among your important papers should be a household inventory -- an itemized list of your personal belongings. Whether you are a homeowner or renter, an accurate household property inventory is a necessity. It provides information for:

- Recording the approximate value and identification details of items owned
- Purchasing homeowner’s or renter’s insurance
- Processing insurance claims
- Listing personal property and its value in a net worth statement
- Planning replacements of furnishings and equipment
- Planning the distribution of your estate

In case of a loss due to burglary, vandalism, or an insured peril, your insurance company will require a list of all items lost or destroyed. Reconstructing a list of belongings from memory is often difficult; it’s easy to overlook items that you’ve hidden away and even ones you use regularly.

Reduce your initial investment of time in preparing an inventory by photographing and/or videotaping your belongings. Refer to Household Inventory for more detailed information. Create a household inventory and save it on your computer hard drive and a removable disk that can be kept off-site. List a description of each item, serial number, purchase date, original cost, and estimated current value. If you can’t find original purchase prices of household electronic equipment in your records, read newspaper classified advertisements or check the Internet for the value of electronic gear that is similar in age and features to yours. Record that information on your household property inventory list and keep it up-to-date. Store an extra copy of your inventory in a secure location outside your home and compare it periodically with the original to make sure the versions remain identical.

Original material from: http://www.extension.org/pages/11357/household-property-inventory#.VifgBFQo670

If you have questions or comments about any item in this newsletter, or would like further Home Management information, please don’t hesitate to contact me at (870) 921-4744, ttreadway@uaex.edu, or by visiting our office at 7 Agri-Plex Drive in Lewisville.

Sincerely

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