

POLYESTER

WHAT IS POLYESTER?

Polyester is a manufactured, "plastic like" fiber created from petroleum derivatives. There are currently hundreds of types of polyester, each with a slight but significant difference (in degree) in particular characteristics.

Polyester was originally used extensively in apparel and was created to look like silk.

Today, polyester is used for both floor covering and above-the-floor fabrics while still holding a market share in apparel. It is often blended with weaker or quicker-wearing fibers to help increase the overall strength of a fabric.

OLEOPHILIC BY NATURE

As with all petroleum-based fibers, polyester is very oil loving (oleophilic). One of polyester's distinguishing characteristics is its tenacity when it comes to holding unwanted oils.

Tightly woven or "sheer" polyester fabrics can become soiled with oil or oil-based substances that are difficult to remove. An oil-based stain may seem to disappear during the spotting process only to return when the fabric has dried. In fact, the spot may even seem to grow or move from the original spot.

A headboard with grease had to be "spotted" three times before the spot was totally removed. The first two attempts only seemed to worsen the original spot. OMS

sprayed over the entire headboard from an airless sprayer corrected the problem.

PILLING MAY BE A CONCERN

While all polyester fabrics do not pill, there are some, as in the sample below, that have severe problems.



The construction of the above fabric has everything to do with why it pilled so badly. Most of the warp threads (the fibers running vertically) are loosely constructed. Also, the fibers themselves are relatively fine. Wear will cause the fibers to break. The problem is that only part of the fiber breaks and the other part is still attached. This attached but broken part will collect fuzz and other debris, causing "pilling".

Many sweaters that consist of polyester or blends will pill. There are even electric razors for apparel and upholstery that removes these fuzz balls.

RINGING

Tightly woven polyester also has a tendency to ring during spotting and cleaning. The sample shown above would not likely ring because of the loose weave. Ringing generally occurs on more even and tightly woven fabrics.

Feathering cleaning solutions seam-to-seam is generally a better way to alleviate a ringing problem than feathering to a larger circle. Feathering without going seam-to-seam will usually just cause larger rings. Caution must be used not to cross a seam line as a new ring could form.

OVERALL CLEANING

Polyester generally cleans well. Most water-based detergents are generally safe but should always be tested. Strong alkaline chemicals that have been heated can cause fiber deterioration and should be avoided.

All in all, polyester cleans well. Water-based as well as solvent-based cleaners can be

used to deep clean polyester. Testing is still necessary, as it is with any fabric.

As mentioned earlier, oil can be a problem to remove and may take several cleaning attempts before removal is successful.

Caution should also be used when using paint, oil and grease removers like ReZort. These chemicals have residues that must be rinsed thoroughly. Leaving any traces behind will only lead to darken areas that will need to be further rinsed.

ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

Fabric protectors like SFR can minimize ringing problems. Spotting and cleaning are made easier and spills are less likely to be permanent.

**AS WITH ALL FABRIC AND FINISHES,
ALWAYS TEST CHEMICALS AND/OR
PROCEDURES FIRST IN AN
INCONSPICUOUS AREA OF THE
FABRIC.**