

Your dry cleaning bill of rights: Exercise those rights!



You've invested time and money in a quality wardrobe or in a few prized bespoke, made-to-measure, designer, specialty and couture garments.

And you want to maintain that wardrobe and those garments in pristine condition. Looking, feeling and smelling great. And lasting much longer.

Like most, you'll probably turn to a "professional dry cleaner" for help.

And what happens there?

The world of "professional dry cleaning"

They take 50 to 60 "dry clean only" garments. Sort them into "lights" and "darks". Load them into a dry cleaning machine with little or no pre-spotting (pre-spotting is the removal of stains prior to loading them in a dry cleaning machine).

They add detergent (the cheapest one), moisture or water (to "remove" any water-based stains), fragrance (to disguise the smell of the emulsified oils, fats, creams and lotions in the solvent) and sizing (to stiffen your garments and render them quicker to machine press).

They toss them about in a relatively aggressive, dye-stripping, toxic solvent such as perchloroethylene, synthetic petroleum or formaldehyde dibutyl acetal for 20 to 30 minutes.

They extract at a high RPM and dry at a high temperature to further minimize the total wash/extract/dry cycle time.

Then, they machine press the garments and "squirt" them with steam from a hand iron in an (often futile) attempt to conceal any evidence of machine

pressing. At a rate of 30 to 40 pants per hour per presser and 20 to 30 non-pant garments per hour per presser. About 1½ to 3 minutes per garment.

Finally, they stuff the finished garments into narrow poly bags and cram them onto a holding rack or conveyor.

What's more, many of your dry clean only cottons and linens may, in fact, not have been dry cleaned at all.

They've probably been washed or wet cleaned, tossed into a dryer, machine pressed, and then "squirted" with steam. Even if you specifically requested "dry clean only". Even if the care label said "dry clean only".

Voila, they're done! With almost no investment of time or skill. They're in by 9:00 and out by 5:00. Picked up on day 1 and delivered on day 3.

Welcome to the world of "professional dry cleaning". Where every cleaner claims to be a true quality cleaner.

The results you should expect

So what are **your dry cleaning rights**?

And **what you should expect** from a dry cleaner?

- The right to garments that are exceptionally clean and free of both oil-based stains (such as

body oil, creams, lotions, salad dressing, steak sauce, etc.) and water-based stains (such as perspiration, soda, juice, wine, etc.)

- The right to spectacularly bright whites, creams and pastels.
- The right to colors that are rich and lustrous, without that “washed out”, faded look.
- The right to renewed, revitalized fabric textures that feel butter soft.
- The right to cottons and linens that have been dry cleaned as you requested or as specified by the care label.
Not washed and dried in a dryer.
- The right to garments with absolutely no dry cleaning solvent smell. Ever.
- The right to garments with absolutely no fragrance or perfume smell.
- The right to garments that are meticulously finished. Inside and out. By hand.
Not by machine.
- The right to garments that are carefully and thoroughly inspected. From inside to outside. From top to bottom.
- The right to garments that are professionally repaired whenever feasible.
- The right to a complete set of matching buttons that are secure and not scratched, chipped or cracked.
- The right to garments that are individually and elegantly packaged using hangers and other packaging materials that support the drape and integrity of those garments.

The actions required to produce those results

And how can your dry cleaner achieve the results?

- By pre-spotting every garment **instead of** just loading all garments into a dry cleaning machine and maybe post-spotting them. Pre-spotting is targeted stain removal by a skilled technician **prior to cleaning** the garment in a dry cleaning machine.
- By cleaning your garments in an odorless, crystal clear, dermatologically-friendly, fabric- gentle dry cleaning fluid **instead of a**

fabric aggressive, dye stripping, toxic solvent like perchloroethylene (aka perc), synthetic petroleum or formaldehyde dibutyl acetal, the solvents used by 95% of all cleaners.

- By dry cleaning your cottons and linens as you requested or as specified by the care label **instead of** wet cleaning or washing them and tossing them in a drier.
- By operating their dry cleaning machines with zero moisture, zero sizing and zero fragrance **instead of** injecting moisture, sizing and fragrance into their dry cleaning solvent.
- By gently hand ironing all your garments **instead of** machine pressing them.
- By conducting a detailed inspection of every garment – inside and out – prior to packaging **instead of** a cursory look over, if any.
- By employing skilled, on-site tailors and alterationists to make all necessary repairs **instead of** assigning the task to the first customer service representative with nothing to do.
- By packaging your garments individually and using premium packaging materials **instead of** stuffing them in a bag and using materials that “look pretty” but aren’t technically aligned with and supportive of your garments over the short and long term.
- By taking the time to do the job right (5 days in most cases) **instead of** routinely offering same and next day service or 3 day pickup and delivery service.

Unfortunately, for the vast majority of cleaners, fine garment care – true quality cleaning – requires more than just a knowledge of loading and unloading a shirt washer or dry clean machine. More than just banging those garments out on a press. And more than just an assembly-line cleaning and pressing operation where every garment is barcoded and treated as interchangeable irrespective of brand and/or original cost.

Based on this definition, we could teach any supermarket stock room employee to be a dry cleaner or presser in 2 weeks (more likely, 2 days).

The philosophy required to produce those results

Truth is, fine garment care — true quality cleaning — requires

- an extensive knowledge of and commitment to the art and science of textiles, garment construction, cleaning and hand ironing,
- a never-ending commitment to process improvement (no matter how marginal),
- a stubbornness to reject labor saving technologies that negatively impacts true quality,
- an unyielding commitment to invest in true quality rather than extract every last penny out of the cleaning, hand ironing and packaging process,
- a sense of pride in one's work, a passion for perfection (to the extent that perfection is achievable),
- the time necessary to “do the job right,” and, most importantly,
- a personal philosophy that says that true quality cleaning has inherent meaning and value — for the cleaner, their employees and their clients.



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RAVE FabriCARE, based in Scottsdale, Arizona, cares for fine garments, household textiles and accessories and serves clients in the USA and Canada and in other selected countries throughout the world. Stu is the author of various Position Papers, White Papers and Ebooks on these subjects, all of which are available from ravefabricare.com/downloads/free-stuff. He is an evangelist for true quality cleaning and is a contributor to and editor of True Quality Cleaning, RAVE FabriCARE's blog.



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