

From family heirlooms to vintage purchases, almost everyone has some treasured article of clothing or accessory worthy of preservation. The choices you make in storing or displaying such objects will determine not only their longevity but also their future value.

Costume Society of America, whose membership brings its collective expertise to bear on owners' most frequent questions about costume care, issues this concise, clear guide. Protect your vintage keepsake by learning how to minimize such problems as yellowing, insect damage, fiber breakage along fold lines, and fading.

The membership of Costume Society of America includes curators, historians, artists, designers, librarians, entertainers, educators, and students. For more than a quarter century, the Society has acted as a clearinghouse for information on all aspects of dress and appearance.



Costume Society of America
Studying and shaping world dress



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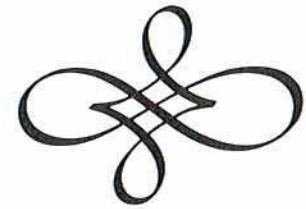
your Vintage KEEPSAKE

A CSA Guide to
Costume Storage
and Display



Margaret T. Ordoñez

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Costume Society of America

Contents

Storage

4

What is the best place to store a clothing collection?	4
Is hanging or boxed storage best for garments?	4
How can you design and make a padded hanger?	5
Is a dust cover needed for garments inside a closet?	8
Why is cotton fabric the best material for dust covers?	8
Are special papers and boxes needed for safe storage?	9
Are plastic products safe to use for storage?	10
Are cedar chests good storage areas?	11
Can garments be safely stored in boxes?	12
How can you minimize folds and wrinkles in boxed storage?	12
How should garments be prepared for storage?	12
When is rolled storage an option for clothing or accessories?	14
Can accessories and memorabilia be stored with garments?	15
What will protect a garment collection from insects?	15

What should you do if you find clothes moths or carpet beetles?	17
How can garments be vacuumed safely?	19
Can moldy fabrics be treated like insect-infested textiles?	21
Can furs be safely stored at home?	21

Display

How can damage from exposure to light be minimized?	22
Can garments be displayed if not under glass?	22
How should garments or accessories be framed under glass?	23
Can a shawl be hung on a wall safely?	25
How can garments be safely displayed on dress forms or manikins?	27
Should vintage garments be worn?	28

Conclusion

Suppliers of Archival Materials

Storage

Good storage under proper conditions protects objects. You can store clothing and accessories safely even with limited space or funds. Moreover, improvements to storage space and techniques often require only minimal time.

What is the best place to store a clothing collection?

Many valuable objects have survived over the last centuries in household attics and basements, where most people choose to store what they cannot bear to throw away. Yet uncontrolled conditions in attics and basements are undesirable for long-term storage. Frequent changes in temperature and humidity age textiles, leather, and plastics faster than more constant conditions. High temperatures also are harmful, and with high levels of moisture, mold and mildew can grow on fabrics and leather. For these reasons, the living space inside your home where you maintain a comfortable temperature is the best choice for storing valuable clothing. Closets in the interior of your house usually have the most constant conditions. If you live in a humid climate, you can discourage mold growth by leaving closet doors open to allow for air circulation and by not storing shoes or boxes on closet floors.

Is hanging or boxed storage best for garments?

Make this decision for each item considering the garment and the space available. Does the garment have a long train, a heavy skirt, narrow straps, or beads on net or chiffon? See figures 1, 2, and 3. Does the shoulder area of chiffon or lace have the strength to support the weight of the skirt? Is the fabric bias-cut or knit? Does the fabric have damaged or weak areas? A *yes* to any of these questions indicates that boxed storage is best. If you have more hanging space than shelving, padded

Figure 1. Narrow straps on heavy floor-length dress are insufficient to support weight of garment if hung on a hanger.



Figure 2. Heavily beaded chiffon dress should be stored in a box.

Figure 3. A knit dress that would stretch if it were stored on a hanger.



hangers are a good storage solution for clothing that can hang safely. Carefully choosing the hanger size and shape can ensure minimal strain on hanging garments.

How can you design and make a padded hanger?

Many designs are possible if you do the following: Compare the slope of the garment's shoulder line to the hanger's angles. Heavy wire hangers quite often fit better than purchased padded hangers that slope very little. A wooden hanger may have the correct shape and good strength for supporting a heavy suit or coat. Next consider how wide the hanger needs to be to support the garment without distorting its sleeves. Because you are going to pad the hanger, size and shape are more critical than whether it is made of metal or wood, but plastic hangers may not be a good choice. They can lose strength, distort, or become brittle. See good and bad choices in Figures 4 and 5.

Figure 4. Polypropylene plastic, aluminum, and wooden hangers that can be padded to provide good support with the proper shape.

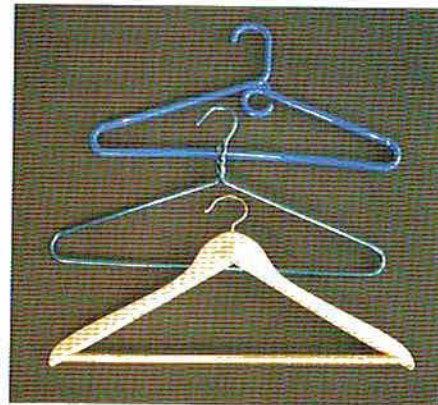


Figure 5. Hangers that are poor choices because of shape (top two) or brittle plastic (bottom).

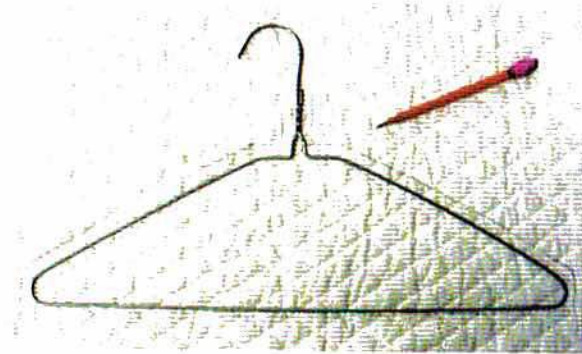


Figure 6. Penciled cutting line drawn on quilted fabric outlining the shape of the hanger.

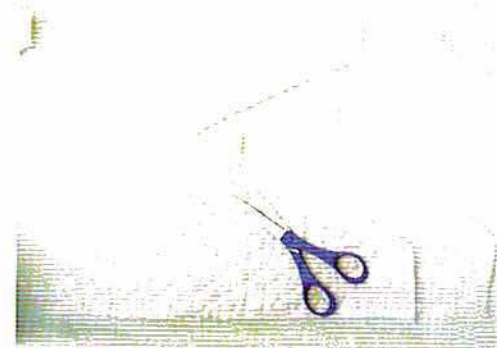


Figure 7. Two layers of quilted fabric cut along penciled line.

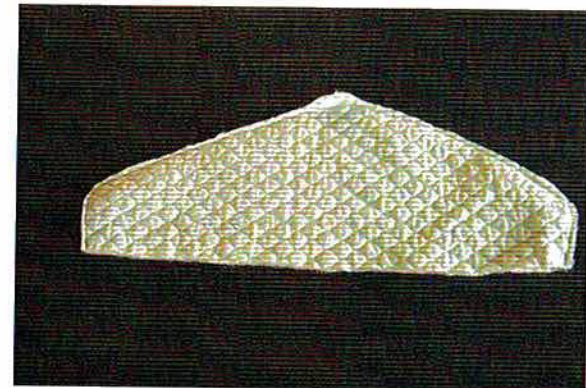


Figure 8. Hanger cover stitched and ready to turn.

Figure 9. Polyester quilt batting adds padding to the hanger. Large stitches hold it in place.

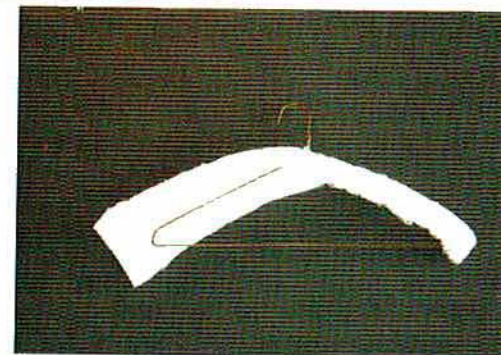




Figure 10. Two-bar hanger with padding draped over skirt bar.

For blouses, shirts, or dresses, you can make a simple hanger cover of inexpensive quilted white cotton, which can be purchased at almost any fabric store. Launder the fabric well to remove sizing and soil, making sure that rinsing is thorough enough to remove the detergent. To shape the cover, lay your hanger on a double thickness of quilted fabric. With a pencil, trace around the hanger as shown in Figure 6, adding one-half inch for seam allowances on the sides and an inch or more on the bottom. Be sure the neck of your cover will extend above the wire wrap on the hanger to protect the garment from snagging. See Figure 7. Cut out two layers of the quilted fabric as is shown in Figure 7. Leaving the bottom open, stitch the layers with right sides together by hand or machine and turn right side out. See Figure 8. Prepare hanger by covering the wire with one or more layers of polyester quilt batting or fleece. The lower cut edges can be stitched together to hold the batting in place while the cover is being placed over it. See Figure 9.

For hangers that must support heavier garments, cut additional layers of quilted fabric. Make a small slit in the center of each layer, so it can slip on over the hanger and drape evenly on either side underneath your hanger cover. Basting the extra layers to the cover will help hold them in place. The finished hanger does not have to be very fat.

Use just enough padding to provide a soft but firm cushion for the garment. To provide soft, firm support for pants, pad and cover the cross bars of hangers with a double thickness of the same quilted fabric. You could hang pants and a shirt or blouse on the same padded hanger. Hanging skirts without creating stress along the waistband is difficult. Metal clips on skirt hangers can damage the fabric. A two-bar skirt hanger spreads stress evenly, but draping a rectangle of quilted fabric over the top of the skirt as in Figure 10 will provide additional protection. Boxed storage might be the best solution for a heavy skirt.

Is a dust cover needed for garments inside a closet?

A cover draped over garments hanging in storage helps protect them from light and dust. For your most valuable garments, you can make a loosely fitted cover by stitching the sides and top (leaving a small center opening for the hanger) of two rectangles of cotton or percale. A simpler solution is to stitch ties made of woven twill tape to the sides of one long rectangle with a small slit or buttonhole at its very center, so it can slip over the hanger and then tie easily as in Figure 11.

Plastic dry cleaner bags are not a good choice for dust covers. Usually they are made of polyvinyl chloride, which breaks down quickly, releasing acid that can harm textiles and metal buttons, snaps, hooks and eyes, and buckles.

Why is cotton fabric the best material for dust covers?

Light to medium cotton fabrics work well for dust covers and linings because they create no static electricity to attract dust. Cotton can be laundered periodically as it gets dusty. Prepare new cotton fabric by laundering several times in hot water with a liquid laundry detergent to reduce the starchy sizing, which yellows the fabric as it ages. Rinse an extra time in the last cycle to make sure no detergent remains in the fabric.

If you make your dust covers from old sheets, be sure to launder them as you would new fabric because body oils are difficult to remove.

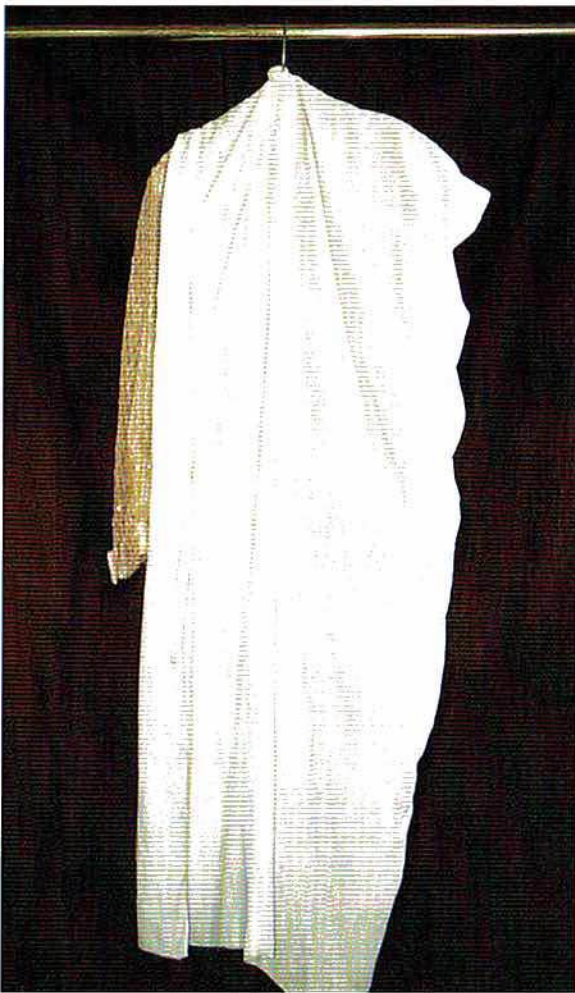


Figure 11. Dust cover with ties.

Used pillowcases are not good for dust covers or storage because of the oil that may remain even after many launderings.

Are special papers and boxes needed for safe storage?

Materials that touch garments in storage affect their color and condition. Tissue paper and paperboard boxes become acidic over time. Conservation-supply companies sell both boxes and papers that are good for long-term storage, such as those shown in Figure 12. See names and addresses on page 31.

Paper acidifies with age. Archival-quality papers and boards contain no lignin from wood pulp or products from processing that has acidification. The term *acid-free* identifies these products. Archival papers have a neutral pH unless calcium carbonate has been added to make them alkaline. Papers and boards with this alkaline reserve are good for storing cottons and linens, which are plant fibers. Neutral papers are best for silk and wool, which are protein fibers.

Traditionally blue tissue paper has been popular, especially among dry cleaners who box garments such as wedding dresses for storage. Blue tissue does not keep textiles from yellowing nor prevent insect damage. The wax coating in some blue papers does not age well, and the blue dye will run if it gets wet. White is the best color of paper to use.

Are plastic products safe to use for storage?

Some plastics are safe; others are not. Inexpensive polyvinyl chloride (PVC) plastic is chemically unstable and not a good choice for long-term storage. Dry-cleaning bags, garment bags, and household plastic boxes are often PVC. Some plastic bags and boxes are made of safer materials.



Figure 12. Little girl's dress stored in an archival box with acid-free tissue.

Figure 13. Unwise storage of cotton baby clothes and textiles in a cedar chest.



from polypropylene and polyethylene. These are more chemically stable. Though plastics are seldom labeled, PVC can often be detected by its odor, which many consumers may associate with new shower curtains. Plastics also limit air circulation, trap moisture that can encourage mold growth, and allow light to penetrate.

Are cedar chests good storage areas?

New cedar or camphor chests repel clothes moths and carpet beetles. These insects damage protein materials such as silk, wool, fur, feathers, and leather. The older a chest, the less it repels insects. The unsealed wood, like paper, gives off acids as it ages. The acidic environment inside a chest like the one in Figure 13 is particularly harmful to cotton and linen fabrics, which are plant fibers. Use wood chests to store things like acrylic blankets and put keepsake clothing in safe boxes.

If edges or folds of fabric touch wood, yellowing occurs. This is a sign of acid damage from the wood and can happen in chests, drawers, or on bare shelves. Wrapping garments in cotton muslin or acid-free

tissue provides some protection. Sealing wood surfaces with several coats of water-soluble polyurethane also helps prevent damage.

Can garments be safely stored in boxes?

Storage in safe paperboard or safe plastic boxes is sometimes preferable to hanging. You may have more space for boxes than for hangers. Some designs and fabrics need to be stored flat. Garments with trains and heavy skirts, knits, and damaged or weakened fabrics should be stored in boxes. Horizontal storage reduces the gravitational pull of hanging, but creasing and wrinkling can be hard on fabrics.

How can you minimize folds and wrinkles in boxed storage?

The size box you choose for long-term storage determines not only how many times you have to fold a garment but also how much compression occurs. Folds create stress on fabric and stitches. Fibers in the yarn of the fabric can break along sharp folds or creases. The compression caused by storing multiple garments within one container can be damaging. Shallow boxes help prevent such damage.

Choose a box large enough to minimize the number of necessary folds to any single garment and shallow enough to prevent stacking too many layers. If you do stack several garments, be sure the heaviest is on the bottom.

You can cushion folds in lightweight fabrics with loosely rolled tissue paper. Pad folds in heavy garments with rolled quilt batting covered with tissue or cotton fabric. Sleeves and pleats cannot be folded in different places. Pad these areas with tissue to reduce strain on the fold lines and prevent creases from forming.

To help prevent creases, refold garments at least once a year. When you refold, it is best to inspect for insects and darkening soiled areas that were not obvious previously.

How should garments be prepared for storage?

Always be sure garments are clean before storing them. Soils attract insects. Perspiration becomes so alkaline that it stains and weakens fabric. Deposits from deodorants and antiperspirants discolor and stiffen cloth. Removal of these soils becomes more difficult with time, and permanent stains can result.

Some fabrics, notions, and accessories do not age well. Dress shields and foam padding are two examples. If possible, these should be removed and stored separately or discarded. The limited life span of rubber products is well known. Vinyl-coated raincoats and clothing with a "wet look" give off a harmful acid as they age. Buttons, belt buckles, purse clasps and handles, combs, and fan frames may be made of cellulose nitrate, also called celluloid, which forms crystals internally and emits nitric acid as it decomposes. Imitation jet beads made of glass often form an acidic white coating that can rub off onto fabrics if not removed with a water-dampened swab. If such components cannot be detached easily and harmlessly, the complete garments and accessories containing them must be stored so they do not come into contact with other garments.

Metal buttons, buckles, and hooks and eyes may oxidize. Rust from iron parts destroys fibers. Blue-green copper salts discolor fabric. If you cannot remove them without harming the fabric to which they are attached, use white cotton fabric to wrap potentially harmful buttons or buckles or to place as a shield between the metal and the garment. Replace corroded hooks and eyes to prevent damage. The removed parts may be historically significant; save them in a labeled envelope attached to the storage cover or box.

The air or fumes from a furnace affect some dyes in acetate. Boxed storage is a good choice for acetate fabrics because air circulation is limited in a box. If hanging storage is necessary, the fabric dust cover should encase the entire garment and be closed at the top and bottom. Even with this precaution, the dye might change color more on the outside and edges of pleats and folds than underneath, where it is less exposed. Garments made after the late 1920s might be made of acetate.



Figure 14. A lightweight silk velvet scarf rolled loosely with tissue on a tube to avoid folding it in storage.

Taffeta and faille are typical twentieth-century acetate fabrics that often fade when exposed to fumes.

When is rolled storage an option for clothing or accessories?

Flat accessories such as scarves, handkerchiefs, and shawls can be rolled on tubes safely. A storage tube needs to be large enough not to stress the cloth. For example, the velvet scarf in Figure 14 should be rolled on a tube at least two inches in diameter. Tubes need to be long enough to roll the textile without folding it. Rolling a folded fabric strains the yarns along the fold.

Acid-free storage tubes are available from conservation supply companies. These firms also sell barrier films to cover tubes that are not acid-free. Such tubes can also be wrapped in aluminum foil and several layers of cotton to block or reduce acid emissions. Cover rolled accessories with cotton wrappers to block light and dust. Cotton tube covers and dust covers can be laundered yearly to neutralize them.



Figure 15. Photographs, letters, and other paper products are best stored in acid-free envelopes away from garments.

Can accessories and memorabilia be stored with garments?

Store nontextile accessories and other keepsakes such as shoes, purses, dried flowers, photographs, and newspaper clippings separately from garments. This protects textiles from chemicals given off by treated leather, plastics, glues, papers, and inks. Label these separately boxed or packaged items to identify which garment they accessorize or document. See Figures 15, 16, 17, and 18.

What will protect a garment collection from insects?

Cleaning and monitoring are first lines of defense against infestations. Fabrics that contain starch or spots of food can attract crickets, roaches, and silverfish, insects that would not be interested in textiles. Clothes moths and carpet beetles eat wool, silk, feathers, fur, and



Figure 16. Groom's tie can be safely stored with the bride's 1893 wedding dress.

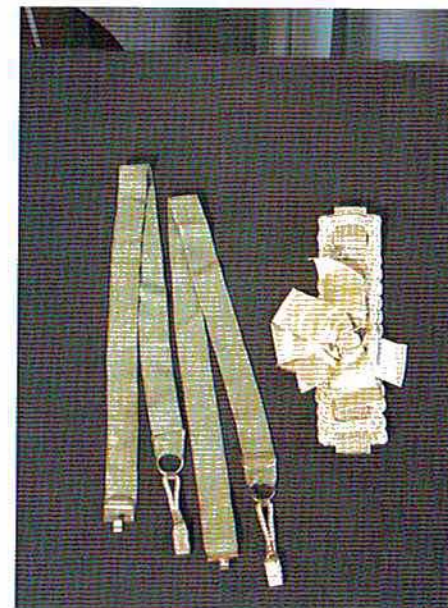


Figure 18. Groom's suspenders and bride's garter should also be stored separately because both contain deteriorating rubber.



Figure 17. Bride's shoes and groom's gloves, both made of leather, should be stored away from wedding dress.

leather. If these protein materials are soiled, insects like them even more. Examining garments for soil before storing them is essential. Vacuuming all surfaces of garments helps remove soil and insect eggs. If laundering or dry cleaning cannot safely remove the soil, an object should be checked frequently for signs of infestation.

Periodic examination of garments in storage is equally important in controlling infestations. Look for larvae while changing folds of boxed clothes. Clothes-moth and carpet-beetle larvae—not adults—eat protein fibers. They particularly like wool. Cylindrical moth larvae spin a webbed tunnel either around themselves or on the surface of the fabric. Webs can contain cuttings of the fabric that the larvae have been eating. Both moth and beetle larvae graze the surface or eat completely through a fabric, creating holes. Look for the granular waste product of moths.

Carpet beetle larvae are hairy little worms of different lengths depending on the type. They shed their “skins,” so shells indicate a past or present infestation. Because adult moths and beetles fly, they can move from area to area and garment to garment, laying eggs too small to see easily. Adult moths or beetles, dead or alive, are strong indicators of larvae infestation. Small moths may flit around dark spaces away from light. Adult beetles are attracted to sunlight; dead ones may be found on windowsills.

Vacuum storage areas periodically to reduce the possibility of infestations. Regularly inspect these areas. Cut flowers are a likely source of carpet beetles. Checking blossoms before bringing them into your house is a good precaution.

What should you do if you find clothes moths or carpet beetles?

Prevention is the best solution, but when that fails, treatment is essential. If you find carpet beetles or clothes moths on a stored garment, take the garment outside, taking care not to dislodge or scatter the insects and their eggs. Inspection will reveal the extent of the infestation and damage. Remove and destroy the adults and larvae, which are large enough to be seen and picked off the fabric. To remove the less visible eggs, vacuum the fabric thoroughly. These steps are the

first, but to ensure the integrity of your storage area and all its contents, further treatment is necessary. Remember, too, that the vacuum cleaner bag is contaminated. Do not store it in the house without changing the bag and filter.

Vacuum the storage area thoroughly, and inspect all other textiles stored there. If the infestation is severe, you might want to spray with an insecticide approved for use inside the home. Follow all directions and precautions on the product. Avoid getting any insecticide on the textiles themselves.

Several treatments are possible for infested fabrics. If the garment can be dry-cleaned, the solvent will kill all life stages of moths and beetles. Be cautious, however. The agitation and high heat in dry cleaning machines can damage old or weakened fabrics. You can request items be cleaned on a “silk cycle,” which has a shorter time, low temperature, and less agitation than a regular cycle. Choose a dry cleaner that has a good reputation, is on the premises, and will talk to you about what you want done. Home dry-cleaning products for use in your dryer are not a suitable alternative to commercial dry cleaning.

If your stored garments or accessories are in good condition and can be washed by hand, this is a solution. Most likely, laundering with a liquid laundry detergent (not dishwashing liquid) in warm water will dislodge eggs. If you are unsure the treatment was successful, seal the garment in a plastic bag after it is completely dry. Wait a month, before returning the garment to storage and inspect it for any signs of infestation. Even if there is no sign of infestation, be sure to inspect the storage area frequently.

The vapor of mothballs (paradichlorobenzene or PDB) in sufficient strength can kill insects but is also unhealthy for humans. Mothballs must be used in an airtight container that can eventually be opened and aired without contaminating the air in your house. The closed container should not be a polyvinyl chloride garment bag, the type that hangs in the closet and has a zipper. The container could be a plastic or archival paperboard storage box that can be sealed or a polyethylene bag.

Do not let the mothballs touch the textiles themselves. The PDB vapors are heavier than air, so the crystals or balls need to be suspended

above the textiles to be treated. Follow manufacturers' instructions as to how much of the product to use and for how long. Do not skimp. You want one-hundred-percent kill. After treatment, the garments can be aired, vacuumed again, and placed back into the cleaned storage area. They should not be stored permanently in mothballs.

Herbs, cedar chips, and mothballs made of naphthalene are repellents. They discourage insects from moving in, but do not kill those already present.

Freezing, which will not harm dry garments, is a chemical-free treatment. After vacuuming, put garments in a chest-type freezer set to 20 degrees Fahrenheit or lower for several weeks. Because carpet-beetle larvae can hibernate through the first freezing, allow the garments to return to room temperature, then immediately refreeze for another two weeks.

How can garments be vacuumed safely?

Vacuum garments through fiberglass screening laid on its surface as in Figure 19. The screen protects the fabric, lace, and fringe while vacuuming. You can get nonmetallic (fiberglass or plastic) window screening at a hardware store. Any plastic will do, as it will not remain in contact with the textile for long. Wash the screen with dishwashing detergent to remove oils or grease. While the screen lies on the garment, hold the upholstery attachment of a vacuum cleaner near the surface (two finger-widths away is usually a safe distance to avoid too much suction) to remove dust and insect eggs (larvae should be picked off and killed before vacuuming as they eat holes in the vacuum bag if left there for very long).

Vacuum garments inside and out, especially those made of wool. Clean under lapels and collars. Reduce the amount of suction by opening the vacuum-control sleeve on the hose. To clean pockets and other narrow areas secure a piece of screening or cheesecloth over the end of the vacuum cleaning hose with a rubber band. See Figure 20. Lightly cupping your fingers between the wand and the fabric provides additional protection for the fabric in pockets and sleeves.



Figure 19. Vacuuming a garment through a fiberglass screen with the sleeve in the hose opened to reduce suction.



Figure 20. Vacuuming the interior of a pocket with end of wand covered.

Can moldy fabrics be treated like insect-infested textiles?

Some treatments for killing mold spores are similar to those for insects. Molds, however, can be a danger to your health. Vacuuming with an ordinary vacuum cleaner is not safe. Only those with micro-filters should be used, and then the filter is contaminated and has to be cleaned or replaced depending on the model. Dry cleaning or treating with paradichlorobenzene mothballs (PDB, as on page 19) is effective. Launderable fabrics can be cleaned with liquid laundry detergent and nonchlorine liquid bleach. This treatment may not remove stains left from mildew but will lessen musty odors. Freezing is not a reliable method of killing mold.

Can furs be safely stored at home?

Storing furs at home is a disaster waiting to happen. The temperature and humidity in most homes are too high for safe fur storage. Because furs are proteins, clothes moths and carpet beetles love them, especially if they are soiled. If professional storage is not practical, choose the coolest storage area in your home. An unheated bedroom closet would be a good choice. Examining frequently for insects is essential. Use cotton dust covers (as described on page 9) to protect furs; never use plastic bags that inhibit air circulation.

Display

You can display costume items safely and effectively in your home. Exhibiting garments helps younger generations learn to appreciate historic and beautiful clothing, even if objects are displayed only on special occasions. You need to consider ways to minimize light damage, soiling, mold, and stress.

How can damage from exposure to light be minimized?

The kind and amount of light in a room are critical for safe display of garments. Sunlight and fluorescent tubes are most damaging because of the ultraviolet (UV) radiation that they emit. Light from incandescent bulbs is much safer, although all light is damaging. For displaying garments, select areas with low lighting and no direct sunlight. Directing a spotlight toward a displayed keepsake is a poor choice. Specially treated glass or UV filters on windows reduce damage from sunlight. These treatments have a limited life span, however. They are not effective forever; therefore it is wise to compare the life expectancies of such products before purchasing. Special glass or PlexiglasTM for framed items also can reduce UV penetration.

Can garments be displayed if not under glass?

Garments can be displayed safely for short periods where children, pets, and curious adults will not harm them. Laying a beaded dress on a bed to show it off for a special occasion is a good choice as long as guests do not put their coats over it. Draping a shawl on a chair or sofa where people will be sitting is a less wise choice.

Displaying garments or accessories near frequently opened windows increases the need to vacuum them. Placing them near a kitchen can result in an oily soil deposit. Objects displayed in the open will get

dusty, but mold is less likely to grow in a well-ventilated, open display than behind glass or under a glass dome.

Vacuuming garments and accessories (as described on pages 20–21) will remove nonoily dust. Look for signs of insects while vacuuming, especially on wool fabrics.

How should garments or accessories be framed under glass?

Lace collars, scarves, shawls, baby clothes and handkerchiefs often are framed for display. They can be stitched to a fabric stretched over an archival board available at an art supply department or framing shop. This mount can then be placed in a frame. Corrugated board is more substantial than mat board for the back support. Boards that contain polystyrene foam cores are not good for long-term display because the styrene is chemically unstable.

Cover the board with a well-laundered fabric of a color and texture appropriate for the background of the garment to be displayed. Pull the fabric tightly around the board, align the lengthwise and crosswise threads of its weave parallel to the edges of the board, and **stitch on the backside**, maintaining the tension. This alignment and tension are necessary to provide a firm support for the garment.

You also can make a support for displaying an accessory or garment by stretching a backing fabric over a wooden stretcher frame available at craft and art supply stores. See Figure 21. Seal the wood with a minimum of two coats of water-soluble polyurethane to reduce acid emissions from the wood. Align the backing fabric's grainline with the sides of the wood frame, pull the fabric firmly to the back of the frame and staple. See Figure 22.

The item to be displayed can be stitched to the stretched background fabric. See Figure 23. A straight row of running stitches is effective and less stressful than other stitches. Each stitch should be about three-eighths to one-quarter inch long. Tiny stitches, catching only a few yarns of a sheer or weakened fabric, can cut right through. The tension on the sewing thread should be just sufficient for the thread to lie flat without causing dimples in the fabric. Stay stitches,



Figure 21. Supplies: unassembled stretcher frame, water-soluble polyurethane varnish, vest, and backing fabric.

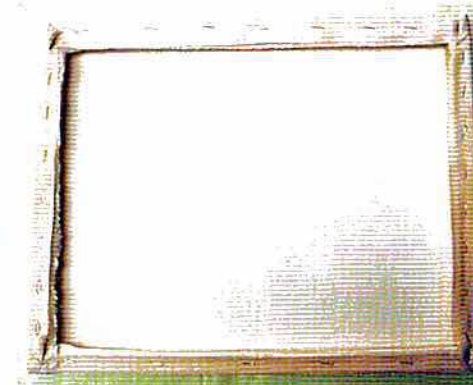


Figure 22. Backing fabric stretched over a sealed wood frame and stapled in place; layer of cotton fabric underneath the backing fabric provides additional support.



Figure 23. A vest stitched to a stretched backing fabric. Padding inside the vest reduces flat appearance of garment.

not a knot, at the beginning and end of a row of stitches should be done in the background fabric.

The running stitches can go around the perimeter of the piece. If the item is large, additional lines of stitching across the piece will help prevent sagging. If these follow seam lines or lines in the pattern, they are not very visible. See Figure 23.

The first consideration in framing a garment or accessory is that it does not touch the glass. There must be space between the object and the glass: with high humidity, mold could grow if the two were to come in contact. Spacers of several varieties to hold the glass off the fabric mount are available from picture framers. The depth of the frame must accommodate the glass, the spacer, and the fabric-covered board containing the accessory or garment. Ideally, you should seal the raw wood inside a picture frame with several coats of water-soluble polyurethane, letting it dry several days before inserting the mounted accessory.

Can a shawl be hung on a wall safely?

Yes, if it is in good condition without holes and thin areas, a shawl can be hung for short periods of time. Ideally no fabric should be on permanent display. Rotating several shawls protects each one from continuous strain and exposure to light.

For your display area, select an interior wall that is large enough and not exposed to direct sunlight at any time of year. Make sure no heating vents or units are below the space for the shawl. It is also best situated where people and animals will not be able to touch the shawl easily.

Nails and tacks that penetrate the fabric cause acute stress in small areas. Rings sewn at intervals do the same. A safe mount distributes stress evenly over the textile. Hanging a shawl over a padded tube (see page 15 for discussion of tubes) is a very effective method of display, especially for long rectangular shawls. The tube can be padded with quilt batting and covered with laundered cotton fabric. A rod running the length of the tube can be attached to the wall with hardware available in the drapery section of a fabric store. See Figure 24. This mount provides space between the shawl and the wall.



Figure 24. Kashmir shawls hung on a padded, cotton-covered tube. Interior rod can be attached to wall.

Another method of display, using Velcro™, works well for small or square shawls that are in good condition. Measure the top of the shawl, side to side, to determine the length of the Velcro needed. Machine-sew the soft side of the Velcro to a strip of cotton fabric that is one inch wider than the Velcro. Attach the cotton strip to the shawl by several rows of running stitches above and below the Velcro; this should provide even support all along the top. The stitches should be at least three-eighths inches long, in thread that matches the color of the shawl.

If you are concerned about the stress of hanging, a shawl could be sewn to a full fabric backing. Attach the shawl to a piece of laundered and well-rinsed cotton fabric with a row of running stitches around the perimeter and through the interior. These inside stitches can follow pattern lines so they are not noticeable. Depending on the support needed, the rows of interior stitches can be six to eighteen inches apart. Their length should be no less than three-eighths inch with just enough tension for the thread to lie flat.

How can garments be safely displayed on dress forms or manikins?

Dress forms or manikins provide better support than hangers. They, too, can stress a garment, however, if they do not match the shapes of the garments. Seldom do forms from the last half of the twentieth century properly support garments from before that time. Empire-style dresses from the early nineteenth century have extraordinarily high bust lines. Often dresses from throughout that century have narrower shoulders and smaller waistlines than twentieth-century garments. Men's dress coats from the era may present similar problems. The women's monobosom that begins in the 1890s and is the fashionable line of the next decade is a strange silhouette that only looks appropriate on a form padded to that shape. Actually, a flattened monobosom, an almost boyish figure, continues from the 1910s into the 1930s.

Dress forms can be padded to create the desired silhouette; padding manikins is difficult. An additional problem with manikins is their stance. Many department-store manikins have poses that either

make dressing them difficult or that stress the garment's fabric and seams. Often manikin arms are larger than the sleeves of older garments can accommodate. Alternatives include using padded hangers or laying a garment across a bed to display it for special occasions. Period manikins for displaying particularly beautiful or valuable garments are available. Contact a museum that exhibits garments for suppliers.

Should vintage garments be worn?

The answer to this question depends on a number of factors. First, are the fabric and sewing thread strong enough to withstand stress from dressing, moving, and undressing? Second, can the size and design of the dress accommodate the wearer's body without straining the fabric and seams? Weigh the uniqueness and value of the garment against the risk of damaging it. Many garments are passed down out of family tradition. They are saved so that another baby may wear a christening gown or another bride walk down the aisle in a treasured heirloom. Nonetheless, if heirloom garments are to survive wearing, they must be cleaned properly before storage. See page 16.

Reproductions of heirloom garments are a good solution to preserving family tradition without risking damage to an heirloom garment. In a copy of an original, a bride can appreciate family history in a dress that fits her comfortably and is not fragile. Parents of a baby do not have to be unreasonably concerned about leaks, spills, or stress on a copy that can be laundered easily.

Conclusion

If you want to improve storage of a number of garments and accessories, assign a priority to each of them. In setting priorities, consider which garments are the most valuable and which improvements would be easiest to make. A seemingly overwhelming task can be accomplished by working on only a small step at a time. Your efforts can add years to the lives of collectible garments and accessories.

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The methods described in this booklet have been tested by the author, at the University of Rhode Island, and have been in use since 1990.

The garments shown are from the University of Rhode Island Historic Textile and Costume Collection.

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Box 41037

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ttup@ttu.edu

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