

FIBER FACTS



Velvet... It's All About the Fiber

In this article, we will discuss only velvet fabrics, though much of the information—especially regarding maintenance—is also applicable to other pile fabrics such as chenille.

What is Velvet?

Velvet is a type of pile weave that makes up a large percentage of the total upholstery fabric market. Velvet is a warp-pile fabric, which means that it has one set of filling yarns and two sets of warp yarns. The second set of warp yarns can be cut or uncut.

“Double-cloth” and “over-wire” methods are the two ways to create pile fabrics. In the double cloth method, two fabrics are woven, one above the other, and connected with an extra set of warp yarns.

The over-wire method involves placing wires across the loom so that they intersect the cloth in certain places that create a pile. The pile is then cut with a blade that is over the loom. The wire is removed before the fabric is removed from the loom.

Velvet can be made of various types of fibers and blends. Cotton, rayon and silk are prominent among high-end fabrics. Other fibers include mohair, linen and synthetics.

a linen velvet can crush and cause a unique shading pattern. This will manifest itself as dark or shiny spots, depending on the angle from which the fabric is viewed.



Elegant Soprarizzo Velvet

We are not referring here to the capacity to change direction of the pile-lean which results in the beautiful “shadings” of dark and light and make velvet look so rich.

Cleaning Perils

Velvet fabrics of different pile fibers have very different responses to cleaning, though they are similar in construction.

Soil and stains and the steps to remove them can sometimes cause uncorrectable, severe distortion resulting in a blotchy appearance, uneven napping, or even collapsing of the pile surface of the fabric. The appearance of the fabric can be severely damaged long after the offending substance has been removed.

Pile Distortion Problems

Pile distortion is a negative phenomenon where the natural grain and consistency of the pile fibers have been unevenly altered.

Some velvets are prone to pile distortion with normal or minimal use. Just as a linen suit wrinkles,

Just as one’s hair “sets” when combed or brushed into position while damp, so the hair-like fibers



and yarns of the velvet can become matted from dampness and/or pressure.

While a protective treatment to control moisture absorbency can reduce the severity of the problem in some instances, customized expert guidance is needed in dealing with each different velvet construction and fiber to assure effective prevention or correction.

Cotton is King

Of the different fiber types used in velvet pile, cotton is perhaps the most forgiving and easiest to maintain. Cotton velvet will generally perform better than other natural fibers because it is possible to wet clean (or spot clean) most cotton velvets. With proper testing and grooming with a velvet brush, cotton velvets usually respond quite well to water-based cleaning methods.

Prone to Problems

Silk and rayon velvets are very popular for their lustrous and elegant appearance. These two fibers are also the most prone to pile distortion. Any water-based stain or cleaning agent is likely to cause permanent pile changes on velvets made of these fibers. Because of this, velvet fabrics of silk or rayon are considered dry clean only.

To Avoid Pile Distortion on Velvet Furnishings...

Lightly blot spills immediately.
NEVER RUB!

Gently brush out dried substances (with velvet brush or toothbrush)... vacuum thoroughly and regularly.

Before liquid cleaners are used, pretest in an inconspicuous area of the fabric. Apply the product and let the test spot dry, looking for any changes. If changes are noticed, professional assistance is advised.

The Experts on Your Side

Fiber-Seal's worldwide system of fabric care experts stands ready to help! From maintenance recommendations to in-person assistance for stubborn spots and spills, the professionals of the Fiber-Seal Fabric Care System create success stories (and happy clients) every day.

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