

THE
WOOLMARK
COMPANY



**CARING FOR YOUR
MERINO WOOL SWEATER**
TRAINING MANUAL



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Sweaters made from Merino wool, are soft, have excellent fluidity, and are breathable, comfortable to wear, have great stretch recovery properties and excellent wear performance.

Of all the many types of wool available, Australian Merino wool is regarded as the finest.

The Merino wool fibre is also natural, biodegradable and renewable.

Merino wool is an excellent fibre for producing sweaters, as it not only offers breathability, but has natural stretch and recovery, great drape and outstanding wear performance.

However Merino wool is a delicate fibre, and as with all things in life which are regarded as delicate, a little bit of care and attention will ensure your sweater will last for a very long time.

This manual provides advice and tips on caring for Merino wool sweaters.

01 LAUNDERING YOUR MERINO WOOL SWEATER

1.1. CLEANING

Introduction to cleaning (washing)

Firstly always read the care claim label which is usually sewn into the side seam, inside the garment. This label provides instructions on how to launder, dry and iron the garment.

In the old days, wool sweaters used to shrink or felt when washed in a washing machine, but today, using technology developed in the early 1970s, a special treatment can be given to the wool so that sweaters can be safely machine washed multiple times without the fear of shrinkage or colour bleeding.

Sweaters made from wool that have been specially treated carry either the Machine Washable or Total Easy Care label (see above right).

As instructions can and do vary between garments, depending on styles, types etc, it is essential to follow these instructions.

There are generally four options for cleaning your Merino wool sweater.

1. Dry Clean Only

Your sweater should be taken to a professional dry cleaner to ensure the superior quality of your sweater is maintained upon cleaning.

2. Hand Wash

Hand wash in clean, lukewarm water, approximately 30°C, using a mild and gentle, preferably Woolmark-approved, detergent. Allow to soak for a period of 10 minutes before rinsing thoroughly firstly in lukewarm water, then finally in cold water.

3. Machine Washable

Sweaters carrying the Woolmark Machine Washable label can be safely machine washed in a washing machine multiple times, without shrinkage taking place. Ideally garments carrying such labels should be washed on the wool setting (usually gentle action at 40°C). If your washing machine does not have a wool cycle, then it is recommended to use the cold water wash or wash cycle for delicates. It is recommended that Merino wool sweaters carrying the machine washable label are flat dried after washing.

4. Total Easy Care

Some specially manufactured Merino wool sweaters carry a Total Easy Care label. This means that such sweaters can be safely machine washed (as per machine washable garments above), but in addition can be dried in a tumble dryer on a low heat setting.



Important notes on cleaning (washing)

Sweaters carrying either the Machine Washable or Total Easy Care care claim label can, if needed, be cleaned either by gentle hand washing or dry cleaning.

Irrespective of the method of cleaning, it is highly recommended that the sweater is laundered inside-out. This will protect the sweater's outer surface, and help to maintain its as new look for longer.

Although Merino wool sweaters are manufactured to a very high colour fastness to minimise the risk of colour bleeding or fading, it is recommended dark or brightly coloured garments are never washed with pale shades or whites.

To avoid the possibility of any colour transfer from one garment to another, after washing never leave wet garments stacked up on one another, for example in a wash basket, for any length of time.

When hand washing sweaters, it is best to wash garments individually, or do like colours together. Also, to avoid any shrinkage or distortion,

avoid any excessive agitation by excessive squeezing or wringing of the sweater by hand.

For hand or machine washing (including Total Easy Care), use only a neutral, mild detergent that is preferably Woolmark recommended (look for the Woolmark symbol on the packet).

Avoid using heavy duty detergents, "Bio" detergents containing enzymes, or any detergents containing bleaches.

Never use bleach, either chlorine or oxygen based.

If powdered detergents are used, it is always best to pre-dissolve the detergent prior to adding to the wash. This helps to prevent concentrated specks of detergent from coming into contact with the sweater which may cause holes.

Final rinse softeners or conditioners can be used, but care should be taken to keep the amount down to minimum. Excessive amount of softener can lead to the formation of pills during subsequent washes – this is because softeners tend to act as a lubricant and enable fibres to move out onto the surface of the sweater more easily.

1.2. DRYING

After washing, it is recommended the wool sweater is carefully flat dried. The exception to this is if the sweater carries the Total Easy Care claim, then it can be safely tumble dried on a low heat setting or a setting for delicates. Alternatively it can be flat dried which is recommended for sweaters carrying both the Hand Wash or Machine Washable care claim label.

To carefully flat dry a Merino wool sweater, it is recommended it is placed on a pale coloured or white towel, and one which is free from lint.

Special garment drying mesh screens are available, which are designed to fit over the bath tub. These tend to speed up the drying process.



When placing the sweater on a towel to dry, gently knead it by hand into shape and size, and remove as many creases or folds as possible.

Allow the garment to dry in the air naturally.

Always flat dry sweaters if possible. Line drying or drying on hangers can cause, particularly so with heavier garments, the sweaters to stretch due to the weight of the moisture contained by the garment, with the result that the garment grows in length and loses its shape.

If pins are used to hold the garment in shape, ensure that they are totally rust proof.

Hanging the sweater on a hanger to dry not only invariably leads to the garment stretching in length, but causes distortions to appear in the

form of humps on the shoulders of the garment. Wire hangers are particularly bad for this.

When drying, avoid direct sunlight, magnified sunlight (close to an outside window) or direct heat.

Avoid placing your Merino wool sweater over a radiator to dry. The part of the garment which is folded over the top of the radiator tends to dry the quickest and can cause the garment colour to change or damage the garment in this area.

1.3 IRONING Introduction to ironing

Whether your Merino wool sweater requires ironing after washing and drying will depend on the number of creases present and the overall appearance of the garment. Generally coarser and heavier type sweaters tend to suffer less from creasing during laundering, so these types are less likely to need any ironing. However whether to iron or not will largely depend upon personal preference.

Important notes on ironing

Set the iron on the wool setting or medium-hot. Too hot a setting could lead to discolouration or in the worst

case causes scorch marks.

Lay the sweater flat and reshape and size gently by hand.

Spray the garment with a little water before applying the iron to the garment surface; alternatively whilst ironing use the steaming function to apply a bit of steam. This will make crease removal and reshaping easier.

Do not apply undue pressure as this will lead to the surface of the sweater becoming shiny.

Never leave the iron to stand for any length of time on the garment as this can result in scorching.



After ironing, lay the sweater flat to condition on a smooth hard surface for a period of 5 minutes or so before folding for storage. This will prevent further creasing.

Do not use spray-on starch, and it is advisable to avoid the use of spray-on softeners or conditioners as these can lead to the presence of deposits on your sweater.

Do not iron garments if the sew-in care claim label advises "Do not iron".

1.4. FOLDING

Sweaters should be stored flat in a folded manner, rather than storing on a hanger.

Storing sweaters on a hanger can lead to stretching of the garment particularly in length, and the formation of humps on the garment shoulders.

If the only option is to store Merino wool sweaters on hangers then use special ones designed for knitwear. These tend to be broad and padded to provide firm support to the shoulders of the sweater. Avoid using thin plastic or wire hangers as these will invariably result in the formation of humps on the shoulders of the garment, and in the worst case result eventually in the formation of holes.

Prior to folding and subsequent storage, it is recommended to inspect the garment for lint, hairs and dandruff. This can usually be done by gently using a soft brush. In addition, pills should be removed and any holes which have appeared should be mended. Pilling and the mending of holes are described later.

Folding your Merino wool sweater is easy and the correct way to do it takes just four simple steps.



Step 1: Lay the sweater face down on a flat surface, and remove gently by hand any bulges, wrinkles or creases.



Step 2: Fold one sleeve across the sweater so that its sleeve aligns with the seam of the garment on the other side. Repeat with the other sleeve, folding the second sleeve over the first.



Step 3: Vertically fold each side of the garment, so that the two sides meet in the centre of the sweater.



Step 4: Fold the garment in half, up from the bottom of the sweater. If the garment is long then this may have to be done in thirds. Then turn the garment over, so its front is facing.

1.5 STORING

Before storing your Merino wool sweater ensure it is completely dry and there are no damp patches which could eventually lead to the formation of mildew.

Store in a dry, cool place avoiding direct sunlight.

Storing Merino wool sweaters in plastic containers is OK, as long as they are not unduly compressed, they are dry, and away from sunlight. Also, sealed plastic containers offer some protection against moths or other insects which may cause damage.

Although the trick is to remove as much air as possible, avoid using vacuum plastic bags, as the tightness of the bag causes the garment to go out of shape and induces creases which may be difficult to remove.

If sweaters are stored wrapped in tissue paper, ensure it is colourless and of the acid-free type.

Unfortunately natural fabrics such as wool are prone to damage caused by moths, particularly in the summer months. Moths lay their eggs on wool. After the eggs have hatched, the larvae feed on the wool fibres to survive. Subsequently this results in holes. On average a single moth lays some 100 eggs at one time, and then the damage can be catastrophic, resulting in the formation of often many holes, making the sweater unwearable.

Taking protection against moth damage can be done by a combination of storing the garments dry in a sealed plastic container as mentioned above. But added protection can be achieved by the use of moth deterrents. Traditionally mothballs, containing naphthalene were used, which provides a pungent unpleasant odour, but today effective odourless proprietary products are available, many based on natural substances such as lavender, rosemary or cloves and it is recommended that these types are used when storing your Merino wool sweater.

Also, moths are attracted to soil and dirt, so to further reduce the risk from moth damage always store in a clean condition after laundering.



02 DEALING WITH PROBLEMS THAT MAY OCCUR

2.1. SWEATER GOES OUT OF SHAPE

If the sweater goes out of shape or is distorted due to incorrect laundering or storage, or sometimes during wear, it usually can be recovered by the following procedure.

- Turn the sweater inside-out.
- Place the sweater in a sink or container containing warm water (around 30°C), with just a drop of detergent.
- Allow it to soak for 10 to 15 minutes.
- Do not agitate or wring but very gently knead.
- Drain the wash liquid away, and by hand gently press the water out of the garment.

- Allow the sweater to continue to drain.
- Rinse if need be, and repeat. If only a drop of detergent has been used to facilitate the wetting out of the sweater then normally this stage is not necessary.
- Once the sweater is no longer dripping, place the garment flat on a white or plain coloured towel.
- Gently by hand adjust the sweater into shape and size, and allow to air dry.

For out of shape portions of the sweater, such as shoulder humps due to drying or storing on a hanger, dip these areas in warm water (30°C to 40°C) and massage these areas gently by hand.

The sweater normally reverts to its normal shape after drying. The exception, where recovery is not possible, is in the event that a sweater which is labelled either Dry Clean Only or Hand Wash has inadvertently been washed in a washing machine, and has severely felted i.e. formed a felt, which unfortunately is irreversible, and results in the sweater being unwearable.



2.2. SWEATER DEVELOPS "PILLS"

Pilling (sometimes referred to as bobbling) is the formation of fuzzy balls on the surface of the sweater, and often results in an unsightly or worn out appearance.

Pilling is caused by rubbing during wear and, although it can occur in any parts of the sweater, the most common areas are around the elbows, armpits, sleeves, belly and the sides of the sweater where, during wear, the arms of the garment are constantly coming into contact with the body of the sweater.

Pilling is a very complex phenomenon, and depends on many factors including the action of the wearer i.e. there is a greater chance of pilling generally if the wearer is more active, or whether the

sweater during wear constantly comes into contact with other surfaces that tend to cause abrasion, such as sitting for long periods at a desk.

Because pilling is so complex, nobody can guarantee that it won't occur, but there are a number of ways that the chances of pilling can be minimised. There are also methods to remove pills if they have been formed.

Minimising the risk of pilling

To reduce the risk of pilling occurring, always turn a sweater inside out when laundering. Any migration of fibres due to abrasion during washing or tumble drying will cause protruding fibres, which can result in pilling, to be formed on the inside rather than the outside or face of the sweater.

When applying a domestic softener or conditioner in the final rinse stage during either hand or machine washing, add a minimal amount. The presence of excessive softener or conditioner on the, already very soft, Merino sweater can assist in migration of the Merino wool fibres out of the yarn structure and to the fabric surface which invariably will result in the formation of pills.

Advice on removal of pills

If not too many pills have been formed then they can usually be removed by hand. This should be done routinely after drying, such as during or just prior to ironing.

A comb can be used to remove pills, but this should be done very gently and carefully so as to not damage the sweater which may lead to the formation of holes.

Small battery operated pill and lint removal devices known as either "de-pillers" or "fabric shavers" are low cost and generally very effective at removing pills and giving your sweater an "as new" appearance again.

Overall to maintain your sweater looking great, if pills occur, routinely remove them using one of the methods described above.



2.3. REPAIRING HOLES AND SNAGS

As soon as a hole appears, however small, it is advisable to repair it immediately. In knit structures holes only get bigger and tend to do so rapidly, often resulting in the sweater becoming irreparable.

For repairing holes a hooked needle or a "knit-picker" with an eye, is required, which is used to draw the yarn from the outside of the sweater to the inside where it is then sewn in.

Alternatively the sweater can be taken to a professional dry cleaner or tailor for invisible mending.

2.4. STAIN REMOVAL

The key to successful stain removal is speed. Stains should be treated immediately.

Never apply any form of heat, as this tends to fix most stains making them more difficult to remove.

Apply solvent-based stain removers, such as dry-cleaning fluid, eucalyptus oil, mineral turpentine, methylated spirits etc in a well-ventilated area.

When applying the recommended stain remover, never use a rubbing action otherwise this may result in a colour change, or in the worst case a hole to appear. Stain remover should be applied to the stain by using a gentle dabbing or blotting action.

Prior to applying the stain remover to the actual stain, first test it on an inconspicuous part of the sweater, such as a seam, to see the effect, if any, the stain remover may have on the colour of the sweater. Some stain removers may cause a colour change due to colour bleeding or having a slight bleaching effect. If this is the case use an alternative stain remover.

Apply the stain remover in small amounts at a time, and work from the edge of the stain inwards to prevent spreading.

Blot the treated area with a white tissue or with an absorbent cloth.

Depending upon the nature and depth or how ingrained the stain is, the stain remover may have to be applied several times.

After applying the stain remover, thoroughly rinse the treated area with cold clean water.

It is then advisable to hand wash the sweater, using a mild gentle detergent, preferably Woolmark approved, before drying.

A dropper bottle is useful to apply the prescribed stain remover accurately to the affected area.

In the case of very stubborn or ingrained stains, the only solution may be to take the sweater to a dry cleaner and have it professionally cleaned.



2.1. SWEATER GOES OUT OF SHAPE

If the sweater goes out of shape or is distorted due to incorrect laundering or storage, or sometimes during wear, it usually can be recovered by the following procedure.

STAIN	REMOVAL METHOD
BALL POINT PEN	Treat with eucalyptus oil or methylated spirits.
BEER	Rinse in cold water, then add diluted white vinegar solution, then rinse thoroughly in cold water.
BLACK COFFEE	Mix alcohol and white vinegar in equal parts and gently dab the stained area before pressing gently with an absorbent cloth.
BLOOD	Dab area with undiluted white vinegar then rinse in cold water.
BUTTER	Gently scrape with a knife or spoon to remove excess butter, then soak the stained portion of the garment in dry-cleaning fluid and gently dab the area.
CHEWING GUM	As for wax.
CHOCOLATE	Dab gently around the edge of the stain with a cloth soaked in white spirit before pressing gently with an absorbent cloth.
GRASS	Dab gently with clean methylated or surgical spirit.
GRAVY	Dab stain with a cloth soaked in clean lukewarm water.
EGG	Treat with white spirit, repeated with diluted white vinegar.
FRUIT	As for gravy.
FRUIT JUICE	As for gravy.
ICE CREAM	As for beer.

STAIN	REMOVAL METHOD
INK	As for ball point pen
LIPSTICK	Treat with eucalyptus oil, turpentine or dry-cleaning fluid.
MAKE UP	As for lipstick.
MILK	As for eggs.
MUSTARD	Flush with ammonia solution, then diluted white vinegar solution.
PAINT, OIL-BASED	Treat with mineral turpentine.
PERSPIRATION STAIN	Dab and soak in a dilute solution of white vinegar.
RUST	Dab gently with clean methylated or surgical spirit.
SCORCH MARKS	Gently scrape away the burnt fibre ends then treat with very dilute hydrogen peroxide solution.
SHOE POLISH	As for lipstick.
TAR	As for paint (oil-based).
VOMIT	As for beer.
WAX	Place sweater in freezer to solidify and make the wax brittle, then break off. Remove residual by dabbing with surgical or methylated spirits.
WINE (RED OR WHITE)	Treat with water containing ammonia solution. Rinse using water containing salt.



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