



Wedding Dress Care: some important guidelines

A wedding dress is worn for just one day but its significance lasts a lifetime. The following information will help you to keep your wedding dress fresh and beautiful...both now and in the years to come.

Preparing for your wedding day

- Before unpacking your wedding dress, make sure that you have a clean, uncluttered area in which to spread it out; away from food, pens, children, pets etc. Your hands should be clean and dry, and it's wise to remove any jewellery that could snag the fabric. Ideally, wear fine cotton gloves when handling or moving the dress.
- Keep *all* labels that come with the dress – you will need these later.
- If your wedding day weather looks uncertain, have a contingency plan, especially if your dress has a long train. Make sure that your bridesmaids understand that you will rely on them to fetch, carry and help you in every way.
- Once you are wearing the dress, it's best to avoid applying makeup. If you need to, do so carefully. And if makeup, wine or any other substance stains your dress on the day, you will need to seek advice (*see below*).

At the end of the day...

- If you wish to keep your wedding dress in perfect condition, it should receive attention as soon as possible.
- It is important that your wedding dress is professionally cleaned before storing, and that you choose a skilled company which has experience in this specialised area. If the dress has been stained, your chosen cleaner should offer specific advice. To ensure the best possible results, give the dry cleaners all labels and care instructions that came with the dress. If there is any doubt, seek the advice of a professional textile conservator.
- When the dress is collected from the cleaners, it must be prepared carefully for storage. It cannot simply be hung in a closet wrapped in plastic or placed in a box. Even the box it came in will not protect it. Surprisingly, standard plastic/PVC bags or covers are silent fabric killers and will, in the long run, accelerate the decline of the dress.
- It's important to remove all pins, wrappings and hangers. The dress should be unpacked with the same care you took with it before your wedding, and wrapped in generous amounts of acid-free tissue paper. Before packing, be sure there is tissue right around the dress and between every fold.
- Choose only an authentic, archival quality acid free box to pack your dress, using a suitably sized box to avoid excessive folding. Do not overfill your box and pack the dress on its own, stored flat and with no other items in the box. Before shutting the lid, check that all fabric is covered by acid-free tissue.
- Ideally, store your wedding dress box in a dark, dust-free area where air can circulate freely. Do not store in a garage, shed, unheated loft space, against an external wall, in an attic, cellar, or anywhere where there is high humidity, dampness or condensation. Do not store near a heat source such as a radiator, near bright light or anywhere vulnerable to pests or insects. In theory, the box should be stored at around 13-18 °C with a relative humidity of about 50 per cent. In practice, the above precautions will give the best possible protection in your home.
- Periodically, unpack your wedding dress to check it and to reduce the risk of permanent creasing. If all is well, carefully repack. If your dress needs attention, seek advice from a professional textile conservator available at www.conservationregister.com operated by Icon, the Institute of Conservation.

This complimentary guide to care and conservation of your wedding dress is brought to you by I. Waterman (Box Makers) Limited in association with Icon, the Institute of Conservation.



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