

The Sewing and Care of Linens

Some of the following information is mine, and some of it has been taken from other sources (all of whom put the information out there free, so I am not cheating anyone by passing it along, but neither am I charging anyone for the information because it was free to begin with. Whenever possible I will quote the source.

Sewing Linens for Your Church By Pamela Burke

Materials and Equipment:

Fabric: The fabric must be linen. The fabric of choice is 100% linen. There are plenty of other options and you will want to discuss these with the priest or minister you are making them for. Ultimately his or her choice is what you should use. If you use linen or any natural fabric that shrinks you will have to prepare the fabric first by shrinking it.

Measuring Equipment: You will need a ruler, metal tape or yard stick. Lay the yard stick on a flat surface or table to be sure it is straight. My preference is a Plexiglas quilter's ruler. I can see through it and mark clearly. I also like having a pin-weaving board so I can be sure the seams are straight. I can press on it, and use it as a marking tool.

Good Light: is essential, so when you are working choose a place that is either well lit or purchase a light to use in the area where you will be sewing.

Spray Sizing: My favorite at the moment is Magic Sizing by Faultless. It is easy to use, doesn't scorch easily, and is VERY inexpensive. I buy mine at Wal-Mart or Sam's.

Construction Marks: Linen can be marked with a soft lead pencil and the marks launder out fairly easily, be sure that all your marks are turned to the inside. Pens that contain disappearing ink are very nice, but do not iron on the mark as it will become permanent.

Needles:

Hand Sewing: You can sew the linens by hand or machine. If you are sewing by hand you will want several. If you have difficulty threading a needle you will want a needle threader and use embroidery needles, as the eye is longer and easier to thread. For hand sewing I prefer betweens. They have very small eyes, are short needles and are very strong.

Machine Sewing: For sewing hems you will want a size 80/12 or a 90/14 embroidery needle. Again the eye of the needle is a little longer and is easier to thread. For hemstitching you will want a wing needle. A size 100/16 or larger according to the size you want the holes in your hem.

Pins: Should be very sharp and free of any rust or debris. I prefer quilter's pins as they are extremely sharp long and easy for me to grasp. The tiny yellow end is plastic and if you plan to press these pins you should use pins with glass head or silk pins with metal tops. The yellow plastic will melt onto your fabric. Pins are strictly a personal preference, give this thought when you are buying your pins.

Beeswax: Rubbed on the length of your hand sewing thread it will cut down the wear and tear on the thread as it is drawn through the fabric. It also helps the thread not to knot so easily.

Thimble: For hand sewing only. Learn to use one if you don't know how now. It will save you many hours of pain and will help you sew faster once you get the hang of it.

Scissors: Scissors should be very sharp. You will want to have at least 2 sizes. One for cutting large pieces of fabric, and embroidery or nipping scissors. To cut large pieces of fabric I prefer a rolling cutter and a cutting mat and a ruler. These are definitely NOT necessary, but certainly speed up the cutting process. The rolling cutter should be razor sharp and used only for cutting fabric to maintain optimum sharpness.

Sewing Thread: I prefer 100% cotton heirloom sewing thread. The finish on the thread is clean and the thread is strong. The sizes range from 70/2 to 140/2, the higher the number on the left of the slash, the smaller the thread size. The 2 indicated that there are 2 pieces of filament or fiber twisted together to make the thread. 60 weight cotton thread is perfectly OK, however if you are doing hemstitching on a sewing machine that thread size is too large and you will not get the hole definition you want. A cotton polyester blend is perfectly acceptable if this is the type of thread you prefer.

Embroidery Floss: Is available at most hobby and craft stores. DMC is very good brand as is Coats. For the red cross stitch cross on the purificators I prefer red silk thread by YLI. A spool will last for many years (machine embroidery thread also is nice, and won't run, as will some of the cheaper embroidery threads – SMJ)

A Book of Embroidery Stitches: If you plan to do the embroidery by hand this will be very useful. They are available in most craft and hobby stores and are very inexpensive.

Constructing Church Linens

This process involves three steps. It is not mandatory that all three steps be done by the same person, so if there are people in your group that prefer to do one step over another, encourage their willingness and talents.

Preparing the linen for cutting

1. Purchase linen that is not pre-shrunk. (Most linen you purchase isn't. Linen shrinks from 4% to 7% so consider that in your calculations when purchasing your linen. Linen shrinks a lot and shrinks a different amount in its width and length. To shrink linen or cotton fabric, wash in very hot water and rinse in cold water. Dry in the dryer. Repeat this step again. To prevent fraying at the edges serge the edge or roll the raw edge and baste tightly. You may also zigzag the edge if you wish. (Elsewhere Mrs. Burke also mentions cutting a 45-degree angle about an inch long across each of the 4 corners on the ends of the fabric. I've tried this. It does allow some fraying but the cuts seem to control it. –SMJ) Linen has both sizing and bluing put in when it is finished by the manufacturer. It will not look as white after the washing as it did when you purchased the fabric. (We will talk about making it white again after you have made it in the cleaning instructions – SMJ)
2. Iron the linen, it is easier to iron if the fabric is slightly damp. (After your second wash, don't put in the dryer, spread small pieces out flat on a clean towel, stacking them one on top of another. Large pieces can be folded and placed on the towel. Roll the towel up to absorb more of the moisture, and put in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for a couple of hours or overnight. If you can't iron the linens within a 48 hour period then dry them until the day before you can, and redampen them – see notes in ironing section about dampening. SMJ)
3. I do not shrink small linens because the amount of shrinkage can easily be compensated for by cutting the fabric about ½" larger.
4. Make your first cut on a line drawn thread. To do this, make a short cut in the fabric and tease the thread out with a needle or stiletto and pull the thread gently. If it breaks simply cut up to that point, re-tease the thread and begin the process again. If you are skilled enough to pull the thread out completely cut parallel to the pulled thread line.
5. Lay the fabric on a flat surface, and using the straight edge, mark from that point and cut.

Hems

Hemming can be done in a number of ways and has been the subject of many heated discussions at altar guilds and in sewing guilds in the past.

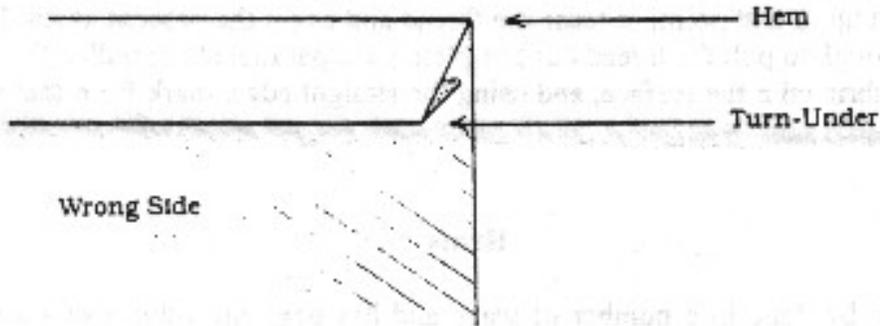
1. Hand hemming can be done either the Convent Hem or in the Flat Hem. Pictures are included. Pictures from Sewing Church Linens by Elizabeth Joseph (Mason) with permission. For further information about this type of hemming please consult her book.
2. Hems can be stitched in place with a straight stitch on a sewing machine using heirloom thread for a fine light finish.
3. Hems can be hemstitched by hand or on a machine.

The Flat Hem

Flat Hems Require 2 Folds

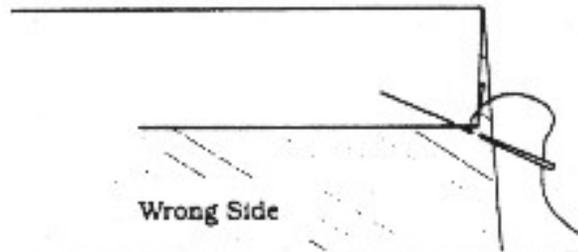
The first fold will be the *turn-under*.

The second fold will be the *hem*.



Stitching

Notice that stitching begins with the thread coming out of the fold of the turn-under.



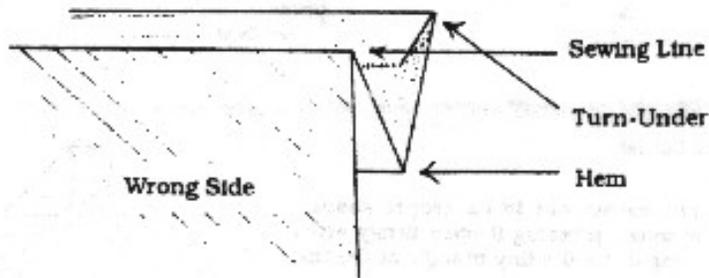
The Convent Hem

Convent Hems Require 3 Folds

The first fold will be the *sewing line*.

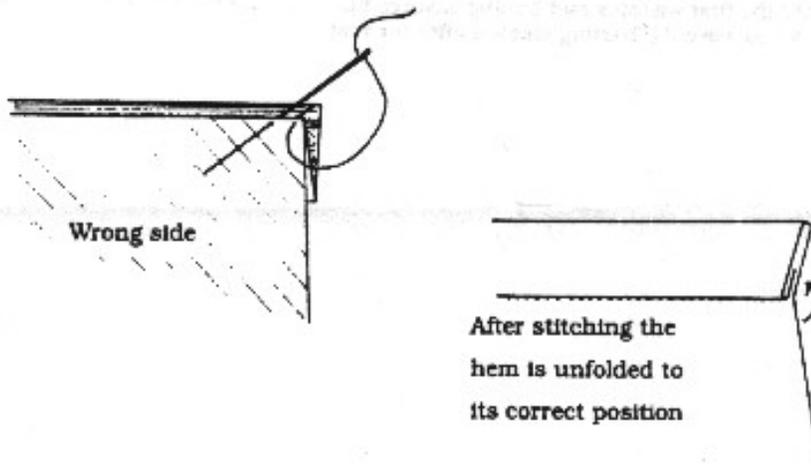
The second fold will be the *turn-under*.

The third fold will be the *hem*.



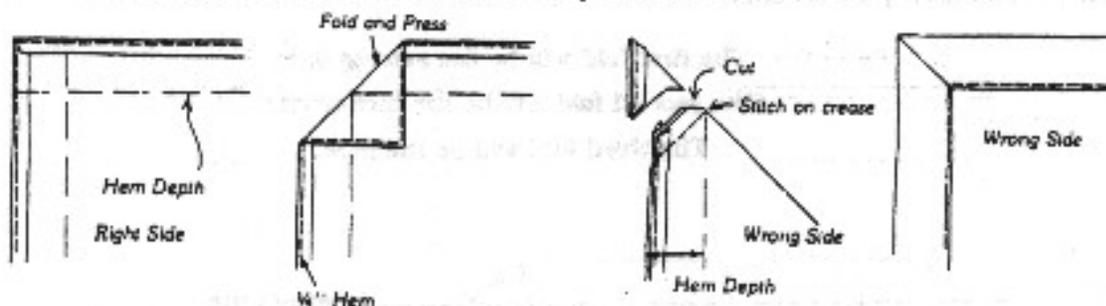
Stitching

Notice that stitching begins with the thread coming out of the fold of the sewing line.



Mitering Corners

This will be discussed in class, please refer to pictures included.

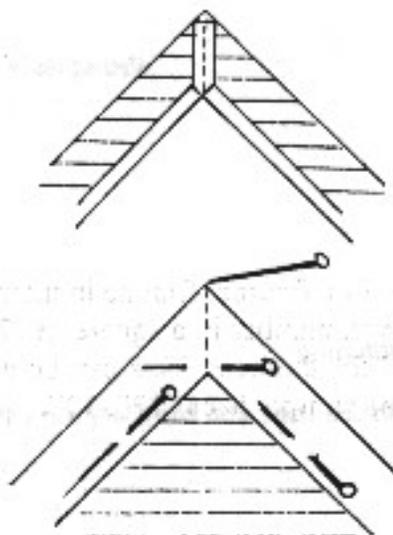


Finishing the Mitered Corner

A. Flatten the mitered corner out to its proper shape. Open the hem of the miter, pressing it open firmly with your fingers and turning down the tiny triangle at the tip neatly.

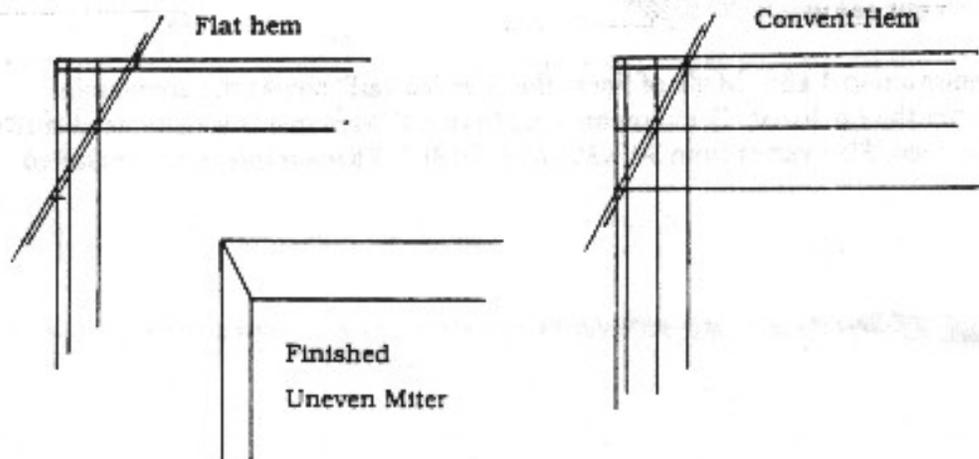
B. Turn the mitered corner right side out. Using a pin, tease out the tip of the corner. Set the miter so that it is straight and square. Pin.

Note: Mitered corners may be machine sewn. Setting all four miters and then machine sewing them all at once makes the work go more quickly. A few basting stitches on either side of the completed miter seam will keep the edges flat until the first washing and ironing ensures that they remain so. Remove the basting stitches after the first ironing.



Uneven Miters—Flat Hem and Convent Hem

Uneven miters are made the same way as even miters for both flat and convent hems.



The Small Linens

(Usually old altar linens do a second lifetime as small linens, especially finger towels. Certain parts of altar cloths wear out faster, and the still good sections are recut for use as small linens. – SMJ)

Purificator:

Can be in many different sizes. One tradition finished purificators to an uneven number in a square i.e. 7", 9", 11", 13". A ¼" hem is good requiring form ½" to 5/8" for the hem. This can be a rolled hem, or simply stitched on the sewing machine.

The Pall:

The pall is to cover a body. You probably know of the funeral Pall which is a large piece of fabric decorated or not, to cover a casket. This is one type of pall; the other type is a square of stiffened linen placed over the chalice. It is usually embroidered and is made much like a pillowcase. A piece of Plexiglas (it used to be cardboard, but Plexiglas or some similar thin plastic works better because it doesn't absorb anything such as a drop of wine – SMJ) is inserted into the case and the opening is handstitched closed. The linen is then dampened with water and dried. It will tighten around the Plexiglas. (An 8" x 16" piece of linen will make about a 7" pall. Palls vary in size but generally are about 7 to 8 inches square – SMJ)

Lavabo Towel (Finger Towel):

These are small towels used after the ceremonial washing of the celebrant's hands before the consecration. Sizes can vary but the usual is 10" by 15", hem is stitched by hand or machine, hemstitching is not necessary. Usually is embroidered with a small red cross in the center of the towel which is either cross-stitched or satin stitched.

Corporal:

This is a napkin on which rests the chalice and communion vessels. It is spread onto the altar over the Fair Linen (Altar Cloth). Made of medium to heavy weight linen, hemmed with convent hem, hemstitched or flat hem, and is often embroidered with a cross (of white or red) either in the center or the front third in the lower center. The placement of the embroidery is so the vessels will not rest on the embroidery and be unstable. Size can range from 20" x 20" to 24" by 24".

Credence Table Cover:

It is the table cover for the table that holds the wine, water, and lavabo bowl. It is generally made of a heavier weight linen than the towels, etc. (Also often made to match the altar cloth – SMJ) May be machine hemmed, hemstitched, or have a convent of flat hem. Often adorned with a 2" cross but is not essential. Size is as dictated by the table, but most often 18" x 36".

Communion Veil: (Ciborium Cover?)

Made of linen, the "chalice veil" covers the communion vessels after the Eucharist. Communion veils have a 1" hem that is usually hand stitched or hemstitched. Size varies from 30" x 30" to 36" x 36" (Mrs. Burke is Episcopalian. In the Catholic Church the Chalice Veil is the fabric that matches the vestment that covers the chalice before the Offertory and after Communion. The communion vessel (ciborium) that is placed in the tabernacle also has a cover. This cover can be of linen or silk, or some other fabric. It can be circular in form or box shaped like a flattened box with the corners cut out so that it drapes flat over four sides of the vessel. In both cases there is a small opening made and hemmed in the top for the handle of the cover to fit through. The size of the cover fits the size of the vessel which can vary. – SMJ)

Caring For Linen

By Sister Mary John, I.H.M.

Linen is made of natural fiber from flax. As a natural fiber it likes water, and doesn't like chemicals. It also likes to "breathe". With care it will last a very long time. Nothing shortens the lifespan of good linen like chlorine bleach or starch. There are other ways to get your linen white and crisp.

Washing:

1. **Do not under any circumstances ever use chlorine bleach on linen.** It eats the fibers of the cloth and makes small holes in the fabric. This information comes from the Belgium Linen Council. To remove stubborn stains use an oxygenated cleaner like Oxy Clean or Biz Detergent.
2. Wash linen in the hottest water your machine can give. Women used to boil their linen in huge kettles or pot on the stove. Heat doesn't bother linen. Oxy Clean also works best in very hot water. If you do boil you linen don't go away an leave it so the water boil away, and after boiling it, wash it again in your washer to make sure that it gets several good rinses. Rinses can be either warm or cold water.
3. The linen will not be as white as it was when you purchased it. Purchase bluing and mix it as prescribed on the bottle. Add this to the rinse water for bright white.
4. Dry in the dryer on the hottest setting if you plan to do a second wash which is recommended. Your last dry can be done on a clothesline in the sun or in the dryer, or not at all if you plan to iron right away.
5. If you are going to iron the linen within the next 24 hours (not later than 48 hours), you can take the wet linen and spread the pieces out flat on a towel in a stack. Larger pieces can be folded into multiple layers. The towel is then rolled up and put in a plastic bag and sealed. This is then put in the refrigerator. If you don't plan to iron that soon dry your linen and dampen it before ironing (see ironing). **Linen left too long damp will mildew.**

Ironing:

1. If your linen is dry you must dampen it. Linen irons best when the fibers are relaxed. Dampening relaxes the fibers. Take your small dry pieces and spread them out flat one on top of another in a stack (just as you would if they were wet and you were going to iron them). This time don't use a towel, just lay them flat on the counter or table. Large pieces can be folded into multiple layers.
2. A sprinkling bottle is nice. All houses used to have them. It was a glass bottle like a beer bottle with a top that fanned out like a flower and had holes to emit water. You shook it over the linen and the drops fell on the cloth in an even manner. A spray bottle will work, but I prefer to use my hand. I take a bowl of water (a very large bowl and a lot of water – linen is thirsty). Dip your hand in the water and quickly shake it over the linen three or four times. Repeat this action until the linen is generally damp. Most of the linen will appear wet, and there will be dry spots but that's all right. The water will move from the wet to the dry while it is in the refrigerator. After you have dampened the pile, flip it over and repeat on the other side. Then divide the pile in half, and turn that up and dampen the middle which is now on top. Fold the pile in half if need be to get a size that will fit nicely in a plastic bag, and starting at one end roll it. A lot of the outside edges are dry. The ones that got rolled up will get water from the inside, but before you put it in the bag spray or take a handful of water and get the ends wet. Put it in the bag and refrigerate. If you are doing a lot of linen make several rolls. Large Altar cloths that are folded should also be refolded after the outside of the pile is dampened so that you get the inside as well. Don't worry if there is some dryness in the layers. The refrigerator will even everything out. **Don't leave linen in the refrigerator more than 48 hours or it will mildew.**

After your linen has refrigerated over night or at least several hours you can iron it. First make sure your iron is clean. Make sure there is nothing on the bottom of the iron and nothing inside it that can come out on your linen. Check the sides of the iron plate as well. Most irons have a linen setting which is very high. You will need a high letting to drive the water out. Some people iron dry linen using a spray starch. **Don't starch linen if you want it to last.** Dampened linen will iron crisp without starch. Being a sister I often had to do our linens. We had to have very stiff linen bandeau and guimpes. These were made by impregnating the linen in a boiled starch, removing the excess starch and ironing it stiff. These articles were always used stiff so it didn't matter. If the linen fibers began to deteriorate the starch held them together like glue, so the linen did last a while, but only because it was glued together. Your altar linens are not so glued. The starch these people use is

1. only to give it a finish which a spray sizing will do just as well and not gum up the fibers. So if you have to do an emergency iron job use a spray sizing (not starch) or just spray water.
2. **Don't iron linen dry.** That may sound funny but if you iron linen until it feels dry it is already scorched. Iron linen until it "seems" dry but is still cool to the touch. The fact that it is still cool means there is still some water in the fibers. At this point stop ironing. Spread the pieces out to finish air drying. One of those wooden drying racks works very well. Don't fold the linen; just drape it over the rungs. Larger pieces can be laid out on beds or tables or hung from a line. It won't take long for them to finish, and by the time you have ironed all the pieces the first ones will probably be ready to finish. Pieces with thick hems will take longer.
3. To finish the ironing, take the air-dried pieces back to the ironing board. They are dry, so they only need a quick smoothing and some will need folding. Run the iron quickly without letting it rest run it over the piece again. (You might lower the temperature at this time). You are just taking out any small folds or dents that got into it while air-drying. Then if the pieces need folding, fold it and press quickly again, especially the seam lines. Repeat as needed and put aside your lovely, white, crisp, linen.

Storing Linen

1. Large Altar cloths are best stored around large tubes of cardboard. Instead of folding the linen, when you are doing the second ironing after air-drying roll it onto a cardboard roll. This will keep it flat and nice and aid in putting it down on the altar without wrinkling. Take some acid free tissue paper and put it around the roll covering the linen and put rubber bands to secure the tissue paper at the ends beyond the linen. So that the tissue is banded to the cardboard but the linen is not. You could tie a ribbon lightly around the center to secure the linen, but that is not usually necessary. Small linens of course are folded.
2. **Do not store linen in a plastic bag.** It will rot. Linen is best stored between layers of acid free tissue paper or with no paper at all. Linen needs air to breathe. It can be kept in wooden drawers or on shelves (covered with paper to keep dust off) but not in plastic boxes unless air can get in.

Catholic Church Custom for Altar Linens

In the Catholic Church the altar should have three cloths all of linen. The under two do not have to be a fine quality, or even cover the whole altar but they must cover the 18 - 24 inch square where the chalice will rest. The top cloth, the one that shows should cover from floor to floor over the top of the altar. It is usually of Fine Linen (fine linen). Sometimes the top linen has an embroidered or lace edge, but it is not necessary. Some churches put Velcro tabs on the front end of the altar from one side to the other, and then make a decorative or lace piece to go from one side to the other with matching Velcro tabs on the back. This they put on and then when the top cloth is put on it drops over the edge and hides the tabs. They then have a nice decorative piece that doesn't have to be changed as often as the linen, or can be changed with the season, but the linen is used for all seasons. It method works well.

Stain Removal Tips

(These tips are from a lady whose name I don't know but will try to find out, who answered questions on Ebay about removing stains from vintage fabrics. These are her recommendations.

Rust

To remove rust didi seven must be activated with lemon juice.

Recently, I started having problems locating Carbona so have tested the didi seven on whites only and it works very well. I have not used this combination on prints, as I need to find a practice piece. I have reservations considering how didi seven reacts with some prints and colored fabric. If you want to give it a try be sure and test it on a practice piece first.

First dampen the rust stain with lemon juice, then dab and gently rub in the didi seven. If it is a recent spot, just dabbing a little lemon juice on it and gently rubbing will do the trick. For rust stains that have been in the fabric for a while, dab and gently rub in the didi seven, then place just that area in a shallow bowl and cover it with lemon juice. Check on it every few minutes until the spot is clean.

Mildew, some ink, “gravy”, and unknown stains

The best method I have found is as follows: Locate the stain you want to remove and spray it with water. Depending on the size of the stain, add enough didi seven to cover it with a thin film on both the right and wrong sides. As you hold the linen in one hand, use a finger of the other hand to work the didi seven into the stain on the front side. Rub gently with the weave of the fabric. (I usually rub up and down then back and forth in a T pattern.) As the didi7 dries, spray a little water on the stain and add a dab more of didi seven. Repeat until the spot has dissolved. If, after approximately 1 minute of rubbing and the stain hasn't faded, the chances are good that didi7 will not remove it.

If you are working on a printed or dyed fabric or an area that is embroidered, there are some cautions that you need to be aware of:

- If the fabric turns a different color, flush out with cool water immediately. You can continue to work on the stain, but flush often. It will work without any damage, but it takes some care and practice.
- If you are working on a dyed fabric, test on a seam or the wrong side to see if the didi seven will have any effect on the color.
- If you are working in an area where there is embroidery, do not leave the didi seven on the area for an extended time. Work on the stain as quickly as possible, then thoroughly rinse the didi seven out.

OxiClean and whites.

Whites fabrics are the easiest type to clean. I have found that OxiClean works well on Victorian & Edwardian whites without problems, but you should wait until you have practiced before attempting it with anything that is valuable or you will be upset if it is ruined.

I use a 4 gallon graniteware canning kettle. I've heard from others who have used stainless steel without any problems, and I have heard from some who have used aluminum and have had some serious problems.

- Fill the pot half and put on the stove to heat.
- When the water is at the simmer stage, turn the fire off and let the water settle for a couple of minutes. If the water got to the boiling point, let it sit a little longer.
- Add ½ cup of the powder OxiClean. (adjust the quantity if you are using a different size of pot). About ¼ cup per gallon of water.) The OxiClean will foam or bubble so for your first attempt sit the pot in the sink before adding the OxiClean. Stir until the OxiClean has dissolved.
- Let the foaming or bubbling settle down, then add the linen that you want to clean.
- Sit the pot back on the stove and turn the fire on very, very low. It will bubble and foam a little so you have to stay in the kitchen and watch it.

Do NOT go off and leave it or you may end up with a mess all over the stove and floor. (The good news is that it makes for a dynamite stove and floor cleaner.) Make sure your path to the sink is clear in case the pot starts foaming too much. That way you can pick it up and set it in the sink if necessary. With some practice, you will understand better what will happen and it won't overflow for you.

The length of time that your whites will need to “cook” depends on how badly they are stained. I have worked with pillowcases that were kraft paper brown. If they are that bad, there is a good chance you will have to cook them at least twice if not three times. If the linen is badly stained and yellowed, the water will rapidly become very scummy and dirty looking. If that happens, empty the kettle and linens into your sink and leave the linens there to drain while you fill the pot back up and start the process over. If you are only working with a little discoloration then your whites will be snowy within an hour if not sooner.



Do not use this method on any silk embroidery thread.

There is a warning on the OxiClean products that you cannot use it on silk.

Do not use this method on any embroidery work that appears to be older than the 40s

Prior to the 40s, many dyes were unstable and bleeding will result. If you are unsure of the age of your item and you still want to try it and it does bleed, follow the instructions that I will post on dye bleeds. But they won't always work with embroidery dyes.

OxiClean and crochet edgings on white cotton or linen.

You can use the same method as described in the OxiClean and whites post. So far I haven't had any problems using the "cooking" method with crochet threads. But don't forget to heed the metallic dyes warning.

To make an OxiClean bath, figure out what you are going to use to soak the item in over night. A sink or bathtub will work in a pinch. I use huge

plastic tubs with rope handles. But I also have a shower with a low curb off of my laundry room, which makes it easy for me to empty the water out when I'm finished. Make sure you consider the emptying problem before you proceed. I do not recommend your washer except for just slight yellowing. After you read all of the posts you will understand why.

How much water and OxiClean you use will depend on what container you are using.

I heat four gallons of water. When the water is very hot, I pour it into one of my tubs and add one cup of OxiClean. Stir to ensure that the OxiClean has dissolved.

Pour in enough cool water so that the Oxi bath is tepid. I usually add in about six gallons of cool water.

Submerge your cloth, poking it down so that it is covered with the Oxi water. Let it sit overnight or for at least six hours.

When your cloth has finished soaking, remove it from the water or, if you used a sink or tub, drain the water out. Let the water drain naturally from the cloth, do not wring or knead. Once the water has drained, hold the cloth up to a strong light to see if all of the stains have disappeared. Because the cloth is damp you might not see some very faint stains.

If you need to continue working on the cloth, pre-treat any remaining spots, then put the cloth into another Oxi bath. Two Oxi baths are the most you should need and only on really stained cloths.

Here is the luncheon cloth after only one pre-treatment and bath.

Except for a few faint streaks in the middle, all of the stains and yellowing are gone. I pretreated the streaks and gave it another Oxi bath.

After a 2nd pretreatment and bath. Then rinsing and drying in the sun the tablecloth now looks like this.

I do want to caution you about reds. If you have a cloth with bright red dyes, you should only do one OxiClean bath and limit the time that you pretreat it. In my early days of cleaning linens, I ended up by fading several tablecloths that had red dyes on them because of soaking them four or five times. Use the shortest amount of time that is needed to brighten your cloth.

Linen Fabric

It seems to me that the coarser types of linen that were used for tablecloths and dishtowels attract and hold in airborne dirt and dust much more than cotton. If you wet a linen tablecloth or dishtowel down and hold it up to the light, you can see that there are a lot of dirt streaks and discoloration. Often their true condition is not noticeable when dry. If your cloth is like that, spread it out on a flat surface and work the spray OxiClean liquid into it following the path of the fiber strands. Put it into an Oxi bath and then rinse by hand and drain. Hold it up to the light and see if it needs an overall treatment or a spot treatment again. For dishtowels I often have to do this procedure three or four times.

Carbona

Carbona Stain Devil #9 is the fastest working product that I've used to remove true rust spots. Spread your cloth out on a flat surface and dab the Carbona on the rust. Let the cloth sit, then check on the spot before it has dried. If the rust stain is recent, it will disappear in seconds. If the rust has not disappeared, then treat it with more Carbona. Your rust spot should show some improvements after a few treatments. I have had rust stains that have taken many treatments to totally disappear, but every time there was some improvement along the way. If there is no improvement after the second or third application, then it isn't rust!

Spotting method

Use the spotting method to remove stains like paint drips, ink (other than with didi seven).

For the spotting method, place a pad of clean soft, white cloth under the stained area. Rub the stain gently with a white cotton cloth dampened with the remover. Use light strokes and work with the weave of the fabric.

Final word on spot removal

If you have been cleaning your cloth with one chemical be sure to rinse, rinse, rinse and rinse again before using another chemical.

Dye Runs and Bleeding

To remove dye streaks and runs effectively, you must work on them immediately before they have had time to dry and set in.

My method is going to be the most controversial and will probably have some people up in arms. But, when your linen has dye runs all over it, you really don't have many options except to learn to appreciate it as is.

One option that will take a very long time to accomplish and still may not work is to hold the dye streaks under the faucet and flush with cold water.

Before proceeding with the following method, rinse out all chemical cleaners that may be in the cloth. If you have just removed the cloth from an Oxi bath, you are going to have to run it through the washer to ensure that it is rinsed well enough. (See the washing instructions for more details.) Do not let dry but immediately work on the runs.

Mix up a weak solution of chlorine bleach and water, about one-half cup bleach with one gallon of tepid water.

If you only have one or two small areas with a dye run, use a Q-tip and dab the bleach solution on to the area. If the entire cloth has streaks, dip it in the water. Lift it out and check every 30 seconds, if not sooner. As soon as the dye runs have vanished, put your cloth into the sink. Quickly, flush the entire cloth with cold water and drain as much of the excess water out as you can. Gently push the cloth to speed draining. As soon as the excess water is out, dip the cloth in distilled white vinegar. If you merely spot treated, you must still flush with cold water and dip the cloth in the vinegar. The vinegar will act as a neutralizer to the bleach.

Washing, Drying and Ironing

Washing

Ideally you should always hand wash vintage textiles. But even when you do hand wash, you still have the rinse problem. The best way I have found to remove all of the OxiClean from the fabric is to run it through a complete cycle of the washing machine without adding soap. Otherwise, you will end up rinsing and rinsing and rinsing and still having OxiClean in the fabric. If you are using your washing machine be sure to set it on the gentle cycle and use cold water. You really need to limit the number of times that you run the textile through the washer. Each time you do, the agitation stresses the fibers and weakens them. If your cloth has weak spots or small holes, the agitation will either make the holes bigger or cause the fibers in the weak areas to break and become holes. When de-staining a cloth, you should only run it through the washer as the final rinse.

There is a new front-loading washer that uses a tumbling motion instead of agitation. If you are in the market for a new machine, you might want to consider one of those styles.