Fabric Finishes

A finish is a treatment given to the yarn or fabric to change it in some way. It can improve the performance or make it easier to care for. Some finishes, like dyeing or printing, are easy to recognize. Others, like oil release or durable press finishes, cannot be seen. The shopper should rely upon the information found on the garment label or the end of the bolt.

A finish may be added for one of the following reasons:

- To make fabrics attractive and serviceable.
- To improve the feel of the fabric.
- To reduce wrinkling.
- To resist soiling.
- To control shrinkage.
- To resist fading.
- To repel insects.
- To shorten drying time.

Today, almost all fabrics have some type of finish. When you select a fabric or garment, check the label to see what finishes have been added. Think about whether the finish will improve the appearance and durability of the garment. An untreated cotton fabric, for example, is soft, absorbent, comfortable to wear, and easy to press. When a crease-resistant finish is added, the fabric will not crease or wrinkle as easily. When laundered properly, it needs no ironing or pressing. The disadvantages are that the fabric becomes less absorbent, seams and pleats become harder to press, and, in some cases, the fabric is weakened.

The biggest problem with finishes is that many do not last. Ideally a fabric finish would last the life of the fabric. But many finishes are added after the fabric has been washed or dry-cleaned.

There is no law requiring the labeling of fabric finishes, but many manufacturers provide this information. Look for it.