Natural Fibers
Natural fibers come from plants and animals. Cotton, linen, and ramie come from plants. Wool and silk come from animals.

There are advantages and disadvantages to wearing clothes made from natural fibers. Natural fibers soil easily but are easily cleaned. They dry slowly and may shrink, stretch or lose shape during laundering.

Some natural fibers wrinkle easily, especially cotton, linen, silk, and ramie. You can press cotton, linen, and ramie with a hot iron, but you must use a cooler iron with wool and silk.

Man-Made Fibers
The first man-made fiber was rayon. It was developed in the 19th Century but wasn’t named until 1924.

There are 21 man-made fibers that have been approved by the Federal Trade Commission. Of the 21, only seven are commonly used to make clothing. These are polyester, nylon, rayon, acetate, acrylic, olefin, and spandex.

Most man-made fibers are strong, heat sensitive, do not absorb moisture and are quick to dry. They are also susceptible to static electricity.

Blends
A blend fabric is one in which the fibers are mixed before they are spun into yarns. Yarns are blended for a number of reasons:

- Economy.
- Variety.
- Strength.
- Less shrinkage.
- Greater absorbency.
- To prevent it from wearing out so quickly.
- To provide warmth or coolness.
- To prevent wrinkling.

Each yarn contributes its best quality to a blend if there is enough of it. Keep the following facts in mind as you choose which fibers to use:

- Acrylic or polyester added to cotton or rayon decrease drying time.
- Cotton, linen, ramie, or rayon increase absorbency.
- Cotton, rayon, or acetate decrease the cost.
- Silk increases the cost.
- Wool and acrylic both add warmth, but wool is more expensive.
- Wool, silk, and polyester all provide crease resistance, but wool and silk are more expensive.
- Nylon and silk add strength and luster.
- Acetate contributes draping qualities.
- Wool blended with at least 55 percent of acrylic and polyester can be washed, dries quickly, and is wrinkle-resistant. Cotton and rayon does best when mixed with at least 65 percent acrylic.