

Fabrics

Practical skills

Natural and synthetic fibres, and what each does in wear.

The properties that matter in use and in washing.

Fibre	Good	Poor
Cotton	Breathable, soft, washable	Creases, slow to dry, shrinks
Linen	Very breathable, strong	Creases heavily
Wool	Warm when damp, odour-resistant	Shrinks with heat and agitation
Silk	Light, strong, drapes	Water marks, delicate
Polyester	Strong, fast-drying, cheap	Holds odour, not breathable
Nylon	Very strong, elastic	Heat-sensitive
Viscose	Soft, drapes	Weak when wet
Elastane	Stretch	Degrades with heat

Wool shrinks from heat plus agitation, not from water alone. Cold hand-washing with no rubbing is safe.