



AIYARA TEXTILE

Upholstery Cleaning Codes

What W, S, W/S and X mean,
and how to care for upholstery fabric

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What cleaning codes are for

Cleaning codes are short letters on a fabric label or furniture tag that tell you what kind of cleaner is safe to use. They are the first thing a professional upholstery cleaner looks for, and the first thing you should check before treating a spill.

The system is used mainly in North America and by furniture makers who export there, but the idea is useful everywhere: some fabrics can be cleaned with water, some cannot, and using the wrong method can leave rings, shrink the fabric, flatten pile or remove colour.

Where to find the code

- On a tag under the seat cushion or under the frame of the furniture.
- On the fabric roll label or the sample card from the supplier.
- In the specification sheet for the fabric. For our fabrics, see the Furniture Fabrics Specification Pack.

If there is no code, treat the fabric as S and test any cleaning method on a hidden area first.

The four codes

W	Water-based cleaning Clean with water-based upholstery shampoo or the foam of a mild, water-based detergent. Professional wet extraction is allowed. Most synthetic fabrics such as polyester, nylon and olefin fall here.
S	Solvent-based cleaning only Use a water-free dry-cleaning solvent. Water can leave rings, shrink the fabric or make dyes run. Common for viscose, rayon, silk, some cottons and many natural-fibre blends.
W/S	Water or solvent Either a water-based cleaner or a dry-cleaning solvent may be used, depending on the stain. Sometimes written as SW. Many blends and finished polyesters fall here.
X	Vacuum or light brushing only Do not use water or solvents. Clean only by vacuuming or brushing. Any stain needs a professional. Usually seen on some natural fibres and specialist finishes.

1. Our fabrics

Both of our current upholstery ranges are 100% polyester with an easy-clean, water-repellent finish.

Range	Fabric	Composition	Cleaning code	Notes
Ivory	Woven, textured	100% polyester	W/S	Water-based cleaning for most spills. Solvent spotter for oil and grease.
Briston	Marbled velvet	100% polyester	W/S	As Ivory. Brush the pile in its natural direction while damp to avoid marks.

Always check the code on the label of the fabric you received, and confirm with us if the label is missing. The finished furniture may carry its own code, set by the furniture maker, that takes the fillings and frame into account.

About the water-repellent finish

The finish makes water-based spills bead on the surface for a short time instead of soaking in, which gives you time to blot them up. It is not waterproof, and it does not stop oily stains as well as watery ones. Repeated harsh cleaning gradually weakens it. A professional cleaner can re-apply a protector after deep cleaning if needed.

Why polyester behaves well

- It does not absorb much water, so it dries quickly and is less likely to leave water rings than viscose or cotton.
- It holds dye well, so colour is less likely to run when cleaned.
- It is heat-sensitive. Hot irons, very hot water and hair dryers held close can melt or glaze the surface, especially on velvet. Keep water lukewarm.

Fabrics from other suppliers

Fibre	Usual code	Main risk
Polyester, nylon, olefin	W or W/S	Heat damage; oil stains
Cotton, linen	W/S or S	Shrinkage and water rings
Viscose, rayon, Tencel	S	Water rings, pile crushing, loss of sheen
Silk	S or X	Water marks, loss of lustre, colour loss
Wool	W/S or S	Shrinkage and felting with hot water or rubbing
Leather and suede	Not covered by this system	Use the leather maker's products

2. Cleaning step by step

For W and W/S fabrics, including Ivory and Briston

- **Act at once.** Lift any solids with a blunt knife or spoon.
- **Blot** with a clean, dry, white cloth. Press; do not rub. Rubbing breaks fibres, causes pilling and distorts velvet pile.
- **Make a mild solution:** a few drops of clear, pH-neutral washing-up liquid in a cup of lukewarm water. Whisk it to make foam.
- **Use the foam, not the water.** Apply foam with a cloth or soft brush, working from the outside of the mark inwards.
- **Blot** with a clean damp cloth to remove the detergent, then with a dry cloth.
- **Dry evenly.** Feather the edges of the damp area outwards so there is no hard line. Leave to dry with good airflow, away from direct heat.
- **For velvet,** brush the pile gently in its natural direction while still slightly damp.

For oily marks on W/S fabrics

Blot. Apply a small amount of water-free upholstery spotter to a white cloth, never directly to the fabric, and dab. Work in a ventilated room. Then follow with the water-based steps above to remove any residue.

For S fabrics

Use only a dry-cleaning solvent made for upholstery. Apply it to a cloth, dab, and blot. Do not use water. For large stains, call a professional.

Test first, every time

Choose a hidden area, such as the back of a skirt or under a seat cushion. Apply your cleaner, wait five minutes, then blot with a white cloth. If colour comes off, the fabric changes texture or a ring appears when dry, stop and call a professional.

Never

- Remove cushion covers and machine wash them, even if they have zips. Covers can shrink and will no longer fit, and washed covers will not match the rest of the piece.
- Use bleach, ammonia, oven cleaner, "oxy" products or stain removers made for clothes.
- Use a steam cleaner, iron or hair dryer on velvet.
- Soak the fabric. Too much water can reach the foam and frame, leaving brown marks as it dries.

3. Stain guide

The table assumes a W or W/S fabric such as Ivory or Briston. Follow the steps in order and stop when the stain is gone.

Stain	Steps
Coffee, tea, soft drinks	Blot. Detergent foam. Blot with damp cloth. If a mark remains, dab with 1 part white vinegar to 2 parts water, then blot with water.
Red wine, fruit juice	Blot quickly. Detergent foam. Vinegar solution. Blot with water. Older stains may need a professional.
Milk, egg, blood	Cold water only; heat fixes protein. Blot, detergent foam, blot with cold water.
Oil, butter, salad dressing	Blot. Sprinkle with cornflour or talc, leave 15 minutes, brush off. Solvent spotter on a cloth. Then detergent foam.
Make-up, lipstick	Scrape gently. Solvent spotter on a cloth. Detergent foam.
Ballpoint ink	Dab with a little rubbing alcohol on a cotton bud, test first. Blot. Detergent foam.
Chocolate	Let it harden and lift off. Detergent foam. Solvent spotter for any greasy mark.
Pet accidents	Blot thoroughly. Vinegar solution to neutralise. Blot with water. Dry fully; call a professional if odour remains.
Water rings	Dampen the whole panel evenly with a barely wet cloth, from seam to seam, and dry evenly. Rings form at the edge of a wet area.
Chewing gum	Harden with ice in a plastic bag, then lift off. Solvent spotter for residue.

4. Routine care

How often	What to do
Weekly	Vacuum with a soft upholstery brush, including seams and under cushions. On velvet, work in the direction of the pile.
Weekly	Turn and plump loose seat and back cushions so they wear evenly.
Monthly	Check for small stains and treat them before they set.
Every 12 to 24 months (homes)	Professional upholstery cleaning.
Every 6 to 12 months (hotels, restaurants)	Professional cleaning, with spot cleaning by housekeeping in between.

Protecting upholstery

- Keep furniture out of strong direct sunlight, or use blinds or sheer curtains. All fabrics fade over time.
- Keep furniture at least 30 cm from radiators, heaters and air-conditioning outlets, which dry fibres and can discolour pale fabrics.
- Watch for rivets, belt buckles, pet claws and rough jeans, which cause snags and pilling.
- Pilling is surface fibre rolling into small balls, most common in the first months of use. Remove it with a fabric shaver held flat. It is not a fault and usually stops once loose fibres are gone.

Advice for hotels and restaurants

- Train housekeeping staff to blot, not rub, and to use only the approved cleaner for each fabric.
- Keep a simple spot cleaning kit at each station: white cloths, a pH-neutral cleaner, a water spray bottle and a solvent spotter.
- Record the fabric name, colour and lot number for each room, so that replacement covers match.
- Order a small stock of spare fabric from the same lot for future repairs.

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