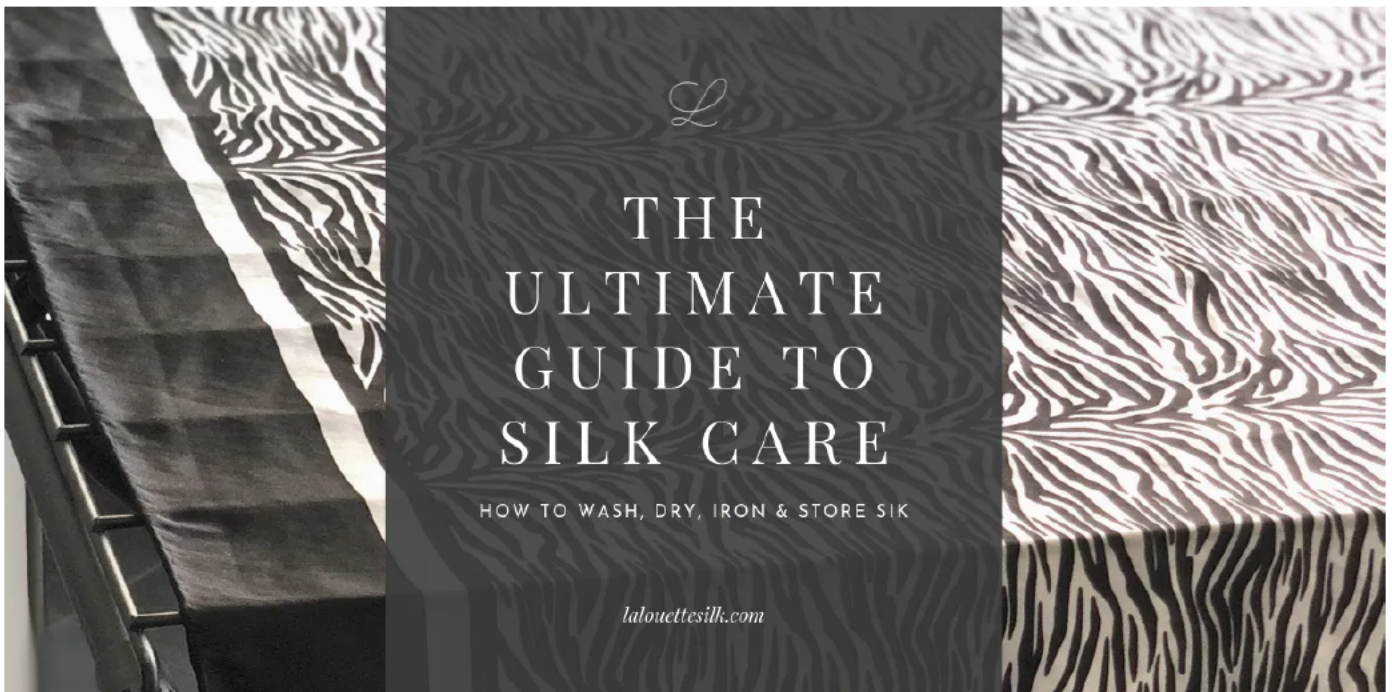


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# The Ultimate Guide to Silk Care: How to Wash, Iron, and Store Silk



While silk is one of the strongest natural fibers in the world, it is still a delicate material that requires special care. There are certain things you should do if you want your silk to stay soft and shimmering. Learn how to wash your silk yourself, how to iron it, and how to store it in this article.

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## FAQs – How to Wash Silk

Can silk only be dry cleaned?

No, it is a common misconception that silk can only be dry cleaned. Manufacturers are required by law to provide care instructions with their silk clothing, but these care instructions do not have to mention more than one way to clean the item. For example, a silk item may be suitable for both dry cleaning and hand washing, but the care label only needs to state one of these two methods. It is up to the manufacturer to decide which method to list.

Dry cleaning is often the easiest cleaning method for manufacturers to promote, as it requires fewer instructions than (hand) washing. On top of this, dry cleaning also puts the responsibility of cleaning the item with a professional. This lowers the chance of the consumer accidentally mishandling the fabric. In turn, this is convenient for the seller as it also makes it less likely that the customer will return the damaged item. Unless the silk item has intricate beading or buttons, the text 'dry clean only' on a silk item's care label is often put there to protect the manufacturer, rather than the customer.

Despite it being recommended often, dry cleaning is usually not the optimal choice for cleaning silk fabrics. Dry cleaning can be too harsh on silk due to the use of chemical solvents to clean the fabric. These chemicals can weaken the silk fibers over time, as well as decrease the vibrancy of its colors and the natural luster of silk.

As opposed to what the name 'dry cleaning' promises, dry cleaning is often not actually completely dry. Liquids other than water are applied to the fabric to clean it. Sometimes, water is used to dilute cleaning solvents. Silk should never be put in the dryer. Yet dry cleaning involves using a lot of heat, sometimes even more than your household dryer.

Finally, dry cleaners often use machines to press garments after cleaning. This process can permanently flatten the hand-rolled edges that many silk scarves have. All of these factors can damage or shrink your silk beyond repair.

## Is silk machine washable?

While possible, it is generally not advised to wash silk in the machine. Machine washing can be too rough on silk, with the intense turning of the machine drum. If your washing machine has a delicate cycle, then that could be used to counter this. Silk should only be washed with gentle soaps, preferably special silk detergent. However, your washing machine can contain residues of regular detergent or bleach, which can damage your silk. You should try your best to ensure there are no such residues in your machine before using it to wash silk. This can be difficult, so it's often best to hand wash your silk instead.

## How to Hand Wash a Silk Scarf

Most silk items lend themselves well to hand washing. Hand washing can yield excellent results if done correctly. Silk scarves are especially easy to hand wash at home, thanks to their simple shape and the absence of buttons and zippers.

Before washing your silk, it is always wise to first check the care instructions that came with your silk item. While you don't always have to follow what the care instructions say blindly, some brands may provide useful instructions specific to their silk's properties. For example, if a brand states their silk isn't colorfast, you won't be able to wash it at home. Some silk items may be treated with water repellent coatings, in which case you also

won't be able to wash it. In these scenarios, you're better off taking your scarf to the dry cleaners.

Here are the steps to hand washing your silk at home without damaging it:

## 1. Check if your silk is colorfast

Many silk scarves have vibrant and colorful patterns printed on them. Silk is a natural fiber that lends itself extremely well to dyeing. Colors tend to show up rich and deeply hued on silk fabrics. However, not all manufacturers use colorfast dyes or finishings. Before submerging your silk scarf in water, you should always do a spot test for colorfastness. You don't want the colors on your silk to bleed.

To do a colorfast test, first, wet a small area of your silk scarf with a little bit of water. It's best to wet an inconspicuous area, which doesn't show prominently when wearing the scarf, in case the color bleeds.

After wetting a small area of your scarf, use a cotton swab or bud to press on the wet spot a few times gently. Be careful not to rub the silk, as this may damage it.

Check your cotton swab for any color residues. If the color of your silk bled onto the swab, then you won't be able to hand wash the silk at home and you'll have to take your scarf to the dry cleaner. If your swab is still clean and white, then you can proceed to the next step.

## 2. Pre-treat stains (if any)

Silk scarves are often worn close to the face, which may lead you to stain your scarf with make-up, food, or drinks. When you find a stain, it's important to treat it as soon as possible before it dries and settles. This increases the chances of successfully removing the stain.

To remove stains from a silk scarf, first lay the scarf flat on top of a towel. The towel can absorb any water or detergent and ensures the scarf doesn't slip away.

Then, treat the spot that was stained with a 50/50 mixture of water and silk detergent. You only need a few drops of detergent. Silk and lingerie detergents or delicate detergents are ideal. If you don't have these available mild baby shampoo can work in a pinch. Don't use any store-bought stain remover liquids, as these are too harsh for silk.

Dip a cotton bud into your solution of water and silk detergent, and gently rub it onto the stain. Don't go too hard or over-rub the spot, as this can damage your silk.

After this, flip your scarf over and repeat this process on the backside of your silk. The stain is now treated, and your scarf should now be ready for hand washing.

## 3. Prepare your cleaning station

Before washing your silk, you should make sure there's nothing on your hands that can damage your silk. Take off

your rings and bracelets, and make sure there's nothing on your nails that can tug the silk. Be careful of chipped nail polish and broken nails, as these sharp edges can get stuck on your silk.

Next up is making sure that your sink is immaculate. Your sink should be perfectly clean before putting your scarves in them, so get rid of any toothpaste stains and other dirt. If you're using a washing tub, then the same applies to this.

#### 4. Fill your sink with cool water and add silk detergent

After cleaning your sink or tub, you're ready to fill it with water. Silk should be washed in cool water. The water doesn't have to be ice cold, but it should not feel warm to the touch either. We're aiming for a water temperature that feels a little colder than lukewarm.

Next, mix in your silk detergent. Follow the instructions on the detergent's packaging to determine how much you need to add to the water. It is best to use a detergent that was specifically designed for silk. If you don't have any available, you can use a mild baby shampoo mixed with a little splash of vinegar. Never use bleach, stain remover liquid, dishwashing liquid, or regular detergent to wash silk.

#### 5. Submerge your silk in the water and gently swirl it around

You can't soak silk in soapy water for too long, so first, we'll set a timer for 4 minutes. The longer you soak your silk, the higher the chance the dyes will release.

We're now ready to put our silk scarf in the water. It's important only to wash one silk scarf at a time. Once you submerge your scarf, you have to keep it moving for the entire 4 minutes. Gently swish and swirl the scarf around your sink. The movement also ensures that each area of your scarf is being washed.



#### 6. Remove the scarf, drain the soapy water, and rinse

After 4 minutes have passed and your timer went off, you can take your silk scarf out of the water. Do not squeeze or wring the scarf to get rid of any water. We're now ready to rinse the scarf to remove any detergent that has been absorbed by the scarf.



Dump out the soapy water, and fill your sink with fresh, cool water.

Gently swirl your scarf around in the clean water to remove any detergent residue. This should take no longer than a minute.

To make sure that no soap is left on your scarf, you should repeat this process twice. This means your silk scarf will be rinsed a total of 3 times.

## How to Dry Silk

### 7. Dry your scarf using a towel and drying rack

Your silk has now been washed, and we're ready to dry it. Remember to be gentle with your silk. Do not wring your wet scarf, and do not put it in the dryer. Instead, we're going to dry it on a cotton towel before air drying.

Start off by laying a clean towel flat on the ground. Spread your silk scarf out on the towel, straightening out the corners. Then, roll up the towel with your scarf in it. Gently press on the rolled-up towel to absorb excess moisture. After gently pressing down on the towel, unroll the towel. You'll find that the scarf is no longer dripping water. We can now transfer it to a flat drying rack.

Silk scarves should be air-dried in the shade, as direct sunlight can fade its colors. Do not use clothespins or clothespins, as these could damage the silk and create stubborn wrinkles in the fabric. Instead, drape your scarf over a flat drying rack and leave it to air dry. Even in the shade, your silk scarf should dry quickly within about 30 to 60 minutes, depending on your local temperature.

Et voila! These seven simple steps are all it takes to hand wash and dry a silk scarf at home. Your scarf is now clean and dry, and if you wish you can proceed to iron your scarf following the steps below.

