

Are you tired of seeing your clothes piled up on the bedroom chair? Do you wonder why your garments require ironing every time you put them on? Better yet, have you ever stretched out your favorite sweater by hanging it? If so, it's high time for you to learn how to fold and hang your clothes -- the right way. Properly storing your threads will keep them looking their best and extend their "shelf life," and allow you to maximize your closet space. The first step is determining which items in your wardrobe should be hung and which should be folded.

What You Should Fold

- Fold your sweaters (especially the heavier ones), T-shirts and underwear.
- Knitwear: If hung, knitted garments will likely stretch eventually.
- Garments made from stretchy fabrics such as spandex and nylon, to make sure they maintain their original shape.
- Relatively fine or delicate articles of clothing.

Folding Tips

Everyone has their own secret technique when it comes to folding shirts, but in the end, it doesn't matter what a T-shirt or sweater looks like once it's sitting in a drawer. The technique you use to fold your garments isn't so important. Some prefer to fold their sweaters in half before folding the sleeves in; others prefer to start by folding the sleeves and then folding the sweater in half. Either way doesn't make much of a difference. What is important is that your garment must be flat and wrinkle-free before you start folding it, and the fabric must remain nicely spread out throughout the folding process. By doing so, you'll keep your garments free of creases and will therefore get to skip out on ironing before wearing them. Where shape is concerned, some prefer to fold their garments in a perfect square while others prefer a rectangular shape. Just keep in mind that a rectangular fold will help you maximize deeper storage spaces while a square fold is more practical for spaces with minimal depth.

Extra Folding Tips

Mix it up. Once in a while, try to alternate the way you fold your garments in order to prevent creases from setting in permanently. Make smaller piles. Avoid piling up too many sweaters or

T-shirts in order to reduce the strain on those at the bottom of the pile. The extra weight might emphasize the creases in the garments and might even cause them to set in permanently. Use tissue. If you're a perfectionist, then you might want to place a thin layer of white tissue between folds to help prevent creasing. Because this technique is rather time-consuming and costly, it's usually limited to retail stores. Stay organized. Always try to keep your closet neatly organized. Separate your Ts from your long-sleeve knits, and your heavyweight sweaters from your lighter ones. It will make choosing what to wear for that hot date that much easier.

What You Should Hang

- Pants, with the exception of pajamas, track pants and sweat pants.
- Suits and items like button-down shirts, blazers and overcoats.

Hanging Tips

When hanging your garments, make sure that they are evenly spaced out and easily accessible. They should drape naturally rather than be bunched up together; this will prevent them from creasing and allow the air to circulate for proper ventilation.

Shirts

When hanging a shirt, make sure it's completely buttoned up in order to keep the collar in place and prevent the neckline from creasing, and in some cases, getting distorted. (In the instance where a shirt doesn't button up all the way to the top, you can always use a safety pin to hold the collar in place.) For heavier shirts, consider crossing the sleeves around and over the hanger to prevent the sleeves from stretching.

Pants

Always remember to remove your belt from your slacks before hanging them; this will prevent the waistline from distorting. Next, fold your slacks along the pants' natural creases, so that both

legs of the slacks lie flat against one another (parallel); make sure any pleats are folded down. You can use a hanger with clamps or slide the slacks onto a trouser rod or regular hanger. Note: Hangers with clamps or grip clips will make your life easier and help you maximize your closet space. If you use regular hangers instead, you might want to consider those with non-slip rubber to prevent the slacks from slipping off.

Choosing The Best Hangers

Plastic tubular hangers are known to offer minimal support and should be used for lighter items such as button-down shirts. Padded, shaped and traditional suit hangers are best for jackets, suits, thin shirts (i.e. linen), and tailored garments. The bigger the hanger, the more support your clothes receive, thereby helping to prevent unsightly creases. Wardrobe valets are also great for hanging suits, but they are rather expensive and will take up a lot of wardrobe space. Try to avoid wire hangers altogether -- you know, those you get from your local dry cleaner. When used to hang pants, they can create a crease right at your pants' thigh level. They can also rust and may eventually stain your clothing. You can also find various types of practical hangers made especially for hanging belts and ties.

More Storing Tips...

Empty your pockets. Remember to remove everything from your pockets, as some bulky items could distort a garment's shape. Air out your garments. Before hanging or folding your clothes, make sure they are completely dry to prevent mildew from building up. As well, if you were hanging out in a smoky club, it's a good idea to let your clothes air out before storing them away (no one wants a smoke-infested closet). Do it right away. You should also get into the habit of hanging and folding your clothes as soon as you get undressed, unless they need to be aired out (see above). Don't hesitate to ask. Finally, if you don't know how to store a new garment, simply ask the salesperson for advice.

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