



Advice on washing Yarn before knitting or Knitted Goods

Cones, Skeins or Hanks of Yarn from The Natural Fibre Company

General

- Immediately after spinning, the yarn is in an oiled condition, with spinning oil from the processing. For yarns washed at the mill it is possible that a small amount of oil will remain. Some knitters, especially those using knitting machines, prefer to use oiled yarn and wash the finished items afterwards or the yarn can be washed prior to use.
- Yarn can be stored oiled for several years without detriment. Yarns which are poorly stored, allowed to get damp and then dried, or which did not have all the lanolin removed when spun may become brittle in time, so it is better to wash it out.
- If the yarn is on cones or in balls it must be re-wound into skeins/hanks for washing. Washing cones is a waste of time (!) while washing balls risks felting them and may not get to the inner parts. *Please note that US terminology uses skein and ball inter-changeably: here we mean skeins/hanks.*
- Yarns **dyed** by the Natural Fibre Company use acid reactive dyes which are usually fully absorbed. They will have been washed and rinsed and should only give out a very little, if any, dye colour when washed. Darker colours are more likely to have a little dye-stuff residue. The residue will not normally affect other fibres but for colour work it is advisable to use a colour catcher product if you are concerned.
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Washing

- Our spinning oil is either mineral or vegetable based, with an emulsifying agent added: so it will mostly come out of the yarn in water without added soap, though a little soap or detergent will help, particularly if the yarn is naturally paler coloured. The newer soak washes will also work. Fill the sink, or a large bowl, with comfortable hand-hot water and immerse a few hanks, moving them gently in the water. They can be left for a minute or two to allow the emulsifier to work.
- When removing, dunk each item a couple of times to realign the fibres and gently squeeze out water in a downward movement. As well as removing the oil, the washing and rinsing will permit the wool to remember its natural bounce and the yarn should become noticeably fatter, softer and fluffier.
- Repeat as necessary until water is clear, using slightly cooler water each time. **NEVER CHANGE FROM HOT TO COLD**, and do not ever put wool in really cold water: it will go hard. Wringing or rubbing causes wool to felt, especially in hot water. The felting propensity of mohair and alpaca is much lower than that of wool due to less pronounced scales on the fibres.



THE NATURAL FIBRE COMPANY



Dyed yarns

- Yarns **dyed** inhouse for our customers use acid reactive dyes which are usually fully absorbed because they bond chemically with the core of the wool fibre.
- Dyed yarns will have been washed and rinsed and should only give out a very little, if any, dye colour when washed. Darker and more intense colours are more likely to have a little dye-stuff residue.
- Very rarely, dye may transfer onto hands, particularly if hot, when working and should wash off quite easily
- Acid reactive dyes will not transfer onto artificial or vegetable fibres and unless the water is quite acidic should not transfer onto other wool. However, for colour work using strong contrasts it may be advisable to consider using a colour catcher product in the first wash, and possibly consider washing a small sample of darker colours before working up your project – then if there is any colour loss you can wash before starting.

Drying

Hanks may be spin-dried but **NOT** tumble-dried. If spinning, put into several bags to balance the machine load, use a low speed and short spin and repeat if still dripping. Shake out and hang to cool and dry naturally, away from direct heat or strong sunlight. Large skeins will be helped by weights. When completely, dry shake well to free and realign the strands. Some natural fibres may moult until knitted, washed and settled.

Washed, packaged yarns in balls or skeins and Knitted Items

- All our wool, mohair and alpaca can be washed with care once made into knitted or crocheted items. If you have any worries, dry clean instead.
- **Follow the same approach as above:** hand wash or use a cool wool cycle in a machine, **do not** alter the temperature suddenly, gently squeeze out moisture (do not wring) and spin dry on a short spin, **NEVER TUMBLE DRY**, dry flat if possible, pulling back into shape if necessary and press lightly if necessary.
- Knitted components of a garment or other item should be blocked by pulling into shape, pinning out and pressing under a damp cloth before making up, and may be washed before doing this.
- Most wool will hang out creases, though mohair and alpaca are less keen to do so. Light pressing with a warm iron on a wool setting, preferably on the inside of the item will solve this. Remember that for pressing you need to use a damp cloth as too hot an iron will make a shiny iron-shaped mark!
- Remember not to press rib areas as you will make the wool lose its memory and stretch!

Remember: if you want to make felt or shrink something, wash it at 60°C and tumble dry!

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