

SHOULD YOU TRY THIS AT HOME? The Truths and Myths about Dry Cleaning

What are the 3 most common threats to a man's wardrobe? Lipstick on the collar, wine and ink stains. What *does* one do when there are no words to explain to your girlfriend what someone else's lipstick or perfume scent is on your shirt? What do you do when you get pen ink right on your favorite shirt? And who hasn't panicked trying to decide whether its club soda or soap and water at once when the red wine hits your best tie? The fashionable "go-to guy" is dry cleaning expert Johnny Xirouchakis, the guru of garment care. For years, customers including celebrities and museums consult with Johnny for their high-end, irreplaceable and hard to clean items.

Here is his insider information to share with your readers:

LIPSTICK and MAKEUP: Contain pigments, waxes and oils. With a little effort, these stains can be removed at home. The first thing you should do is TEST in an inconspicuous area of your garment because you will want to determine if the fabric dye, be it on silk, synthetic or 100% cotton, is prone to bleed. Water will break down certain dye, these "bleeders" require professional dry cleaning. Testing should be done using a wet Q tip dabbed in your cleaning solution, rub gently with several strokes then allow to air dry; blow dryers are a plus. Though some light dye may transfer to the Q tip, if the dried test area has not faded, proceed to clean. You should place the collar area on a bath towel, then you should sparingly apply a citrus-based liquid dishwashing solution on the affected areas. Let the solution soak in for a few minutes. With a sponge or rag dipped in warm water, gently rub the area until the stain fades out. Then rinse the collar with cool water and hang the shirt to air dry or blow dry for speed. To mask perfume odors, spray on a household odor remover, such as "Febreze." In order to remove all residues, the shirt should go through an OZONE room as soon as possible.

WINE: Wine is a tannin stain. Tannin stains come out from the ground – berries, coffee, grapes, mustard seed and grass, etc. All tannin stains can be attempted this way. Acetic acid used by drycleaners as a first step to tannin stain removal is nothing more than concentrated salad vinegar (white vinegar). Mix house vinegar with a citrus soap and follow the cleaning steps used to clean and dry the shirt collar. Beware of excess rubbing that can distort the weave or dye of your favorite tie. As ties are often cut on a bias, (on a slant) you must be careful of stretching the fabric. Do not rub vigorously on the tie and always use cold water. Heat sets stains. Tamping (a gentle patting) of the stain will avoid distortion of the fabric. On more durable fabrics use a teacup and stretch the fabric over the rim to give yourself a working area. This will also allow the excess liquid to drain into the cup. Remember: Club soda – myth. Hot water-myth.

INK: Pen ink or paint have different properties and they can be either dry or water soluble. To begin, you will to determine which one you have. If it is water soluble ink, the citrus-based detergent will work as a great degreaser. To help you remember, think of the old adage "Oil and water don't mix." Quite simply, water won't break down oil based ink, which means you should go directly to a professional dry cleaner.