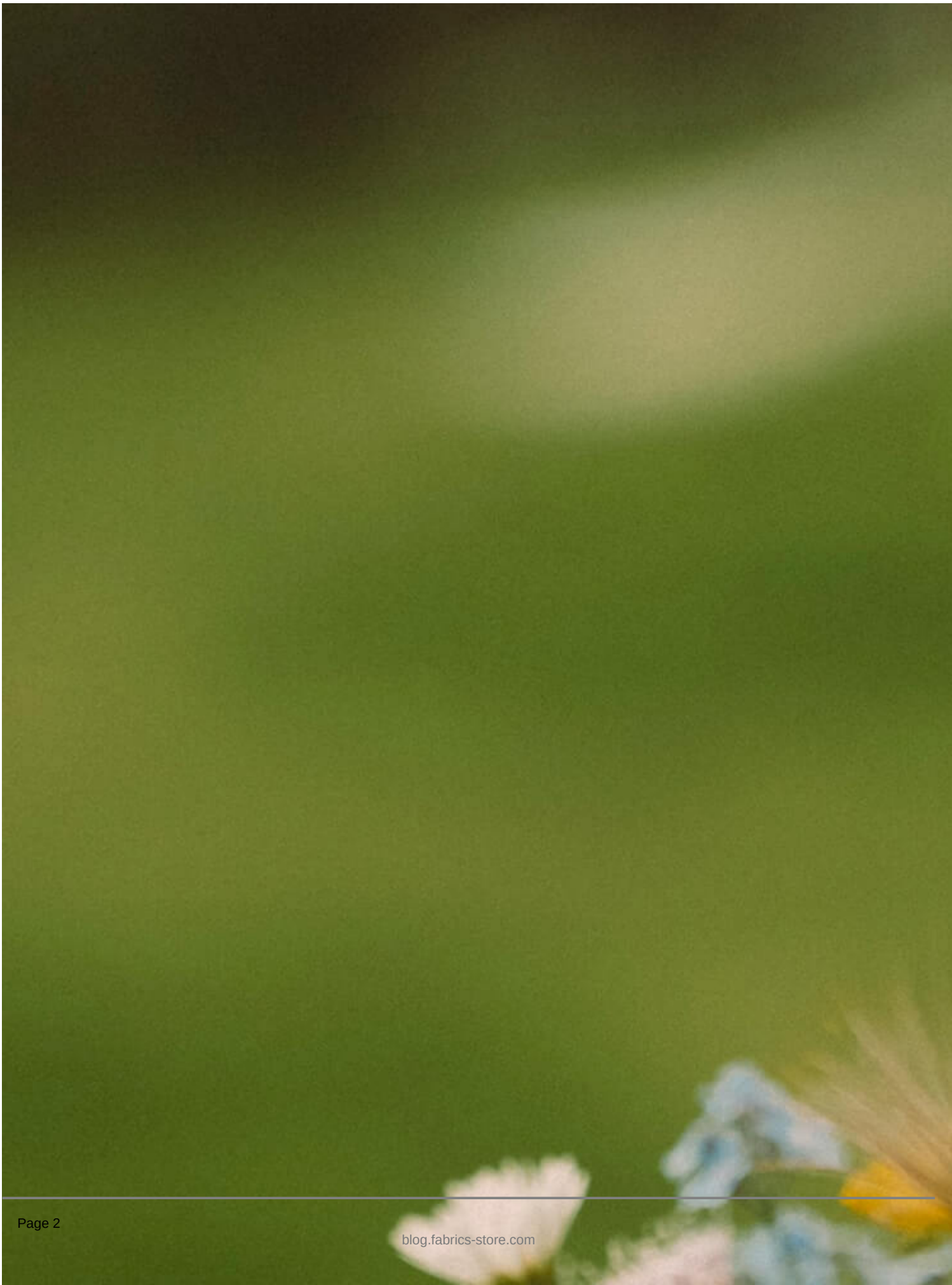


How to Pre-Wash Fabric: A Simple Guide

Description



We all know that exciting feeling of bringing home a beautiful new fabric, and all you want to do is dive in and start cutting. But, before we begin, thereâ??s an important step we shouldnâ??t skip: *pre-washing your fabric.*

Sure, it may not be the most exciting task, but pre-washing our fabric can save a lot of time and heartache down the line.

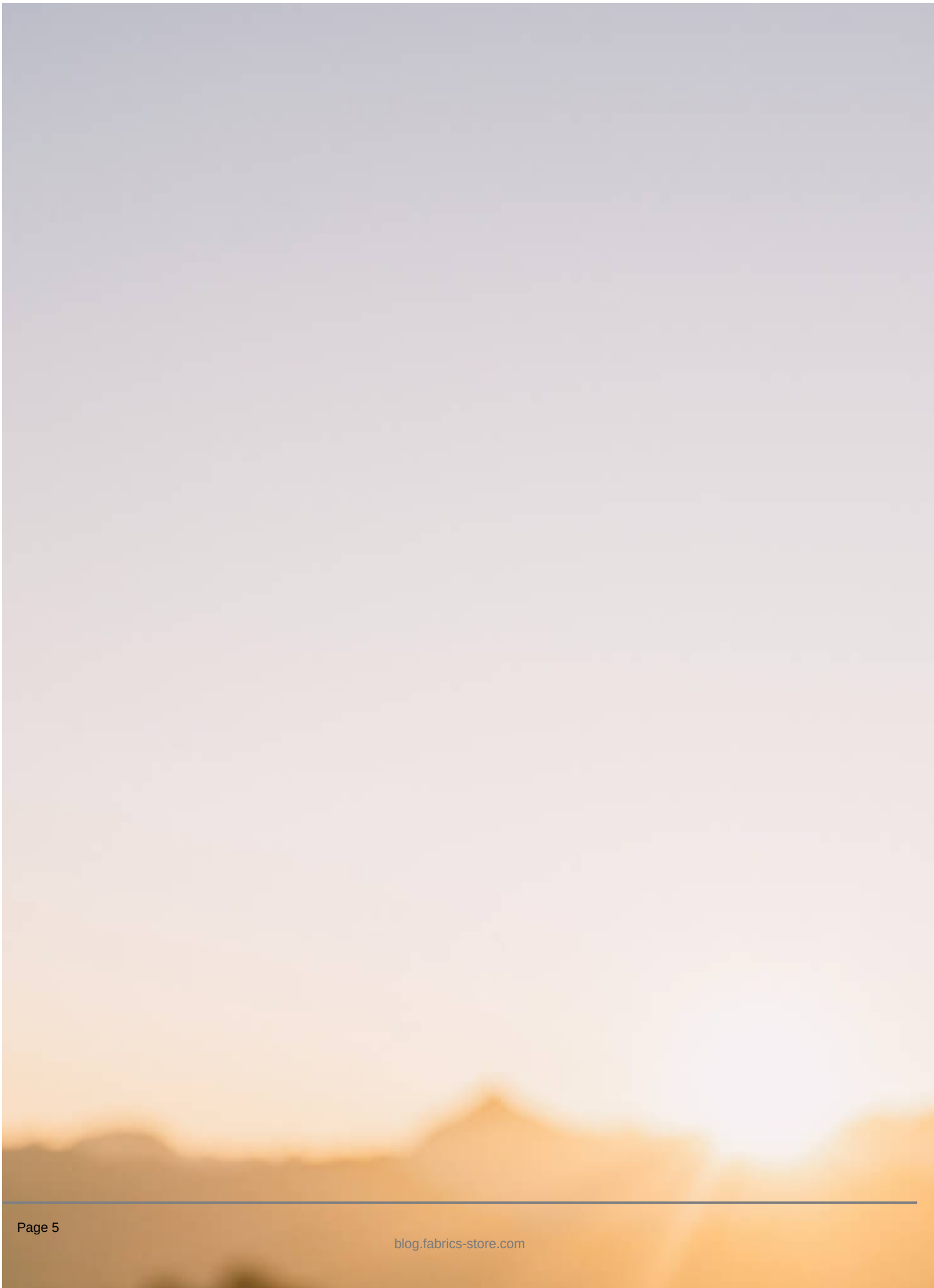
Iâ??ll admit, I have let my impatience get the better of me in the past and havenâ??t always prioritised this step. However, Iâ??ve learned the hard way that skipping this step can be pretty devastating. Just imagine spending hours sewing a garment only to wash it and find that it has shrunk or warped beyond wearability. I am sure many of us have been there, whether with handmade or store-bought garments. Therefore, I have made it a habit to pre-wash any fabrics as soon as I bring them home. I usually even order a little extraâ??just in case!

What are the benefits of pre-washing?

I understand that washing large pieces of fabric, drying, and then ironing can take time and spaceâ??especially in a small apartment (trust me, I get it). However, the benefits of laundering fabric before cutting and sewing far outweigh the inconvenience.

- *Pre-shrinking:* Fabrics can shrink during their first wash as the fibres tighten from the agitation and heat. Pre-washing prevents this unwanted shrinkage from occurring after the garment is made, helping to ensure a more accurate fit.
- *Colour fixation:* Pre-washing removes excess dyes and helps to prevent colour bleeding. This is especially important when colour blocking light and dark fabrics together, as it minimises the risk of the dye transferring between fabrics.
- *Adjusting texture and drape:* Pre-washing can help the fabric to settle, whether that be through softening or a change in texture. In doing so, your will get a better idea of how the fabric will look and behave for your final project.

- *Chemical removal:* Fabric can carry residue from the manufacturing process. A quick pre-wash can reduce the presence of possible chemicals.



How to pre-wash fabric

1. Check the care instructions: If available, start by checking the care and wash instructions. This information is often found on the sellerâ??s website or, if in-store, on the tag attached to the fabric bolt (take a photo for future reference).

2. Identify the fabric type: Again this information can be found on the sellers website, or if in store, on the fabric bolt. If this information isnâ??t available, a burn test may help identify the fibre type. There are many good resources online on how to do this.

3. Finish the raw edges: Take a look at the raw edges of the fabric. If theyâ??re prone to fraying, consider finishing the edges with an overlock or zigzag stitch. This will prevent a tangled mess or the loss of fabric length. Alternatively, if the piece of fabric is small enough place it in a mesh laundry bag for added protection.

4. Sort by colour: Just like doing the laundry, separate the light and dark fabrics. Colours may bleed, and sorting will help prevent unwanted dye transfer.

Tip: *If youâ??re worried about colour bleeding, a simple bleed test can give you peace of mind. Cut a small piece of fabric (about 5cm square) and soak it in water mixed with your preferred laundry detergent for roughly 30 minutes. If the water changes colour, the dyes have bled. Another method is to lay the washed fabric on a white paper towel to check for any dye transfer. This quick test can help with deciding if another wash is needed or if the fabric should be washed separately in the future.*

5. Wash: Different types of fabric require specific care during pre-washing. Always check the care instructions if available.

Here are some general tips for handling various fabrics:

- *Cotton and linen:* Most cotton and linen fabrics can be machine washed in warm or hot water. However, more delicate or coloured types may benefit from a cold wash to prevent fading. Being natural fibres, I would recommend using a mild detergent.
- *Silk and wool:* Hand washing is the safest approach for these delicate fabrics. A delicate cold machine wash may also be acceptable, but itâ??s best to place the fabric in a mesh laundry bag. Use a detergent specifically designed for silk or wool.
- S*ynthetics (e.g. polyester, nylon, or acrylic):* These fabrics are generally more durable, so a gentle or regular machine wash cycle with cold or warm water is suitable. However, if in doubt, opt for a gentler cycle with cooler water and a mild detergent.
- *Rayon (e.g. viscose, modal, or lyocell):* This semi-synthetic fibre can be delicate, so a cold water washâ??either by hand or on a gentle machine cycleâ??is recommended.
- *Delicate fabrics (e.g. lace, fine knits, or embellished pieces):* Hand washing is the safest approach for these delicate fabrics. If using the machine, place the fabric in a mesh laundry bag to prevent snagging. Opt for a cold water wash and a delicate or gentle machine cycle, and use a mild detergent.
- *Heavy fabrics (e.g. denim, or canvas):* Use a gentle cold machine cycle or soak in cold water to prevent shrinkage and to help ensure the fabric maintains its structure. Also, rinse the fabric thoroughly to remove all detergent, as heavier fabrics may retain soap residue.

Remember to treat the fabric as you would the finished garmentâ??avoid hand washing the fabric if you plan to machine wash the finished garment.

6. Remove the fabric as soon as possible: Take the fabric out of the water as soon as possible. Clothes can bunch up and twist in the machine or bucket, so give the fabric a shake to reduce creases (especially for linen). This will also cut down on ironing time, which is what we all want.

7. Dry: Always check the fabricâ??s care instructions for specific drying recommendations. Whenever possible, I would recommend air drying,

especially for more delicate fabrics, laying them flat and keeping them out of direct sunlight. If machine drying is necessary, reserve it for more durable fabrics like synthetics, cotton, or linen.

8. Iron: After the fabric dries, press to remove any wrinkles, making it easier and more accurate to cut and sew. Sometime ironing the fabric

While pre-washing may seem like an annoying extra step, itâ??s totally worth it to protect your hard work and ensure your garments fit perfectly!

CATEGORY

1. SEWING ESSENTIALS

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