



Your love your blue jeans. And who doesn't? Since the mid-1950s denim jeans have consistently been favorites with the youth culture. But now, because jeans are so durable and comfy, they have become a wardrobe staple for every member of the family with the average North American owning 7 pairs. So how do you choose and care for your most versatile wardrobe staple?

About Denim

Denim is made from tightly woven cotton twill. Lengthwise, yarns are dyed with indigo or blue dye; while horizontal yarns remain white. The tightly woven yarns make the jeans more durable and produce the distinct denim color.

Pre-washed vs. Unwashed

There are two general categories of denim blue jeans: pre-washed and unwashed denim. Pre-washed denim, also known as preshrunk or distressed denim, is achieved through bleaching or several mechanical treatments like stonewashes, sandblasting and scraping. Unwashed denim is stronger and most durable but is also much stiffer.

Reducing Fading and Shrinkage

Even if your jeans are pre-washed, they can still fade and shrink over time, especially if you do not follow the care label instructions. There are certain precautions that one can take to maintain color (Normal, gradual washdown is desirable for more jean wearers) and fit.

- Always turn the jeans inside-out for laundering
- Wash in cold water
- Never use bleach

If the care label instructions recommend drying in a dryer, be sure not to use hotter than recommended dryer temperatures and take the jeans out of the dryer while they are still slightly damp. Then lay your jeans on a towel to dry or, if possible, hang them so that no part of the jean is folded over.

Caring for Unwashed Denim

Wear your unwashed jeans as much as possible before the first wash. (They will have a tough surface, almost like they are water resistant.)

- Do not try to clean local stains as rubbing can remove the indigo and you may get a bleach spot
- The longer you can keep them unwashed, the longer they will stay in good shape
- When you absolutely have to wash them, turn them inside out so they have some resistance to unwanted crinkles from the machine
- To encourage fading and natural worn-in effects, wash in warmer temperatures
- Once out of the dryer, turn them back to normal and shake them flat, otherwise they might get an unwanted crease or fold. When they are still damp, you can stretch the inseam as much as needed. Let them dry naturally by hanging, not folded

Washing Tips from Cotton Inc.

1. Be sure to read the care label on the garment carefully. The manufacturer is the expert about their clothing and how to care for them
2. We strongly suggest sorting by color. You don't want lighter garments picking up the dye from darker clothes. This can occur particularly with jeans, as indigo dyes tend to wash out
3. Lastly, to minimize shrinkage or wrinkling, take clothes out of the dryer when just a tad damp and either lay flat or hang to completely dry

Tips for Getting the Right Fit

Because washing your jeans can cause additional shrinkage, it is important to remember some simple things when shopping for jeans. Try to:

- Buy jeans that are a little longer than necessary
- Try them on with the shoes you wear most often
- Wash your jeans before you hem them.