

THE CARE LABEL DECODER

5 Things Your Fabric Label Is Not Telling You

— A practical guide from *Fabrics Vetted* —

Find the care label sewn into the seam of any garment. Read the fiber content list. The first fiber listed is the dominant one. That fiber defines the biological profile of what is touching your skin. Everything else is doing marketing work for the minority component.

I SYNTHETIC FIBERS TO WATCH FOR

If any of these leads the fiber content list, the garment has a synthetic biological profile regardless of marketing DM

POLYESTER / PET — A petroleum derivative. Same polymer as a plastic water bottle. Releases microplastic particles under heat and friction.

NYLON / POLYAMIDE — Petroleum-derived synthetic. Similar shedding profile to polyester. Common in activewear.

ACRYLIC — Petroleum-based. The highest microplastic shedding rate of the common synthetics. Common in sweaters and knitwear.

ELASTANE / SPANDEX / LYCRA — A synthetic polyurethane fiber. Does not biodegrade. Even at 2 percent of a blend, prevents the garment from being recycled or composted at end of life.

2

THE NATURAL FIBERS TO LOOK FOR

If any of these leads the fiber content list, the next question is what certifications are on the label.

ORGANIC COTTON — Look for GOTS certification on the physical label, not just the hangtag. GOTS prohibits PFAS, heavy metals, endocrine disruptors, and formaldehyde across the supply chain.

LINEN — Made from flax. Naturally breathable and biodegradable. Minimal processing chemistry required.

WOOL — Look for the Responsible Wool Standard (RWS) for verified ethical sourcing. Wool is naturally thermoregulating and biocompatible.

TENCEL / LYOCELL — A wood-derived cellulose fiber processed in a closed-loop system with non-toxic solvents. The cleanest cellulosic fiber currently available at commercial scale.

HEMP — Naturally pest-resistant, requires minimal water, biodegradable. Often blended with cotton or linen.

3

THE CERTIFICATIONS THAT ACTUALLY MEAN SOMETHING

GOTS (Global Organic Textile Standard) The most rigorous textile certification available. Requires 95 percent organic fiber content for the "organic" label, 70 percent for "made with organic." Covers the entire supply chain including dyes and finishing chemicals.

OEKO-TEX Standard 100 Tests finished garments for over 100 harmful substances. A complementary certification to GOTS. A garment can be OEKO-TEX certified without being organic — the standard is about chemical safety of the finished product.

Responsible Wool Standard (RWS) Verified ethical wool sourcing. Animal welfare and land management criteria.

If a hangtag uses the word "organic" or "sustainable" without one of these certifications named on the physical care label, treat the claim as unverified marketing.

4

THE BLEND TRAP

A garment can be 90 percent polyester and 10 percent organic cotton and legally carry a "made with organic" claim on the hangtag.

The organic cotton is real. The synthetic profile of the garment is also real. The dominant fiber wins.

Rule: The first fiber listed on the care label is what defines the garment. Anything below it in the list is a minority component doing marketing work.

5

THE 30 SECOND TEST

Before buying anything, do this:

1. Locate the care label. It is sewn into the seam, not attached as a hangtag.
2. Read the fiber content list. Note the first fiber.
3. If synthetic, the garment is synthetic. Decide if that is acceptable for the use case.
4. If natural, check for a certification name printed on the same label or a separate sewn certification tag.
5. If no certification appears, the claim is unverified marketing.

That is it. 30 seconds. More accurate than every hangtag claim ever printed.

THE LABEL IS A DOCUMENT. READ THE WHOLE THING

www.fabricsvetted.com

