

Handwashing a Wedding Dress

Materials

1. A Tub ~ or very, very large bucket.
2. Detergent ~ a "special" one is unnecessary unless you have a silk or natural material dress.
3. Spot Cleaner ~ I love Spray N Wash; I have tried others and always seem to return to this one.
4. Soft/Hard Sponge ~ Get a new one, go for colorless.
5. Rags or towels ~ Clean and white
6. A hand-held shower head ~ I really love this for "Power Washing" out those dirty trains. I'd say optional, but for me, this is non-optional, especially for tulle. It works wonders.
 - o Before I upgraded my shower head, I used an adaptor attached to the sink.
 - o You can also use a hose if the gown is really muddy.
 - For this, you would first place the dress on a clean tarp lying down.
 - Rinse the whole dress on the shower setting, ensuring the water is moving down the gown and away.
 - Then turn up the pressure slowly to full or jet while focusing on the muddy strain.
 - After carefully washing most of the dirt away, move the dress inside to soak.
7. A Fan & Spacing to hang the gown freely to dry
8. A Steamer & Steamer Mit
9. Bonus Items - A lint roller and fabric shaver

Washing Instructions

1. Rinse your dress with lukewarm water
 - o Ensure the water runs down the dress and into the drain.
 - o For extra dirty gowns, rinse outside as described above.
 - o Continue doing this until the bulk of the dirt is removed.
2. Use your spot cleaner around sweat and dirt areas, and rub with a soft sponge in circular motions.
 - o Armpits, inside the bodice, and along the train will need it the most.
 - o Be careful as you move your dress; keep it as standard a shape as possible, not scrunched, to avoid snags.
3. Fill the tub with lukewarm water and a small amount of detergent. Soak the dress in your tub with some detergent for 30 minutes.
 - o Adgate the water a little.
 - o At this point, the water shouldn't get instantly gross.
 - o Get the towels/rags wet as well and place them over the dress to help submerge it.
4. After 30 minutes is up, revisit any known strains/spots and scrub more if they have not lifted.
 - o Special notes depending on the fabric ↓
 - Tulle: can handle a scrub sponge/rough sponge side; be sure to get both sides of the fabric.
 - Organza: can handle a scrub sponge/rough sponge side; get both sides of the fabric.

- Chiffon: delicate/soft sponge only.
 - Lace: It depends. Start with only a soft sponge. Thinner lace without any beadwork can take a bit more pressure with a rough sponge if a soft sponge isn't enough. NEVER use a rough sponge on thick lace. Get the underside; typically, you can use the rough sponge on the back side if it's lace applique (lace sewn on tulle). A jet water stream helps get dirt stuck between fibers.
 - Satin: Use a soft sponge only. Don't dare use a scrub sponge. A jet water stream helps remove some stains instead of scrubbing.
 - The Lining: The rough sponge is fine, if it's not a satin lining. The best way to tell is that traditional linings are very thin and typically matte, not shiny. Occasional dirt gets really stuck in the seam on the lining. I blast it with a hose or shower head on JET to remove it.
 - Colored Areas: Soft sponge only.
 - KEEP IN MIND: Transparent fabrics become more transparent when wet, the dress will look less white in the tub than it will once dried.
5. Drain the tub and rinse the dress again until it's free of soap.
 6. Inspect the dress for any missed spots; repeat #4 as many times as needed until you can not see any dirty spots.

Drying

This is critical to ensure a good result.

1. SLOWLY lift the gown by the ribbons in the bodice. This should be a workout, SLOW so that the dress can drain the extra water.
 - Avoid lifting by delicate fabric, such as tulle sleeves.
 - The dress is too heavy wet; you have to get some of that water off before you can hang it.
 - Squeeze a little in heavy areas, keep the bulk of the dress in the tub for 15-30ish minutes
2. Once the dress is light enough and not dripping too much, hang the dress by the bodice ribbons for drying.
 - Choose a spot with good airflow, and the dress can hang freely.
 - Place some towels or a bucket under the dress
 - Pat dry any metal parts on the dress, hooks, and zippers.
 - I spread the train back as much as possible and place a fan under focused on the inside of the dress.
3. Periodically check on the dress and move it till it's completely dry.
 - If it's taking longer than 3 hours, focus a fan on the lining, and shake the layers a bit. You don't want it to stay wet for too long.
4. Make sure it is completely dry before putting it away.
 - It is CRITICAL that your dress is fully dry to avoid mold.
5. Steam your dress to give it that finishing touch.

Congrats, you did it! Squeaky clean dress ♥