



# TIPS ON TABLE LINENS

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By

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Home Management and Home Furnishings

The term "table linens" is used to describe any table covering, whether it is made from linen, cotton, rayon, plastic, cork, paper, or synthetics. Since coverings other than tablecloths have found their place in table settings today, variety and interest may be brought about by using place mats, doilies, and runners.

## **TYPES OF FABRIC**

**Linen.** Good linens prove their value by wearing well and looking good year after year. The best linen fiber is strong, resists soiling, is free of lint, and makes a lustrous smooth fabric. The lower quality of linen is characterized by short fibers which make coarse yarn. Good linen will not become fuzzy with use, so buy the best you can afford and regard it as a lifetime investment.

**Cotton.** Cotton is obtained from the boll of the plant and is processed and woven into cloth. It may be used alone or combined with other fibers. Organdy and dotted swiss are often used for tablecloths or place mats. Crash-type cotton may be used to make individual place mats.

**Rayon.** Rayon is a man-made fiber used alone or combined with cotton fibers. In damask cloths, the durability of cotton and the luster of rayon are combined to make a very attractive table fabric.

**Plastics and other material.** Plastics used for place mats are products of the chemical laboratory. Tablecloths and table mats made of plastic are popular because they are attractive, inexpensive, and easy to care for. Some of the best plastic mats are made with protective backing such as cotton fleece or foam rubber. Recently discovered synthetics such as nylon, dacron, acrilan, and orlon are popular when used in table coverings. They are easy to care for, need little ironing, and keep their shape and size. Lauhala, cork, bamboo, and burlap are a few of the many types of table covering that are found in stores today.

## **BUYING TABLE LINENS**

Tablecloths and place mats are used to protect the table and make it attractive. When you are buying table linens, ask the following questions:

- **What is it made of?**

From the point of view of cost, use, and care, it is important to know the content of a table covering. For example, a linen damask cloth would be more expensive than a cotton or rayon-and-linen damask cloth. A dainty linen-and-swiss cloth would be used and cared for differently from a plastic set. The wise homemaker will keep the tag for laundering instructions.

- **Is the cloth well made?**

Thread count in woven table coverings is given by the number of threads to the square inch of fabric. When comparing cloth of the same quality and size of yarns, the greater the number of threads per square inch, the greater the strength and durability.

- **How is the decoration put on?**

It's a good idea to know if decoration is stitched or glued. A great many techniques are used and prices range widely for the quality of work.

- **Is there too much sizing in the cloth?**

Just rub the cloth between your fingers. If there is a change in the firmness, there is too much sizing and when washed you will have a flimsy table cover.

- **What size to buy?**

If your table is round, square, oval, or rectangular, buy the cloth that will fit and look well on your particular table. In order to give the most pleasing appearance to a good dinner cloth, add 16 to 24 inches to both length and width of the table. The following are suggested sizes:

<b>Table Size</b>	<b>Cloth Size</b>
36 x 24 inches	54 x 54 inches
36 x 60 inches	60 x 80 inches
36 x 72 inches	60 x 90 inches
36 x 84 inches	60 x 102 inches

- **What linens do I need?**

A completely stocked linen closet should include tablecloths, place mats, napkins, and silence cloth or table pad.

## **PLACE MATS**

Place mats are becoming more and more popular because they save washing and ironing and at the same time make attractive table settings. Place mats come in almost every kind of material—bamboo, plastic, and lauhala, besides all the fabrics that are used in tablecloths.

If the table is easily marred, use heavy place mats to protect it. Each mat should be large enough for a complete table setting for one person; (12½ x 19 inches is a good size).

Place mats may be used for every meal except the completely formal dinner. They may be used with plastic tablecovers for a casual dinner and lace or linen for a more formal meal.

## **SILENCE CLOTH**

Whenever a table does not have a protective coating, a “silence cloth” or a table pad should be used. A pad will protect the table from hot dishes and spilled liquids. Felt padding may be bought by the yard, then cut into the shape of the table. Table pads made expressly to protect the table are best. They have felt on one side to protect the table from heat and fabric that resists moisture on the other side.

## **CARE OF WHITE LINENS**

Sometimes table linens need a little more care than washing and ironing. Given below are some suggestions for removing stubborn stains from white cloths. Note that most solutions used to remove stains from white linens are too strong for dyed linens. There is the danger of removing the color of the fabric.

<i>Blood</i>	Soak in cold water, changing water as water changes color. Hot water will set the stain.
<i>Candle wax or Chewing Gum</i>	Scrape off gum. It may be easier if gum is first hardened by rubbing with ice. If stain remains, sponge with carbon tetrachloride.
<i>Chocolate</i>	Sponge stain with cool water, or soak for 30 minutes. Spot treat stain with detergent, wash article, rinse, and let dry. If stain remains, use bleach or carbon tetrachloride.
<i>Coffee and/or Tea</i>	If fresh stain, stretch fabric over bowl, fasten with a rubber band and pour boiling water on stain from a height of 2 or 3 feet. Launder, and if stain still shows, bleach.
<i>Egg</i>	Sponge stain with cool water, or force cool water through stain with a small syringe, using a sponge under the stain to absorb the water. If stain remains, rub detergent on stain and work it into fabric. Rinse. If stain still remains after detergent is rinsed out, use a chlorine or sodium perborate bleach or hydrogen peroxide.
<i>Fruit</i>	Pour boiling water on stain from height of 1 to 3 feet, then wash in sudsy water and rinse. If citrus stain, remove with baking soda; use damp cloth on both sides of the stain, and work soda into stain.
<i>Grease or Butter Stains</i>	Regular laundering will remove some grease stains. Others can be removed by rubbing

detergent into the stain followed by a hot water rinse. If stain persists, use carbon tetrachloride.

*Ink*

Wash with detergent. You may have to try several different bleaches because ink compositions vary greatly.

*Iron Rust*

Spread stain over a pan of boiling water and squeeze lemon juice on it. If stain remains, sprinkle salt on it and apply lemon juice, then put it in sun to dry. Rinse. Repeat if necessary.

*Lipstick*

Spot treat with detergent; work into fabric until suds are formed and stain is gone. Rinse. If stain is stubborn, apply carbon tetrachloride.

*Mildew*

Wash with strong soap and dry in sun. You may need to use bleach if mildew is in advanced stage.

*Mustard*

Rub detergent into dampened stain, rinse. If stain is not removed, soak overnight in hot detergent solution. If stain remains, use bleach.

*Scorch*

Sponge in cold water or soak 30 minutes. Work in detergent and rinse. If stain remains, use bleach.

*Removing Grease  
Stains from  
Colored Linens*

Grease spots may not show up until you iron. When this happens, use cleaning fluid or carbon tetrachloride, then wash in warm water.



## **STORING LINENS**

Linens are prone to mildew and turn yellow when stored for long periods. Starched cloths when damp will mildew, therefore the starch should be removed before long storage. Linens will not turn yellow if wrapped in blue tissue paper.

To keep just one fold in a tablecloth, roll the cloth on a cardboard tube after it is ironed, then wrap in tissue paper to keep the cloth dust-free. Store in a chest or storage closet.

## **SHOP CAREFULLY**

Be a careful shopper when buying your table linens. Good table linens will last a long time if you take care of them properly.

### **Reference:**

**Removing Stains From Fabrics — Home Methods.** U.S.D.A. Home and Garden Bulletin No. 62, June, 1959.



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