



STOW SMART
Put tissue paper between sweaters to reduce creases.

DO IT BETTER

Storing winter clothes

Yay! It's time to say buh-bye to coats, sweaters, and all that woolly winter stuff and haul out lighter, brighter spring duds. But before you tuck anything away, be sure you're not setting up a summer retreat for fabric-nibbling pests. You don't want to kick off the next cold season with wrinkled, stretched, or mystery-stained clothes. But that can happen if you don't store your duds right. Here, two clothing-care experts, Ingrid Johnson, professor of textiles at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York, and Steve Boorstein, author of "The Clothing Doctor's 99 Secrets to Cleaning and Clothing Care" (Fashion Media Group, 2006), offer their best tips and tools for treating your winter outfits right.

1. Buy the right storage supplies.

■ **Good hangers** Choose special slacks hangers to help prevent creases in pants (check them out at containerstore.com). Thickly padded or wooden hangers help keep the shape of blouses and jackets and prevent shoulder bumps.

■ **Acid-free tissue paper** Slip it between folded garments to minimize creasing.

■ **Pillowcases** Include a clean cotton sheet or pillowcase in a plastic bin with the clothes. The cotton will act as a wick to humidity over the summer, preventing mildew, staining, and shrinkage.

■ **Translucent plastic bins and breathable bags** They keep your clothes safe from bugs and you can see items.

■ **Dehumidifier** Don't store bins in the basement, but if you must, use a dehumidifier.

2. Clean before you stow.

Yeah, it's a pain, but it's important to wash or dry-clean everything before storing, even something you've worn only once. Body oils and perspiration residue on stored clothes can create surprise stains come fall. Also, moths and other clothes-damaging pests can make a meal out of the tiniest spot of pasta sauce, so this is not the time to be cheap about cleaning. And clean the entire closet before putting anything away; vacuum the floor and dust the ceiling. Those are places that pests love to hide.

3. Fold properly.

Add tissue paper as you fold sweaters and other heavy items to minimize creasing. And always stack folded clothes with the heaviest on bottom, the lightest on top.

4. Keep it cool, dry, and dark. Heat, moisture, and light are natural enemies of stored clothing. Heat in an attic can degrade polyester and nylon stitching, making ripped seams become more likely when fall rolls around. Even in small amounts, light can fade fabrics. Garment bags can help keep light out. And be sure the storage area is dry, because moisture will encourage mold and mildew.

5. Give clothing breathing room.

Plastic bins with snug-fitting lids help save your clothes from bugs and moisture, but plastic doesn't breathe; without airflow, stains that you couldn't see before can suddenly appear on your clothing. So never seal plastic bins with tape, which stops air circulation. Look for cotton garment bags that let your clothes breathe and keep out most light. And avoid cardboard boxes. They can absorb moisture and get moldy and attract bugs.



Mothballs vs. green alternatives

Mothballs are a pesticide and work well, but they're also toxic. So keep them away from children and pets. A lot of people try green options, such as cedar, though there is little research on how effective they are. Cedar seems to be somewhat helpful, but its power wears off over time.