

Care Labels for Wearing Apparel & Certain Piece Goods: Short Guide

Care labels on piece goods—fabrics sold by the bolt or roll intended for DIY apparel—must clearly provide instructions for washing, drying, and ironing. According to [FTC regulations](#), these instructions must be on the bolt or roll end at the point of sale, ensuring consumers know how to care for the finished garment, including warnings against shrinkage or specialized cleaning. Fabric retailers no longer provide sew-in care labels. I suggest you take a photo of the bolt end and/or hang-tag and keep a notebook with swatches, fiber information and care label information.

Key Requirements for Piece Goods Care Labels

- **Location:** Instructions must be displayed on the bolt or roll end, and in some cases, on the fabric itself.
- **Information Content:** Labels must include washing procedures (machine/hand, temperature), drying methods (machine/temperature), and ironing instructions, or warnings if typical care (like hot water) damages the fabric.
- **Permanent vs. Point of Sale:** While finished garments require permanent tags, piece goods require accurate information at the point of purchase so consumers can make informed decisions.
- **Symbol Systems:** Many manufacturers use the International Standards Organization/American Society for Testing and Materials (ISO/ASTM) system which includes: basi/tub for washing, triangle for bleach, square for drying, circle for drying. See the PDF of care label symbols in this section

Why Care Labels Matter

- **Maintenance:** Proper care preserves the shape and color of the fabric, ensuring longevity.
- **Safety & Damage Prevention:** Specific instructions prevent damage from improper water temperatures, drying, or ironing.
- **Consumer Confidence:** Clear instructions allow consumers to estimate the cost of care (e.g., dry cleaning vs. washing) before buying.

Common Care Symbol Guidelines

- **Washing:** A basin with water, with dots representing temperatures (30 degrees C to 95 degrees C)
- **Bleaching:** A triangle. A filled triangle means any bleach, a crossed-out triangle means no bleach.
- **Drying:** A square. A circle in a square is tumble dry; a horizontal line is dry flat.
- **Ironing:** An iron shape. Dots indicate temperature (low, medium, high).
- **Professional Care:** A circle representing dry cleaning.

United States Federal Trade Commission Rule Summary:

“The Care Labeling Rule, which requires manufacturers and importers of textile wearing apparel and goods; provides regular instructions to purchasers through care labels or other methods; prohibits deceptive acts or practices that fail to disclose instructions to regular care; requires appropriate terminology and symbols that accurately describe care procedures.”

For an easy-to-understand guide to Care Labels required by the U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) use this Business Guide:

<https://www.ftc.gov/business-guidance/resources/clothes-captioning-complying-care-labeling-rule> (Retrieved 4/29/26)

Symbols:

See the PDF on Care Symbols from the *American Society for Testing and Materials*.

For full information and alerts to changes in the rule go to:

<https://www.ftc.gov/legal-library/browse/rules/care-labeling-textile-wearing-apparel-certain-piece-goods> (Retrieved 4/29/26)

For example *The American Apparel and Footwear Association* is advocating for use of “digital care labels” as an alternative to physical printed labels attached to an item. For more information go to:

file:///Users/karenlabat/Downloads/AAFA_FTCPetition_Comment_18APR2025.pdf

(Retrieved 4/29/26)