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## EC467 Clothing the Family in Wartime

Helen Rocke

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# CLOTHING THE FAMILY IN WARTIME

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EXTENSION CIRCULAR 467 JAN. 1943  
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AGRICULTURAL  
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DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE COOPERATING,  
W. H. BROKAW, DIRECTOR, LINCOLN.



## CLOTHING THE FAMILY IN WARTIME

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Prepared by

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## THE WARTIME CLOTHING SITUATION

Clothing plays an important part in winning the war..so important that it is becoming necessary for us to make many changes in our clothing habits. Enormous amounts of cloth and clothing are needed by our armed forces. A soldier uses three times as much clothing as he would in civilian life. In wartime, military needs come first. Many of the factories, machines, and materials of the clothing industry, have been released for war purposes. Scarcity of materials, development of substitutes, shortages of labor, and rising prices add to the need for making adjustments in the purchase, care, management, and use of clothing.

### Changes in Materials and Production

Scarcity of materials and rising costs of labor are largely responsible for the increasing costs of clothing in general.

Cotton There is plenty of raw cotton on hand but shortages in machinery and high manufacturing costs make cotton goods scarce and higher in price. Spindles, looms, and other textile machinery which have been making finer cloth for dresses and other clothing have been taken over for making yardage for tents, bags, truck covers, camouflage material, and other military needs, in addition to clothing for the Army, Navy, and Air Force.

Wool Enough wool to equip and maintain an Army of 4 to 6 million men cannot be produced in the U.S. in one year. (It takes the wool from 26 sheep to equip and maintain a soldier the first year.) Civilians must get along with less wool. However, the supply is better than has been expected because ships returning from Australia are bringing wool. The regulations of the War Production Board reducing the amount of yardage which can go into garments, and the blending of wool with other fibers such as cotton, rayon, and aralac are helping to make the nation's stock pile of wool supply the needs.

Rayon Increasing quantities of rayon are now being used for military equipment, tires, parachutes, and to relieve shortages of other fibers. A few years ago almost all of the women's full fashioned hose made in this country were of silk. In 1941, 73% were made of all silk and part silk, and 22% were of nylon. Today practically all of the full-fashioned hosiery knitting machines in production are making rayon or cotton stockings. Producers of rayon yarn must set aside a certain percentage of their output for lend-lease, export to South America as a part of the good neighbor policy, and for blending with wool. These many demands indicate there may be shortages of rayon for the making of hosiery.

Other Fibers All nylon is now being used for military needs, largely in the making of parachutes for carrying men.

Silk was taken off the market in 1941, and linen is scarce because we must depend on imports.

Aralac (which is made from milk) is the only new substitute fiber on the market. Most of the output of this fiber has been used in felt hats. Now small quantities are being used for blending with other fibers for making cloth for dresses and other clothing. When used as interlining its warmth is said to be comparable to that of wool.

Dyes Since munitions require some of the same chemicals as dyes, the trend is toward fewer colors and lighter ones, using less dye. Efforts to retain color fastness will be continued. Packaged dyes for home use are reported to be plentiful.

Dry Cleaning War needs make smaller quantities of chlorinated solvents such as carbon tetrachloride available. Dry cleaners will have to rely more on petroleum solvents. Great danger and fire hazard come with attempting to use these cleaning fluids at home.

### Control and Restrictions

Price ceilings have been established in an effort to keep prices of clothing at a reasonable level. Through the restrictions on yardage in ready-to-wear garments, it is estimated that it will be possible to make at least 15% more garments out of the same cloth. A few examples of restrictions are, no hems or belts more than 2 inches wide, no cuffs on women's coats or cuffs on men's trousers. Patterns have been recently brought under the restrictions that apply to ready-made garments.

### Rise in Cost of Clothing

Clothing for the family represents the second largest investment of family income. Rising costs of manufacturing and distribution between June, 1939, and April 1942, caused clothing costs for the farm family to rise 32%. Increases were greater for farm families because they use more of the same kind of cotton cloth in demand by defense workers.

Nebraska home account records show that for the past twelve years the average farm family of 4 members has spent an average of \$120 per year for clothing and personal appearances. In 1941 they spent \$123 which paid for ready-made as well as made-at-home outer garments, underclothing, and headwear, footwear, care and findings, accessories, barber and beauty shop services, shaving supplies and cosmetics.

### What Can Be Done

These rural homemakers who have kept home accounts have demonstrated what can be accomplished by conserving and caring for clothing. Their families have been provided with comfortable and becoming clothing for a small outlay of cash, which is a real and worthy achievement.

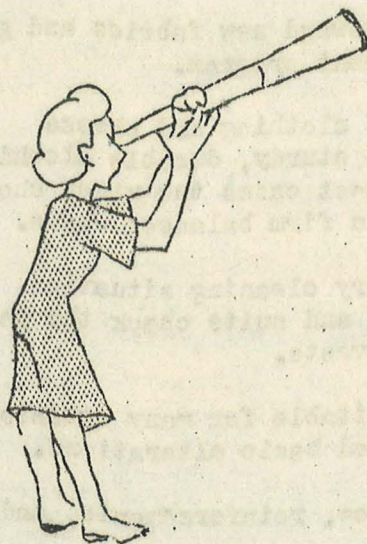
In these days when clothing has to last, smart, wartime homemakers will continue to brush, air, clean, and mend, to help save materials, machines, and labor needed to win the war. By proper care of clothing they will make wardrobes grow old gracefully, and insure newly purchased clothing a long and useful life.

Most families are interested in knowing how to keep the amount spent for clothing low, in order to release cash for other purposes. In time of war, money means much more to our country so all spending for clothes needs to be wise, careful spending. Now our government is asking every family and every individual to buy only what they really need, to give clothing proper care, and to conserve every bit of cloth on hand.

Will your family help to conserve for victory in this way? This circular gives information and suggestions which may prove helpful.



### LOOK AHEAD TO YOUR CLOTHING NEEDS



Comfortable and becoming clothing provides protection for health and morale, maintains confidence through beauty, and develops self respect and poise. Careful thought and planning must go into providing clothing for a family.

Now, when all that goes into making clothing is so important in winning the war, the cooperation of every member of the family is needed in working out a wartime clothing program. Each member can cooperate toward saving clothes, in keeping garments clean and in good repair. Even though more money may now be available for buying clothing each may again cooperate by asking for, and buying only what is really needed.

The first step in looking ahead to your clothing needs is to take stock of garments on hand, to find out what is needed, and to check the condition of garments you have. A suggested plan is included in this circular.

After you have taken stock of garments on hand:

- See what can be done to prolong their usefulness
- Consider your skill as a seamstress and the time you have for sewing
- Consider restyling and remodeling garments
- Give away clothing that you do not plan to use

### BUY WISELY AND CAREFULLY WHAT IS NEEDED

Check ceiling prices and refuse to buy above ceilings. Prices for the same goods do not have to be the same in every store. Each store has its own top prices, depending on what that store charged in March, 1942. It may pay to look in several stores before you buy. Consider the relationship of quality to price.

Look for labels and other indications of quality. Many manufacturers who have built up a fine reputation for quality goods are now making some products which do not meet their high standards and which they label "duration merchandise". Information is given as to the difference from their regular lines, as well as to the performance that can be expected from these articles.

The Wool Products Labeling Act, which requires that labels on wool goods state accurately what the fabric contains, helps in making decisions about articles containing wool.

Become familiar with terms describing new fibers and new finishing processes used on fabrics. Question the claims made for new fabrics and ask the sales person about guarantees.



Look for information about color fastness, and suggestions for care, on labels or tags attached to garments.

Maintain an intelligent and constructive attitude toward new fabrics and garments which are being offered as a result of the government program.

Consider the wear you expect to give the article of clothing and choose material appropriate for that wear. The trend is toward sturdy, durable clothing which can withstand long and hard wear. Therefore, in most cases the wiser choice would be garments of fabrics made of durable yarns with a firm balanced weave.

Consider the upkeep of the garment in view of the dry cleaning situation. Choose washable garments whenever possible. For dresses and suits check the possibility of using detachable washable collars, cuffs, and vests.

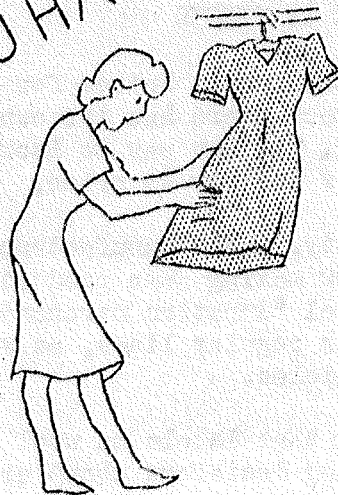
Choose garments of design and style that will be suitable for many occasions. Try to buy the size and style of garment that doesn't need basic alterations.

Notice how the garment is cut, and what seam finishes, reinforcements, and kind of fastenings are used.

Choose articles which will harmonize with garments or accessories on hand.

Ask about sources of reliable information for the consumer and obtain and study such information.

CARE  
FOR WHAT  
YOU HAVE!



#### SAVE YOUR CLOTHES

Dresses The way you clean a dress...press it...store it away varies with the kind of materials in your dress. So first of all check these things about each of your dresses if you can.

What kind of fibers make up the cloth?  
Cotton, rayon, wool, silk, a mixture?

Is the dress washable? Will color fade?  
Will the fabric shrink? Will the buttons,  
buckles, and other trimmings stand the same  
kind of treatment?

What special finishes have been applied  
to the fabric?

Hang It Straight Hang your dress on a hanger  
as soon as you take it off. A little space  
between each dress helps keep the press and  
preserves the material.

If your closet is not well ventilated,  
hang a dress outside the closet awhile...so  
that the air may circulate freely about it be-  
fore you put it back with the



rest of your clothes. If possible, allow a dress to rest a few days after one or two days of wear. This sometimes cuts down on the amount of pressing needed, especially on wool and silk dresses and some rayons.

Use hangers as wide as the dress shoulders. Shoulders stretch out of shape if they slide off hanger ends. For times when a hanger is not at hand you can make one easily by rolling a newspaper or magazine into a firm roll....tying a string around the center with which to hang it.

Fasten a dress when you hang it...at the neck...down the front...any other strategic places that will help the dress hang straight. Simply hanging a dress straight will do a lot to keep it in press and shape. Hang belts separately. Their weight often pulls down too heavily on dress materials.

Hang a separate skirt on a hanger that extends the full width of the skirt belt. Or, if your hangers are narrow, fold both sides back leaving center front and back free of folds. Never fold a skirt straight down the center.

Day-To-Day-Details Keep up with your clothes from day to day. Try to keep them all in shape to wear. Watch for rips and broken stitches. Save yourself time and labor by mending them early. Careful darning will often hide snags...worn places...burned holes. Matched patches hardly show on a print dress. Sometimes a little reinforcement of the seams and buttons of a new dress will save you much mending later on...make the dress look better from the beginning. Check buttons and other trimmings when they come home from the cleaners. They may have been removed during cleaning and sewed on only loosely afterwards.

Brush wool and wool-like dresses with a clothes brush after each wearing. Brush silks and rayons with a soft cloth. Brush in the direction of the grain of the cloth...or with the nap, if the material is a pile fabric. Brush inside as well as out.

If you use a preparation to check underarm perspiration...be sure to let it dry thoroughly before you put on your dress. Most of these preparations are injurious to cloth. A shield of cotton lawn or thin, silk-like fabric snapped into the shoulder and waist seams, helps to protect backs of dresses from body oil.

To Tub or Not To Tub Most wool and silk dresses...some rayons...should be dry cleaned. The sensible way to clean cottons...linens...some silks...some rayons...a few wools is to wash them.

Before you wash a dress, close all slide fasteners...remove all nonwashable trimming as buttons or buckles. Use mild soapsuds for all washable fabrics. Rinse thoroughly after sudsing. Be careful not to twist or wring.

### Cloth Coats

Taking care of a cloth coat is much the same as caring for a good wool dress. But here are a few additional suggestions to keep in mind when you wear or clean a cloth coat.



When You Wear It You can save your coat by unfastening or loosening front fastenings when you sit in it for long. This simple precaution will keep your coat from stretching out of shape across shoulders...around the hips. Smooth the skirt as you sit. Protect your coat from "collar smudge" with a scarf at the neck. If your coat gets soaked with rain or snow hang it up carefully, fasten buttons, and let it dry slowly in a well ventilated room...not near heat. After it dries, brush it.

Coat-Saving Tips Hang your coat on a well-padded hanger. Button the top fastener so the coat will hang straight...keep its shape and press.

Brush your coat thoroughly and often. Brush with the grain of goods. If you have a vacuum cleaner with an upholstery attachment...use that occasionally to remove dust. To lift the nap of the coat material, shake the coat by the hem.

Take spots off quickly. To remove neckline smudge..brush with a good dry cleaning fluid.

Small shields made of lining cloth sewed in under the arms and at the back of the neck protect against wear and perspiration. They may be replaced when worn out. If underarm lining is already worn...make small shields and tack in to cover worn spots.

### Men's Suits

Care after each wearing prolongs the life of a suit and keeps it looking its best. A fabric which is kept clean by brushing and in shape by proper hanging will last longer than one which makes unnecessary trips to the presser and cleaner.

Carelessness in removing clothes is responsible for many a wrinkle. Trousers with pockets full of keys and similar items are certain to develop a discouraged look if thrown on a chair or hung by the belt. Excessive weight from articles in the pockets will cause a strain on the seams and may pull the fabric out of shape.

Two tricks for getting more wear out of a suit are sewing heel-stays into the cuffs or the ends of the trouser legs. The other is the knee retread - a long piece of light weight material which is sewn inside the trouser leg from seam to seam, and extending several inches above and below the knee. This material releases the strain which causes bagginess and wear at the knee.

### Sweaters

Put sweaters on carefully so they won't be strained...stretched out of shape. Don't overload sweater pockets or they'll sag. To put sweaters away...fold and lay them in a drawer. Hanging stretches them out of shape.

### Slips

Check slip seams and finished edges before the garment is ever worn. Sometimes a little reinforcement at a weak place will make your slips last longer. Using pins to repair straps, or to shorten slips breaks the fabric. Keep shoulder strap sets, or ribbon on hand to repair broken straps.



## Pressing

Most winter dresses - some summer ones - look better if you press them on the wrong side.

Be sure to remove any soil or spots before pressing. A warm iron can "set" spots and make it impossible to get them out.

Watch the iron when you press rayon or any other synthetic fiber, or a fabric that is made up partly of these fibers. Too hot an iron can melt them. Keep the temperature of the iron lowest for acetate rayons. Test the iron on the back part of a hem or seam - never set it down untested in the center of the skirt or waist. Press spun rayon and similar materials with linen-like weaves on the wrong side. Press silk dresses by laying tissue paper over the silk - then run the iron over the paper. If there are deep wrinkles in the dress dampen these first with a wet sponge or soft cloth.

The only way to press wool is to steam press it. Use two press cloths, one of wool material and one of firm cotton as unbleached muslin. Spread the wool press cloth over the wrong side of the material you are pressing. Over this lay the second press cloth. Dampen it with warm water. Set the iron down squarely on the top press cloth - lift it - set it down again. Do not lean or press heavily on the iron.

After you've pressed over the cloth, lift both cloths. Beat out the steam left in the wool with the palms of your hands. Never press the moisture completely out of wool or it will get shiny and lifeless looking. After the garment is pressed hang it carefully to dry.

Steam velvet, velveteen, and corduroy dresses occasionally by hanging in a steam filled bathroom or drawing the wrong side of the material over a damp cloth laid on an upturned iron.

## Foundation Garments

If you have two foundation garments, they will both last longer if you wear them alternately. Watch fingernails and rings. These can easily snag and poke holes into elastic laces and nets.

A foundation garment should be tried on and fitted to insure comfort and long wear. Then make it last by putting it on correctly each time you wear it. Fold over the top of the garment, step into it and ease it well up over the hips. Adjust the top and slip on the shoulder straps. Close the fasteners, beginning at the lower edge of the garment and fastening the brassiere last. In warm weather use powder, so that the garment will slip on readily without being strained by extra tugging and pulling. The woman who is much larger through the hips in proportion to bust and shoulders, may find it more satisfactory to put a foundation garment on over her head.

A good way to put on a girdle is to first roll down the garment from the top with your hands. Step into the girdle, pull it above your knees, cross the feet to slim the hips, then unroll the girdle upwards, gently and smoothly.



Keep it Mended Be on the look out for breaks...mend them immediately. Mend garments made from rubber thread with elastic thread that may be salvaged from an old girdle...or make a loose darn with soft cotton thread. A tight darn will tear out when you put the garment on.

Replace broken straps with new straps...ready-made or cut from ribbon. Replace detachable garters when they wear out. Never pin a strap...a garter...or a broken place...even temporarily. Perspiration and body oils are hard on foundation garments...so wash them often. Use a suds of lukewarm water and mild soap. Handle gently when washing...rinse well...roll in a cloth or towel and dry away from sun and heat.

### Hose

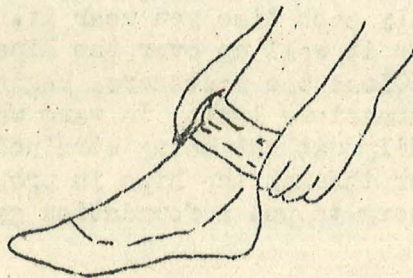
Hose last longer if you buy them wisely and give them good care. Check foot and length measures in relation to your own individual requirements. Proper size is very important for comfort and satisfactory wear. Stockings 1/2 inch longer than your foot do not wear out so quickly. Wool and cotton hose need to be about 1 inch longer than your foot to allow for shrinkage. Stocking size is the stocking foot in inches. Size 9 stocking has a foot 9 inches long.

If you can, buy at least two pairs of one color at a time. Buy hose sturdy enough to suit your purpose and look for reinforcements where hardest wear comes.

Highlights of Hosiery Care Wash new hose before you wear them or put them away. Always wash as soon as possible after you take them off. Perspiration is harmful to fine fabrics.

Rayon hose require special care because rayon loses strength when wet or damp. Wash carefully in suds of lukewarm water. Dip hose in suds, squeeze suds through the hose. Do not twist or rub. Rinse well in lukewarm water. Do not twist or wring but squeeze out water. Lay them on a towel to dry, away from direct heat and sunlight. This usually takes from 18 to 24 hours. Never wear them before they are thoroughly dry.

Keep matching thread on hand and darn worn places before they break through. If a new stocking gets a run, wash it carefully and take it to a professional mender if you cannot mend it yourself.



Save stockings by putting them on the right way. Roll stocking from top to toe. Slip on over the toes. Smooth heel in place. With seam at center back, pull stocking up the leg. Fasten supporters in the reinforced part of the stocking top...not tightly over the knee. Watch the common causes of snags - rough hands...rough feet...too long, sharp, or broken nails...worn supporters...worn shoe lining...shoe laces...rough furniture.



## Shoes

Your shoes will last longer if you wear them only for the occasions for which they are suited....sturdy shoes for work and play and dressy shoes for dress.

Take care of shoes from day to day. When you are not wearing them keep them in shoe bags...on a rack...in a cabinet...never helter-skelter on the floor. Shoes mildew easily so keep them in a dry, well ventilated place. Good shoe trees help most shoes keep their new shape.

Get new heel lifts...toe protectors...soles as soon as you need them. Neglect leads to more expensive repairs. Check all stitching from time to time...have rips resewed.

Use a shoe horn to put shoes on...so you'll keep the counters in the heel in good shape and unbroken. If possible wear one pair of shoes one day, another the next. A day of rest gives each pair a chance to dry and air inside.

Reasonable use of oils or grease, free from salt, will make leather shoes wear much longer. Among the best materials for greasing shoes are neat's foot, cod and castor oils, tallow, and wool grease, or mixtures of them. Any one may be applied in the following way:

Brush the soles and uppers thoroughly to remove all dust and dirt. Warm the shoes carefully, then apply the warm oil or grease with a swab of wool or flannel and rub it well into the leather, preferably with the palm of the hand. Work the grease in thoroughly where the sole joins the upper. Let the shoes dry in a warm place.

On Rainy Days Wet weather can spoil a good pair of shoes in short order. So protect them with rubbers or galoshes. Before you put on galoshes, make sure there is no mud or dust on your shoes. Otherwise, the linings of the galoshes will be soiled...and they'll leave smudges on your shoes and stockings next time. Take off galoshes as soon as you get to where you are going. They cause your feet to perspire, and can injure shoe leather if you leave them on too long.

If you are caught in a storm without rubbers, and your shoes get wet, here are some suggestions for taking care of them. Wet leather is soft, stretches out of shape, and stitches cut through it easily. Dry wet shoes carefully for wet leather "burns" more readily than dry leather. Many people thoughtlessly spoil shoes by placing them when wet against hot stoves, radiators, or even in hot ovens.

The right way to dry shoes is as follows: First wash off all mud and grit with tepid water. Dry if necessary, then use one of the oils suggested above to oil or grease work or rough shoes. Oil street shoes with castor oil, applied lightly and evenly with a piece of cheese cloth and rub in well. Next straighten the counter, heel, vamp, and toe, and stuff the shoes with crumpled paper to keep the shape and hasten drying. Set the shoes aside in a place that is not too warm and let them dry slowly. It is a good plan to polish street or dress shoes as soon as they dry. Cream, liquid, or wax polish that contains no turpentine may be used. Turpentine dries out leather.

Save galoshes and rubbers by keeping them clean and free from oil or grease and away from heat. When not in use keep in a dark, cool place.



WOMEN AND GIRLS

INVENTORY OF CLOTHES ON HAND

CLOTHES I MUST HAVE

	Work Clothes		Dress Clothes		Work Clothes		Dress Clothes	
	No.	Condition	No.	Condition	No.		No.	
<u>OUTER WEAR</u>								
Dresses								
Coats-Jackets								
Aprons								
Blouses-Shirts								
Rain Coats								
Sweaters								
Slacks								
<u>HEAD WEAR</u>								
Hats-Caps								
Scarfs								
<u>UNDER WEAR</u>								
Slip								
Brassiere-Pants								
Union Suits								
Girdle-Garters								
<u>NIGHT WEAR</u>								
Gowns-Pajamas								
Kimona-robe								
<u>FOOT WEAR</u>								
Shoes								
Stockings-socks								
Galoshes-Rubbers								
<u>ACCESSORIES</u>								
Handkerchiefs								
Purses								
Gloves								
Scarfs								



MEN AND BOYS

## INVENTORY OF CLOTHES ON HAND

## CLOTHES I MUST HAVE

	Work Clothes		Dress Clothes		Work Clothes		Dress Clothes	
	No.	Condition	No.	Condition	No.		No.	
<u>OUTER WEAR</u>								
Suits								
Overcoats								
Jackets-Sweaters								
Trousers								
Shirts								
Overalls								
Raincoats								
<u>HEAD WEAR</u>								
Hats								
Caps								
<u>UNDER WEAR</u>								
Union suits								
Shorts & Shirts								
<u>NIGHT WEAR</u>								
Pajamas								
Night Shirts								
Robes								
<u>FOOT WEAR</u>								
Shoes & Boots								
Socks								
Galoshes-Rubbers								
<u>ACCESSORIES</u>								
Handkerchiefs								
Ties								
Belts-Suspenders								
Scarfs								
Gloves-Mittens								



AS A RESULT OF THE STUDY OF THE CIRCULAR, I PLAN TO:

1. Obtain cooperation of family members in:
  - (a) planning our clothing needs
  - (b) keeping garments clean and in good repair
  - (c) saving clothes through proper care
  - (d) buying only what we must have and buying wisely.
2. Restyle and remodel garments.
3. Give away clothing that we do not plan to use.
4. Read labels when purchasing clothing
5. Maintain an intelligent and constructive attitude toward government regulation as related to clothing, and toward new fabrics which are being offered as a result of the government program.

NOTES