

# Chiffon Characteristics

Chiffon is a lightweight, plain woven fabric made out of many different materials. The term chiffon comes from the French word meaning rag or cloth. The fabric is still a popular choice for formal wear, especially in women's clothing. The characteristics of chiffon make the fabric unique.

## Materials

- Chiffon fabrics are typically made from different materials including silk, cotton, rayon or other synthetic fibers such as polyester. The yarn that creates the fabric is first twisted and then woven. This process gives the fabric its unique feeling when handled. Chiffon is soft but at the same time has a rough texture. The fabric is easily dyed to provide a wide variety of colors.

## Thin

- Chiffon is a very thin fabric. Most chiffon is sheer, meaning that you can see through a single piece when it is held up. The material typically uses multiple sheets of fabric to create dresses, draperies and is commonly used in scarfs, evening wear and linings of garments. The thinness of the material makes the fabric very cool to wear, not holding heat near the body.

## Working with Chiffon

- The thinness of the material also makes it difficult to work with. Another aspect is that chiffon tends to be slightly slippery, making it hard to hold onto. The material frays very easily over time. Garments made of chiffon can be stretched and lose their shape over time if not properly cared for. Chiffon should be washed with like colors to avoid bleeding and color loss. The material also may lose its color if exposed to the sun for long periods of time.

## Caring for Chiffon

- Chiffon fabric made out of silk is the most delicate. Silk pieces should be hand-washed or dry cleaned. Other chiffon fabrics can be run through the washing machine using a light detergent using cold water. To dry the fabric, put in the dryer on a short cycle. Over-drying chiffon may cause the material to wrinkle. To remove wrinkles, slightly wet the garment before applying the iron to the fabric.

## **Silk**

- Silk is considered to be the best material for chiffon because it surpasses other materials in richness and smoothness. Silk chiffon is most often used for the body of bridal gowns. It is prized for its light appearance and for the way it hides body flaws. However, silk is the most delicate of chiffons and it has a tendency to tear while wearing. It must be preserved carefully and dry cleaned, making it less ideal for garments like blouses and scarves.

## **Poly-Chiffon**

- Chiffon made from polyester or rayon is more durable than its silk counterpart. It can be washed by hand or even on a gentle cycle in a washing machine, though it must not be machine-dried. Poly-chiffon drapes as easily as silk and is considerably cheaper, making it ideal for the budget-conscious. Poly-chiffon is also used in garments like blouses because it does not tear as easily. Garments made from poly-chiffon can be stored more easily.

## **Blends**

- Chiffon can be made up of a blend of materials to improve durability or to add elasticity. Chiffon may also be used for a portion of a garment, such as a chiffon collar on a wool sweater. Silk and polyester are often blended together to strengthen the fabric. Blends are less expensive than silk chiffon, but they retain some of the smoothness and texture.

## **Similar Fabrics**

- Organza and georgette are other fabrics used much like chiffon. All three can be made from silk or polyester and have a similar feel. However, there are subtle differences between the fabrics. Organza is stiffer and matte in appearance, while chiffon is prized for its flowing nature and shimmery texture. Georgette is thicker than chiffon and less transparent.