

Shoulder Pads

Garment Facts. Beginning in the 1930's shoulder pads have been a popular styling detail in both men's and women's garments. Fashion designers have padded the shoulder areas of jackets, dresses, coats, and blouses in order to accentuate the physical attributes in both men and women. While padded shoulders fell out of style during the late 1950s, they made a resurgence during the 1980s, and have recently returned to the fashion scene.

Fabric Facts. Shoulder pads can be made of polyurethane foam, strips, or pieces of scrap fabric. In structured garments (garments that contain linings and interfacings), padded shoulders may be created by layering fabric into the garment by either sewing the fabric in or by using bonded or fusible fabrics.

Inspection: Carefully inspect for:

1. Lost or missing shoulder pads
2. Distorted padding (the clumping and shifting of the pads)
3. Foam padding that has disintegrated
4. The puckering or delamination of structured garments in the shoulder areas

Drycleaning/Wetcleaning. There are a few processing problems concerning shoulder pads. These include:

1. Polyurethane foam shoulder pads may distort or disintegrate during the drycleaning or wetcleaning processes.
2. Both foam and fabric padding may retain solvent during the drycleaning process. This can result in the presence of a solvent odor in the garment when the consumer takes it home. In some cases, the residual solvent in a garment can result in skin irritation or other health-related problems.
3. Sewn-in padding that contains bondable or fusible fabrics may contain adhesive binders that may be water-soluble, solvent-soluble, or heat sensitive.

In an unstructured garment, the shoulder pads are visible and tacked onto the shoulder areas. In many cases, the shoulder pads can be removed from the garment if the fabric covering has pockets that can be used to remove the pads. If the shoulder pads cannot be removed, it is advisable to ask the customer for permission to install Velcro strips or snaps, so the shoulder pads can be removed. As a last resort, the shoulder pads can be folded in half, and safety pinning the halves together. Some cleaners use a Dennison gun instead of pins. The problem with both of these methods is that the pin or fastener may leave holes in the fabric.

It is advisable to process the garment in accordance with its care label instruction, since structured garments may contain adhesive binders that may become damaged if the care label instructions are not followed. Garments that contain shoulder pads should be put into a protective net, using a gentle cycle in order to limit mechanical action.

Finishing. Garments that contain shoulder pads should be either placed on a form finisher or steamed out on a heart shaped puffer prior to pressing it. This will aid in the shaping the padded areas as well as correcting any distortion that may have taken place.