

Meet the Press

Forget weekly drop-offs at the dry cleaner. With this collar-to-cuff ironing primer, you'll be able to **smooth out the wrinkles yourself**

“When the iron is hot, strike.”
John Heywood,
Proverbs
 (early 16th century)



BLOWING OFF STEAM

The Rowenta Powerglide 2 is sturdy and heats up quickly and evenly. For buying info, see page 166.

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UNLESS YOU'RE ONE of those "extreme ironers"—the small group of enthusiasts who, as a hobby, work out wrinkles everywhere from the summit of Kilimanjaro to 1,100 feet below the sea (there was even a world championship in Munich in 2002)—ironing probably doesn't give you a rush. But with the right techniques and tools, it can be exhilarating. Just think of the money you'll save pressing the everyday basics you'd otherwise be paying someone else to do. On the following pages, you'll find easy instructions for ironing a button-front shirt, pants, and a pleated skirt. You'll also learn strategies for conquering any ironing assignment—no matter how adventurous—in less time.

Button-front shirt IRONING TIME: 5 TO 10 MINUTES

This step-by-step technique can be used on most styles of shirts. Ignore any steps that don't apply.



COLLAR

STEP 1: Iron the underside of the collar, working from the center to the points to avoid creasing. Flip over and repeat on the outside.



SHOULDERS

STEP 2: Secure one shoulder over the narrow end of the board and iron from the yoke (where the collar meets the arm and the body of the shirt) to the center of the back. Repeat on the other shoulder.



CUFFS AND SLEEVES

STEP 3: Lay a sleeve flat on the board with the buttons or cuff-link holes facing up. Iron the inside of the cuff first, then flip the sleeve over and do the outside of the cuff. Next, iron the sleeve, beginning with the button side. Repeat on the other sleeve.



BODY

STEP 4: Iron both front panels, then flip the shirt over and iron the back. When ironing the placket, be careful to iron between the buttons. If you iron over them, you can break the buttons or scratch the iron's soleplate.

IRON RULES

- The number one rule is to check each garment label to determine the fabric content so you can set the correct temperature. Most irons have gauges with fabrics listed on them so you can set the iron accordingly. In general, synthetics should be ironed at low, wool and silk at medium, and cotton and linen at high. Iron a garment on a too-hot setting and it can become shiny or, worse, burn or melt.
- Work in up-and-down strokes, following the line of the fabric. Circular or zigzag strokes can stretch or otherwise damage fabric.
- With knits, press and lift the iron (rather than stroking it) to avoid stretching the fibers.
- To set a crease, use a burst of steam. For fabrics that require low temperatures, set the steam on low and hold the iron two to three inches away from the fabric. For those requiring higher temperatures, set the steam on high and hold the iron six to eight inches away.
- To ensure that a press sets, let the garment cool on the ironing board or a hanger for five minutes. If handled while warm, the garment can wrinkle.
- With delicate fabrics or intricate details, such as pin tucks, gathers, or ruffles, don't bother pressing—just hang the pieces up and steam them. If a material won't respond to steam, take the garment to the dry cleaner.

Pants IRONING TIME: 5 TO 10 MINUTES

Unlike flat-front pants (below), pleated pants are tricky and time-consuming to iron, and best left to the dry cleaner.



POCKETS

STEP 1: Turn the pants inside out, lay the pockets flat on the board, and iron. Note: If the pockets are made of a different material than the pants, be sure to adjust the temperature setting.



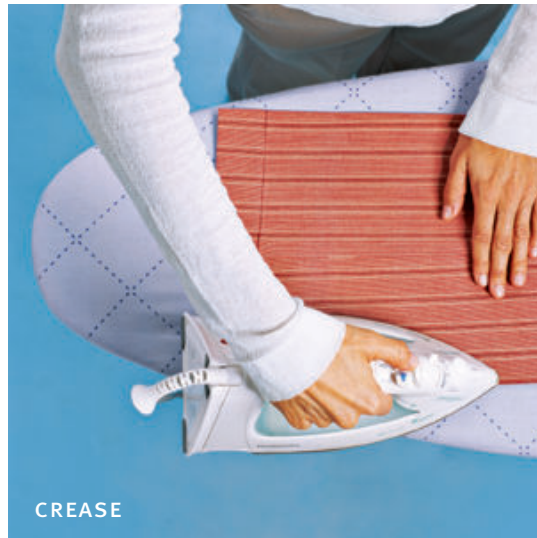
WAISTBAND

STEP 2: Turn the pants right-side out and slip the waistband around the small end of the board. Rotate the pants around the board as you iron. Iron lightly over the outside of the pockets to avoid creases.



LEGS

STEP 3: Place one pant leg directly on top of the other, inseams aligned. Fold back the top leg and iron the inside of the bottom leg to the crotch, then flip the pants over and iron the outside. If you prefer no crease, iron just out to the edges of the legs (but not over them).



CREASE

STEP 4: To set a crease down the front of the pant legs, align the inseams, then hold the iron a few inches away from the legs and give them a burst of steam along the edge. (See Iron Rules, previous page, for more on steaming.)

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN AN IRON

Choose a lightweight iron that has an automatic shutoff safety feature, a durable stainless-steel soleplate, and, ideally, a vertical steaming feature that allows you to de-wrinkle delicates on a hanger. In general, a good-quality iron costs \$50 to \$100. You don't need to spend more. *RS pick:* Rowenta Powerglide 2, \$70, www.rowentausa.com for store locations.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A BOARD

An ironing board should rise to hip level to minimize back strain, so look for one that is height adjustable. The frame should be sturdy but lightweight. The surface should have vent holes to allow steam to escape and enough padding to prevent the holes from making an impression on your fabric. (As long as you have enough padding, you don't need a separate board cover.) *RS pick:* Michael Graves Design ironing board (shown here), \$35, Target, 800-800-8800 for store locations.

THE TIP

When ironing a number of items, **press those that require the lowest temperature first**; work your way up to the clothes requiring higher temperatures. You won't have to wait for the iron to cool off between garments.

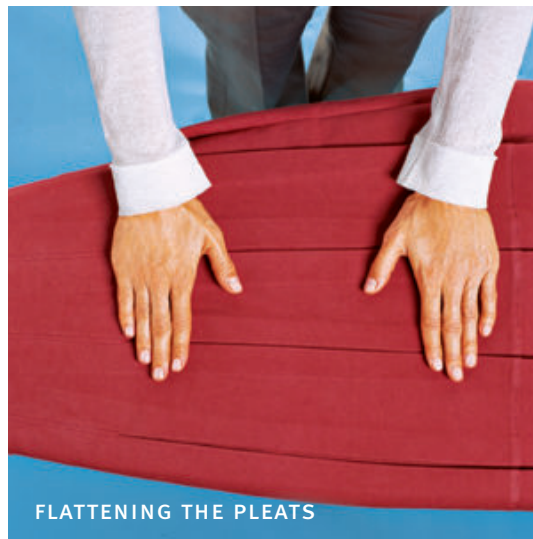
Pleated skirt IRONING TIME: 10 TO 20 MINUTES, DEPENDING ON THE NUMBER AND SIZE OF THE PLEATS

When ironing a pleated skirt, iron the waistband first, then the front and back panels, from the bottom up.



WAISTBAND

STEP 1: Slide the skirt over the board with the waistband at the narrow end. Iron the waistband down to where the pleats begin; rotate the skirt as you go.



FLATTENING THE PLEATS

STEP 2: Lay the pleats flat against the board, stretching the fabric taut with your hands. If they won't obey, use a straight pin to secure the bottom of each pleat directly to the board. (Stick the pin in an inside seam first to make sure it won't damage the fabric.)

WHEN IT PAYS TO HAVE IT PRESSED

Rather than wrestling with the wrinkles, leave these tricky items to the professionals.

■ Clothing made of velvet, satin, taffeta, or acrylic knits, which can be distorted or misshapen by ironing.

■ Clothing with intricate designs, such as a dress made with many different materials and trimmings. The time it would take you to treat every fabric isn't worth it.

■ Clothing covered with beadwork or metallic embroidery, which can be damaged or melt.



STEP 3: Start at the bottom of the skirt and, pleat by pleat, slide the iron toward the waistband.



STEP 4: Hold the iron a few inches above each pleat and shoot it a burst of steam. Note: Allow just-pressed pleats to cool on the board before you rotate the skirt and start on any others.

**EXPERT ADVICE:
HOW TO AVOID
IRONING
ALTOGETHER**

■ Kevin Jones, curator of the Museum Collection at the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandise, in Los Angeles, recommends removing clothes from the dryer while they're still damp, then laying them flat on a towel on a bed (or another large surface) to dry completely.

■ Deniece Schofield, author of *Confessions of an Organized Homemaker* (Betterway Books, \$12), wads a garment up in her hand before purchasing to see if it wrinkles easily. If it does, she won't buy it.