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# HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE  
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

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## QUESTION BOX:

How to fireproof fabrics?  
Getting a professional look  
in makeovers?

ANSWERS FROM: Scientists in the  
Bureau of Agricultural and Industrial  
Chemistry and clothing specialists of  
the Bureau of Home Economics and Human  
Nutrition.

Questions in our mail box today show that homemakers are getting ready for fall,

The cheering warmth of an open fire! What can be more delightful on a cool  
evening? But an open fire has its hazards too. And it was of these, a home-  
maker was thinking, the other day, when she wrote, "I'd like to know if there's some-  
thing I can fireproof my rugs, curtains, draperies and slip covers to protect them  
from sparks and embers. What I'd like to get, of course, is the formula for some  
simple solution which I can apply to the fabrics myself."

There's a formula for just such a simple solution, Mrs. Homemaker. Scientists  
at the United States Department of Agriculture say that borax and boric acid dissolved  
in hot water makes a good fireproofing mixture. As I said, the formula for this  
solution is simple. It requires only three ingredients - borax, boric acid and  
water. Here are the proportions. Use seven ounces of borax, three ounces of boric  
acid and two quarts of hot water to make a half gallon of the solution.

In case you're wondering how borax, boric acid and hot water can fireproof  
fabrics, let me explain what takes place. The fireproofing effect is due partly to  
sealing action. When it's heated, the salts melt and completely cover the treated  
surface with an unburnable film. At the same time the salts give off moisture in the  
form of steam. This too, helps fireproof the material.

The ingredients of the mixture are so easy to obtain and the solution is so  
easily applied, that it can be used to protect many household fabrics. Your ironing



board cover, for instance. And if there are small children in the family, you can fireproof their underclothes and playsuits.

Most convenient way to apply the fireproofing solution is to use it instead of plain water when you sprinkle clothes for ironing. Be sure the fabric is dry or only slightly damp. Also be sure your iron is only moderately hot. If the fabric is damp or the iron too hot, you'll find the mixture depositing on the iron instead of saturating the material. And you'll have to take time out to clean the iron with a wet cloth.

You'll probably find that spraying is the most convenient way to apply the fireproofing solution to your rugs. And this will probably be the easiest method to fireproof your heavy draperies too. By the way, you may have a problem here in wetting heavily-sized or water-resistant fabrics to soak up the mixture. Try adding soap flakes to the solution. Just enough to form a light suds. Soapy water spread and is more effective in wetting the surface. Of course, if you have hard water, you'll have to use some other wetting agent since the soap won't make suds and it may leave a film when it dries. Wetting agents used in commercial dyeing operations aren't affected by hard water and they don't leave any residue when they dry. You may be able to get one of these wetting agents from a firm handling dyers' supplies. A little will go a long way. A quarter of an ounce to a gallon of the fireproofing solution will be enough.

The fabrics you fireproof will need to be treated again each time they're laundered. And here are the proportions for the solution once more...seven ounces of borax, three ounces of boric acid and two quarts of hot water to make a half gallon of the fireproofing mixture.

An obvious hand-me-down or a smartly tailored coat that looks like new?

That's the problem facing a mother who is making over a coat for her 14-year old daughter. She says, "My sister sent me the coat. It's of excellent material. We have a pretty pattern. I've been sewing quite awhile now, but this is the first



coat I've tackled. How can I give it that professional touch that will make it look tailored?"

The first thing to do, according to clothing experts in the United States Department of Agriculture, is to rip up the coat completely. Don't plan to use the collar or the cuffs or the pockets as they are. Chances are that they won't fit the pattern for the young girl.

Clean and steam press each piece of the material until it's completely renovated. You may need to turn it wrong side out so that it will look like new. Avoid any worn spots or try to work them in so that they won't show. And be sure that the pattern pieces can be cut exactly on the thread of the material. That's what the coat will hand properly.

Making over a coat is a real job. If you've had sewing experience you can do it. And you can take pride in the saving because coats for 14-year old girls cost almost as much as coats for women. So take your time and do a thorough, careful job of ripping and cleaning the material...cutting it by the pattern...lining the coat and finishing it.

You can get many more tips on remodeling clothes from a bulletin recently issued by the Department of Agriculture. It's called "Make-overs from Coats and Suits". You can obtain a copy by writing the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D. C.

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