

Has our Microfiber been banished to the garage?

I got my first feel of microfiber about a year ago. It had been mentioned about for many years in trade magazine columns. There was a definite buzz about it and what it could do. We had seen microfiber in action for many years without knowing it when we watched the cleaner at our hotels in Europe wipe the entire floor without a mop bucket, just a little cloth on a pole and made the floor sparkle. The little silky cloths came in a small square box with a larger order. I had ordered the kind that was also good for cleaning glass. We had not made any significant changes to our cleaning process in years: Windex, terry cloth towel, and feather duster. Within five minutes after using the microfiber, I knew we would never go back to using any of the things listed above.

What is microfiber? Microfiber clothes may be best described by stating that it cleans, not chemically, but mechanically or electrically. Microfiber is measured in Deniers- a denier is 1 gram of material for 9000 meters in length. Ummmm, that is micro. As the name implies, the clothes send millions of cleaning soldiers after dirty surfaces that strip off and hold what it finds. Microfiber eliminates the need for any product like glass cleaner, degreasers, even furniture polish. Really. For cleaning, it is one of the greenest products available. Microfibers even sanitize surfaces by stripping away bacteria. It will clean every window in your home, even hand prints, perfectly and in record time. So why aren't Americans homes filled with microfiber?

Well, many are but the microfiber cloths are hiding in the garage. If you visit any car shows you will begin to wonder if it is a car show or a microfiber exposition. There is another reason. If you tried microfiber at a big box store your experience may have left you less than enthusiastic. They are a little disappointing because they feel and act a lot like high price terry cloth towels. Some do not have the fine enough fiber to be truly considered microfiber. Barbara Flanagan of I.D. Magazine calls microfiber "the most fascinatingly unmarketable products..ever". But I think the main reason is that many large companies do not want Americans to use them because you will stop buying many cleaning products. Since the introduction of microfiber to the U.S. market, chemical companies have been successfully marketing "Wipes". The microfibers we use for commercial cleaning are not available to the general public. The ones I ordered from Kimberley-Clark, makers of Kleenex, actually say on the package "For Professional Use Only". They are the only words in English on the package! Why? Really, "Professionals only"?

How should you choose microfiber? Calling a janitorial supply company may be the best way to access the better cloths. Try choosing a cloth that is less terry cloth like and more like basketball shorts. They clean glass better than anything. Make sure to follow the care instructions that come with them. Try to wash your microfiber separately at 160 degrees Fahrenheit and air or tumble dry. Microfibers are delicate and dislike heat. If properly cared for, a good microfiber should be able to go 500 washes before being replaced. So my advice? Wet them down, wring them out, and just see what microfiber can do!