

# WOOL FABRICS *Fact Sheet*

Woolen or worsted— the difference

The woolen system

The worsted system— combing and drawing

Wool in your wardrobe

Consumer attitudes on wool

Blends

**WOOLEN OR WORSTED—THE DIFFERENCE** Woolen and Worsted are two major classifications for wool yarns and fabrics. Here are the differences:

## Woolens

### Processing

spun from *shorter* wool fibers— one to three inches in length  
spun from fibers of a *medium* or *coarse* diameter  
fibers are washed, scoured and carded

### Yarn

bulky, uneven  
low to medium slack twist  
tensile strength lower than worsted

### Fabric Appearance

soft  
fuzzy  
thick, heavier weight

### Characteristics

more insulatory due to trapped air  
not as durable as worsteds  
nap reduces shine  
  
does not hold a crease well

### Uses

sweaters, carpets  
tweeds

## Worsteds

spun from *longer* wool fibers— longer than three inches in length  
spun from fibers of *fine* diameter  
fibers are washed, scoured, carded, **combed** and **drawn**

fine, smooth, even  
tighter twist  
higher tensile strength

crisp  
smooth, clear-faced  
lighter weight

less insulatory  
more durable than woolens  
may become shiny with use where abraded during wear  
holds creases and shape

suits, dresses  
gabardines, crepes



Woolen Yarn



Worsted Yarn

**THE WOOLEN SYSTEM** Woolen fabrics are characterized as being fuzzy, thick and bulky. They are made from fibers that are one to three inches in length that have been carded only (worsted yarns are carded and combed). After the carding process the woolen “sliver” is twisted by machine into rope-like strands called “roving” and wound onto reels for spinning. Woolen yarns are fluffy, relatively loosely twisted, and are used in weaving fabrics such as tweeds, blanket cloth and meltons. Woolen fabrics and yarns are traditionally made into bulky garments such as coats, heavy jackets and sweaters.

## THE WORSTED SYSTEM—COMBING AND DRAWING

Worsted yarns are spun from longer (three inches and longer) fibers that have been carded, *combed* and *drawn*. Combing machines further straighten the wool sliver making the individual fibers lie parallel. The combing process also eliminates “noils” or shorter fibers which grow mostly on the belly of the sheep. (Noils are used in the production of less expensive woolen fabrics and for the manufacturing of felt, a non-woven wool fabric).

The drawing process takes the worsted sliver, doubles it over onto itself and draws it out again to a thinner, more uniform diameter to insure that all wool fibers are parallel. Worsted yarns are twisted tighter and thinner in the spinning process and are manufactured into lightweight fabrics such as gabardine and crepe.





**ALAMERA™**  
AMERICAN WOOL AND COTTON



**WOOL IN YOUR WARDROBE** When planning a professional business wardrobe, wool is preferred. Chosen for its comfort, appearance and longevity, wool garments are suitable for many situations and individual styles. Because wool has this versatility, it is both prestigious and practical for a wardrobe.

When concerned with the price-value relationship of clothing, look closely at clothing durability and appearance over time. Authorities (consultants) on clothing selection and image consistently recommend selecting fewer, but higher quality clothes. By selecting garments qualitatively, rather than quantitatively, money is saved in the long run and a better investment has been made. The right business, professional or social image is important. It can add to your confidence and credibility.

A wardrobe that contains wool is attractive, resists wrinkling, tailors beautifully, retains its shape, wears well, travels well and projects an effective professional image. A wool garment will give the appearance needed to get through a long, busy day.

Today's lifestyles demand getting the best value for your time and money. Make wool a financial investment, and watch it pay off.

**CONSUMER ATTITUDES TOWARD WOOL** WARM, SOFT, COMFORTABLE, NATURAL, PURE: The words used by consumers to describe wool in a research study conducted by Bruskin Goldring Associates. The study entitled, "Consumer Attitudes Towards Wool & Wool Products," asked consumers what they look for in wool garments. The top four answers were comfort, fit, durability and ease of care. This research bears out the growing trend to comfort-driven and quality clothing. After years of living in T-shirts and sweats, the American consumer has become accustomed to clothing that is easy on the body. When Americans dress up, they are still likely to be slightly dressed-down.

The boom in knitted apparel is just one indication of the strength of this trend. Layered-knit dressing, comfort-stretch wovens, and the return to sweaters all point to the importance of the simple but chic style that wool fits so well.

The American wool industry is responding to these demands with innovative blends and finishes. Fabric weights are generally lighter than they were even a few years ago. Feather-weight worsteds and twelve-ounce coatings are just two of the wool fabrics that have inspired designers to create easy-to-wear yet elegant garments.

**BLENDS** Yarns and fabrics made with blends of American wool and other fibers, either natural or synthetic, have long been the choice of knowledgeable designers. Blending two great natural fibers like wool and cotton produces fabrics which benefit from the inherent qualities of each fiber. The end result is better comfort, better aesthetics and better performance.

The American Wool Council has been involved in the development and promotion of wool/cotton blended yarns and fabrics for several years. ALAMERA™ is a registered trademark of the American Wool Council denoting blends of American wool and cotton. ALAMERA blends are distinguished by a soft hand and good loft. The fabrics are season-spanners which can be worn nine to twelve months out of the year, depending on the climate. Other current popular blends are wool/polyester, wool/rayon, wool/nylon and wool/silk.



Division American Sheep Industry Association, Inc.  
6911 South Yosemite Street  
Centennial, CO 80112-1414  
(303) 771-3500 • Fax (303) 771-8200  
[www.sheepusa.org](http://www.sheepusa.org)