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# Steamer vs. Iron: Which One Works Best for Wrinkle-Free Clothes?

By [Lisa Milbrand](#) | Published on May 18, 2024

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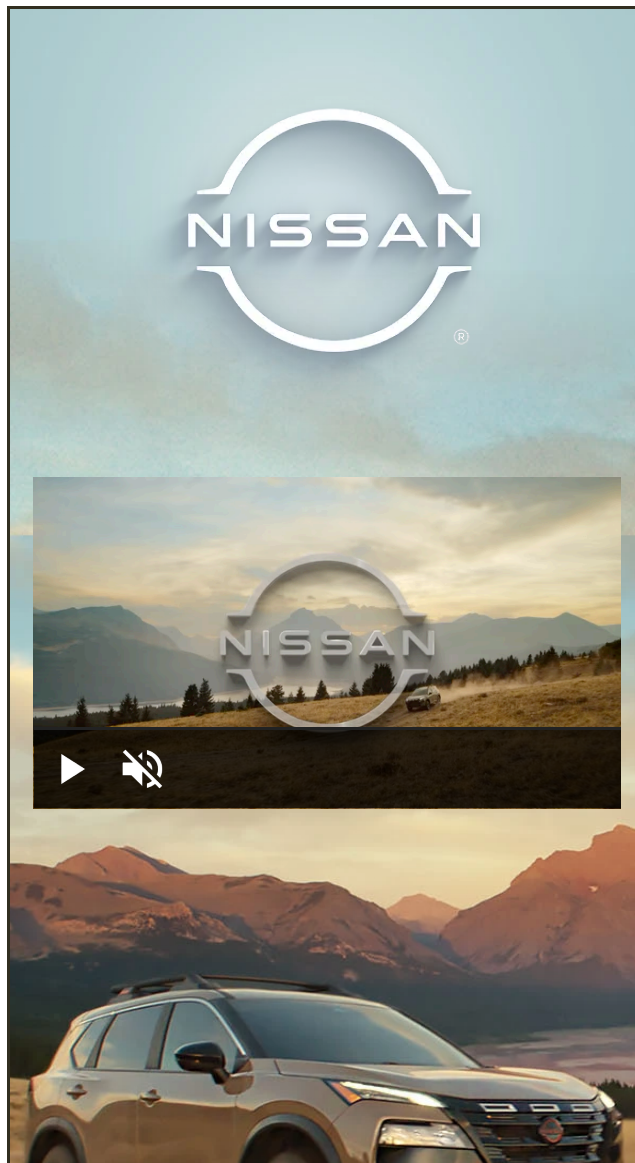


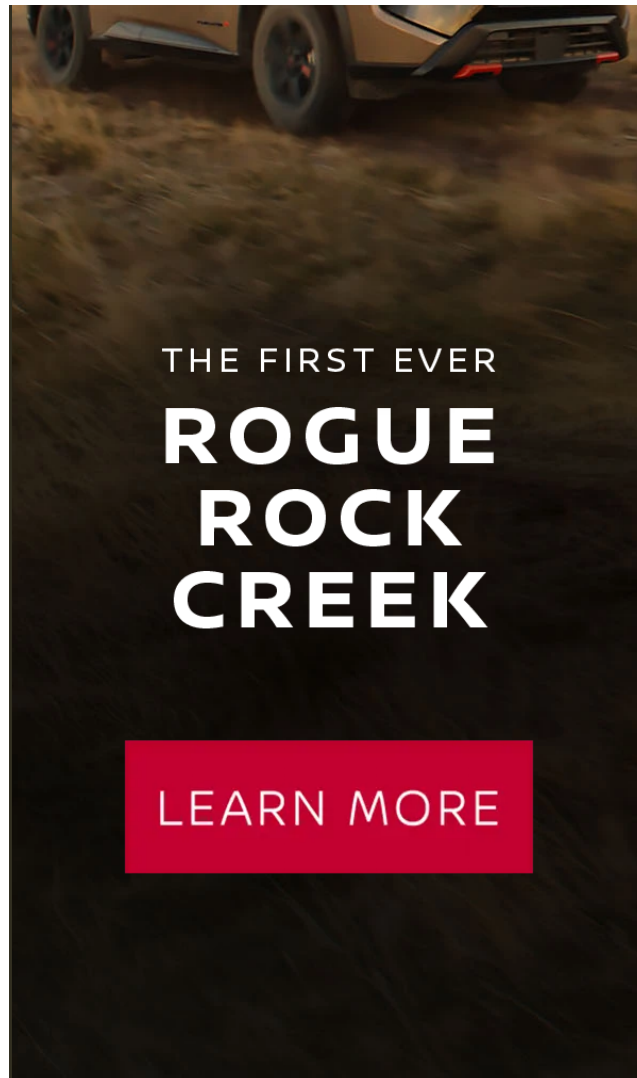


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Clothes get wrinkly—especially if you, ahem, leave your clean clothes in the dryer or the laundry basket hours, days, or (yikes!) weeks before using. And that may lead you to wonder the best way to ease out the wrinkles: steamer vs. iron?

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While there may be some debate, either tool can help keep you looking polished—but each has some particular benefits and downsides.

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## What a Clothes Steamer Works Best For

"I'm encouraging everyone to use a steamer," says Lauren A. Rothman, founder of [Style Auteur](#), a fashion-consulting firm based in Washington, D.C. "There's less user error with a steamer. All you need to do is take your clothing on a hanger, put it on a hook, and turn on the steamer."

They're easy to pack, so you can pop one in your suitcase to deal with any crumpling in transit (Rothman recommends the HiLife steamer as a great option), and you don't have to fuss with settings or a whole setup.

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It works great for most types of clothing and fabrics—even delicate fabrics like silk, cashmere, and wool.

And it especially shines for clothes that are very hard to iron, such as pleated skirts. "An accordion skirt, for instance, is a beast to iron, not even dry cleaner will do it," Rothman says. That's when the steamer comes in

handy.

**TIP**

Have a clothing item that's less than fresh? A steamer can also give it a quick clean, too. "Think of it as a little bit of a cleaning boost," Rothman says.

**RELATED:** [We Tested Clothes Steamers: Here Are the Best Ones](#)

## What an Iron Works Best For

Irons can give you crisp creases and a completely polished and starched look, so they're great for those times when you're really looking to impress. (For instance, if you're wearing a uniform or want a shirt done for an important interview, the iron's your go to.)

As long as you mind your settings, it can be used on delicate fabrics—just make sure that you choose the appropriate setting before you set the iron to your clothing.

It's also great for napkins and table linens, where you're looking for the crisp folds and seamless pressing. "The iron is really set up for that crisp look," Rothman says.

## How to Use a Steamer Vs. Iron

Each wrinkle releasing tool has slightly different techniques, so make sure you use the right strategy for your tool (and your clothes!).

To use a clothes steamer, fill the device with water, and wait (usually just a minute or two) until you see steam coming out. Hold the steamer an inch or two away from your clothing item—do not touch it to the fabric. Run the steamer over each section in an up and down motion, smoothing the fabric as you go.

**RELATED:** [How To Use an Iron the Right Way](#)

Irons also need a fill-up of water and a few minutes of heating time before they're ready to go. Adjust it to the proper temperature for your fabric type while you wait, and consider spraying your clothing with a wrinkle-release spray or fabric starch.



While you can use an iron on a tabletop or floor (with padding and protection), or on a mini board, Rothman suggests investing in a full ironing board and setting up your station somewhere where it's easy for you to maneuver all around the board as you iron.

## Other Options for Removing Wrinkles

While steamers and irons often do the best job of removing wrinkles, there are other ways to refresh your clothes and get them looking a lot less crumpled. Here's the scoop on a few other options.

**RELATED:** [10 Genius Ways to Get Wrinkles Out of Your Clothes Without an Iron](#)

### Wrinkle release sprays

You'll find a ton of these on the market, with different formulations that help relax the fibers and maybe even give it a touch of fragrance, thanks to fabric conditioners, alcohol, or other chemicals. Simply spritz these on your clothes, and pull a bit on the fabric to release the wrinkles.

#### TIP

You can use wrinkle release spray with an iron or steamer to help make it easier to get rid of the wrinkles.

### Wrinkle-removing dryer settings

If your dryer offers this setting, pop it back in for a quick tumble. Generally, a wrinkle-free dryer setting adds a little moisture into the drum and tumbles the clothing to help release the wrinkles. (Just don't

leave it sitting there, as can get wrinkled all over again!)

## Hanging by a steamy shower

Hanging an item of clothing in the bathroom while you're taking a shower is a time-honored trick, though Rothman offers a caveat to using it. "A lot of people end up getting their clothes too wet," she says.

## Pressing at the dry cleaners

You don't have to actually get your clothes dry cleaned in order to get them freshly pressed there—and it costs much less than a full dry clean, Rothman says.

## Hair straightening iron

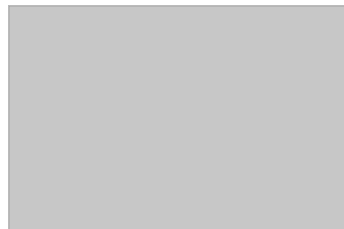
If you have just a few spots to touch up—like a wrinkled collar or cuffs—Rothman likes using a hair straightening iron to press them perfectly.

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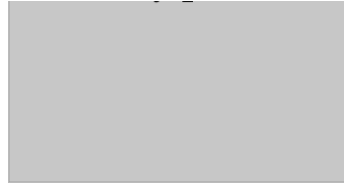
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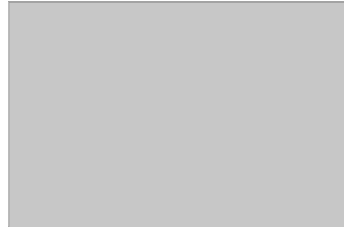
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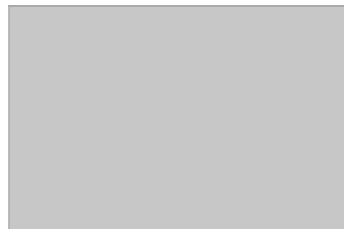
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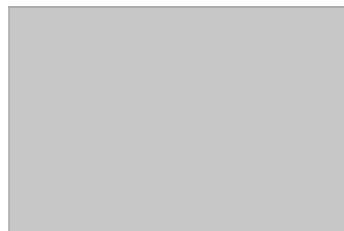
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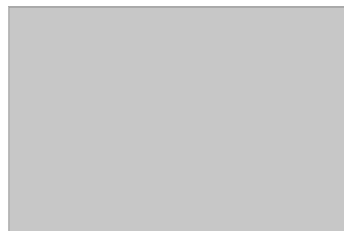
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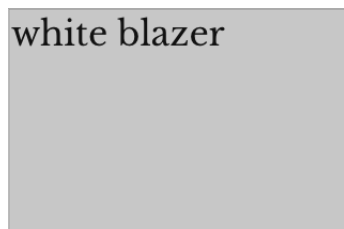
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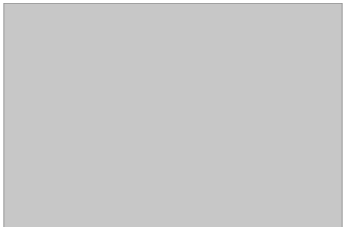
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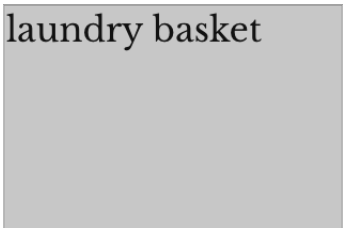
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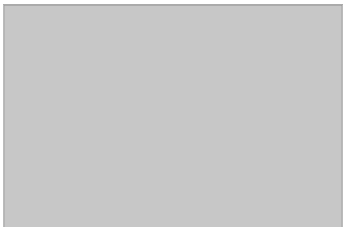


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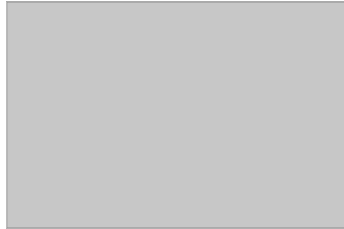


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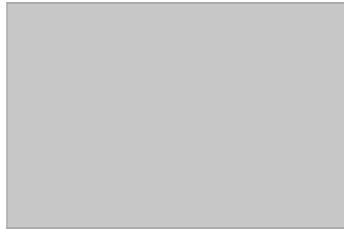
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