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Standard Guide for Care Symbols for Care Instructions on Textile Products¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This guide provides a uniform system of symbols for the disclosure of care instructions on textile products such as apparel, piece goods, and household and institutional articles, hereinafter referred to as “textile,” or “textile product.”

1.2 This guide provides a comprehensive system of symbols to represent care instructions reducing language-dependent care instructions.

1.3 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as the standard. The values given in parentheses are for information only.

1.4 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety, health, and environmental practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

1.5 *This international standard was developed in accordance with internationally recognized principles on standardization established in the Decision on Principles for the Development of International Standards, Guides and Recommendations issued by the World Trade Organization Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Committee.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*²

D123 Terminology Relating to Textiles

D3136 Terminology Relating to Care Labeling for Apparel, Textile, Home Furnishing, and Leather Products (Withdrawn 2023)³

D3938 Guide for Determining or Confirming Care Instructions for Apparel and Other Textile Products

2.2 *ASTM Adjunct:*⁴

Care Symbol Chart

2.3 *AATCC Standard:*

A Glossary of AATCC Standard Terminology, Current Edition⁵

2.4 *Other Standards:*

Federal Trade Commission Amendment to Trade Regulation Rule Concerning Care Labeling of Textile Wearing Apparel, and Certain Piece Goods, Federal Register, Vol 48, No. 99, May 20, 1983 (cited as 16 CFR 423).⁶

The National Standard of Canada—Care Labelling of Textiles (CAN/CGSB-86.1-M91)⁷

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions*—For definitions of terms related to care labeling, refer to Terminology **D3136**. For definitions of other textile terms used in this guide, refer to Terminology **D123**.

3.1.1 *care instructions, n—in textiles*, a series of directions that describe practices which should refurbish a product without adverse effects, and that warn against any part of the directions which one could reasonably be expected to use that may harm the item. **D3136**

3.1.2 *care label, n—in textiles*, a label or other affixed instruction set that reports how a product should be refurbished.

3.1.2.1 *Discussion*—The Federal Trade Commission, in Rule 16 CFR 423, requires care instructions on most apparel and certain other textile items. In relation to these products, the FTC definition states: “Care Label means a permanent label or tag, containing regular care information and instructions, that is attached or affixed in some manner that will not become separated from the product and will remain legible during the useful life of the product.” **D3136**

¹ This guide is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee **D13** on Textiles and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee **D13.62** on Labeling.

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² For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, www.astm.org, or contact ASTM Customer Service at service@astm.org. For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard’s Document Summary page on the ASTM website.

³ The last approved version of this historical standard is referenced on www.astm.org.

⁴ Available from ASTM International Headquarters. Order Adjunct No. **ADJD5489-E-PDF**. Original adjunct produced in 1994.

⁵ *Annual AATCC Technical Manual*, available from the American Association of Textile Chemists and Colorists (AATCC), P.O. Box 12215, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709-2215, <http://www.aatcc.org>.

⁶ Available from U.S. Government Publishing Office, 732 N. Capitol Street, NW, Washington, DC 20401, <http://www.gpo.gov>.

⁷ Available from Canadian General Standards Board (CGSB), 11 Laurier St., Phase III, Place du Portage, Gatineau, Quebec K1A 0S5, Canada, <http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/ongc-cgsb>.

3.1.3 *care symbol, n*—a pictorial symbol that gives directions for refurbishing a consumer textile product.

4. Significance and Use

4.1 This guide provides symbols and a system for their use by which care instructions for textile products can be conveyed in a simple, space-saving, and easily understood pictorial format that is not language dependent. See also [ADJD5489-E-PDF](#). Currently, the FTC Care Labeling Rule recognizes Guide D5489-96c.

4.2 Care symbols are an important means for identifying the appropriate care procedure for home laundering, commercial laundering, professional textile care, and coin-operated drycleaning, of textile products.

4.3 Care labeling using symbols can be used by the purchaser to select textiles on the basis of the care method required without knowledge of the language. The FTC Care Labeling Rule specifies Guide D5489-96c symbols. Additional changes in words and symbols have been added to this guide which are not covered by 16 CFR 423. In the United States, when care symbols only are to be included in a care label, the FTC requires that the Guide D5489-96c version of symbols must be used. However, the symbols, as included in this standard version (Guide D5489-18), may be used if symbols are used in addition to full care instructions written in English wording.

4.4 In countries in which a word-based care labeling system is required, the care symbol system may be used as a supplemental system.

4.5 The word-based instructions for each symbol in this guide are harmonious with Terminology [D123](#), and Terminology [D3136](#), the United States Federal Trade Commission Care Labeling Rule, 16 CFR 423, and industry practice (see [Figs. 1 and 2](#)).

4.6 The care label symbol system is based on five basic care symbols representing five operations: washing, bleaching, drying, ironing, and professional textile care.

4.7 One color is used for all care symbols in this care labeling system.

NOTE 1—While this symbol system uses one color, it is harmonious with tri-color systems such as the Canadian system because the instructions are clear whether printed in one or three colors.

4.8 This guide does not specify the type of label material or fabric to use. However, appropriateness for consumer comfort is recommended.

5. Procedure

5.1 *Introduction*—This section defines the basic symbols and prohibitive symbols: the washing, bleaching, drying, ironing, and professional textile care processes; the required number and order of symbols; supplementary care information; and appropriate instructions and labels.

5.2 Basic Symbols:

5.2.1 There are five basic symbols: the washtub, triangle, square, iron, and circle.

5.2.2 The washtub represents the washing process, the triangle represents the bleaching process, the square represents

the drying process, the iron represents the ironing or pressing process, and the circle represents the professional textile care process ([Fig. 3](#)).

5.3 *Prohibitive Symbols*—The prohibitive “X” symbol may be used only when evidence can be provided that the care procedure on which it is superimposed would adversely change the dimensions, hand, appearance, or performance of the textile. ([Fig. 4](#)).

5.4 The Washing Process—The Washtub Symbol:

5.4.1 The washtub with a water wave represents the washing process in a home laundering or commercial laundering setting.

5.4.1.1 The washtub without a water wave may be used to present the washing process.

NOTE 2—The washtub without a water wave is used in the Canadian care symbol system.

5.4.2 Additional symbols inside the washtub indicate the suggested water temperature and hand-washing process.

5.4.3 Additional symbols below the tub indicate the permanent press cycle (one underline, minus sign, or bar) and delicate-gentle washing cycle (two underlines, minus signs, or bars).

5.4.3.1 Permanent dress and gentle/delicate cycle instructions may be reported in symbols or words on a label with the symbolic instructions for machine wash and the water temperature.

5.4.4 The numerical or the dot system or both illustrated in [Fig. 1](#) may be used to represent the maximum water temperature for machine and hand washing.

5.4.4.1 The six washing temperatures are 30 °C (80 °F), 40 °C (105 °F), 50 °C (120 °F), 60 °C (140 °F), 70 °C (160 °F), and 95 °C (200 °F) and shall be in Celsius when using the numerical water temperature system.

NOTE 3—The Fahrenheit temperatures, while not true conversions from Celsius to Fahrenheit, are within the range of tolerance and represent common consumer usage.

5.4.4.2 The symbols used to represent the maximum water temperature in the dot system are: six dots [95 °C (200 °F)], five dots [70 °C (160 °F)], four dots [60 °C (140 °F)], very hot, three dots [50 °C (120 °F)], hot, two dots [40 °C (105 °F)], warm, one dot [30 °C (85 °F)], cool/cold.

5.4.4.3 The water temperature placed in the hand washing symbol may be 40 °C (105 °F) or 30 °C (85 °F).

NOTE 4—In the Canadian care symbol system, a hand in a yellow washtub means *wash gently by hand in cool water (not exceeding 30 °C (85 °F))*. In the ISO system, a hand in a washtub means hand wash only, do not machine wash, maximum temperature 40 °C (105 °F), handle with care. A water temperature is not reported in either system.

5.4.5 To represent the care instruction for a specific wash condition, use the appropriate symbol as illustrated in [Fig. 1](#).

NOTE 5—Consumers may obtain washing machine temperatures that are frequently below the suggested temperature. The actual water temperature obtained when using the washing machine settings of hot, warm, and cold vary in North American by region, season, water heater settings, and regulations governing factory-set mixes. In general, North American washing machines do not have internal heaters.

NOTE 6—For consumer information the 30 °C wash water is represented on the symbol charts by the temperature range of 65 °F to 85 °F