

Storing Fabric Tips: How to Avoid Pesky Pests During Long-Term Storage

By Ashley Little

I'm lucky enough to have a few relatives who sew, and sometimes they give me boxes upon boxes of fabric that they don't want anymore. Unfortunately, some of that fabric has been in storage for a long time and has been attacked by nasty little pests.

The most recent case: My mom discovered even more boxes of my late grandmother's fabric in the attic and gave them to me. I opened the box to find lots of beautiful wool. I was so excited! But then I unfolded the wool, only to discover tiny little holes all over the fabric. The gorgeous wool had been attacked by clothes moths. Sigh. My grandma certainly could have used some tips on storing fabric!

Clothes moths aren't the only pest to look out for. Anything from mice to carpet beetles can invade your precious fabric. When you store fabric long-term, bad things can happen.

Here are a few essential tips for storing fabric to avoid yucky pests.



A swatch of wool with tiny moth holes

Clean fabric before storing.

If you're storing fabric long term, be sure to wash the fabric before storing. Pests are more attracted to dirty fabrics, so washing them is the first step for telling them to back off.

Store fabric in tightly sealed containers.

Beware of containers that have holes on the sides for easier carrying. (That's how the clothes moths entered my grandma's fabric stash!) Fabric should be tightly sealed inside. The only thing keeping those pests out is your Fort Knox-like security smarts.

Speaking of containers, experts seem to agree that a cedar chest is not the end-all answer to preventing pests. Cedar chests actually lose their pest-preventing qualities after a few years. The more important feature of storage is that the container is tightly sealed.





Photo via Blueprint member [France Nadeau](#)

Store fabric with sachets.

Sachets are wonderful for repelling pests when storing fabric long term, and you don't have to fill them with strong-smelling moth balls to get the job done! A sachet filled with bay leaves, lavender, thyme, rosemary or mint might also do the trick. Of course, you shouldn't depend solely on this as a way to prevent those tricky buggers from invading.

Not sure how to go about sewing a sachet? Get a [free sachet pattern here](#) and you'll have one in a snap!

Use dehumidifiers and fans.

Clothes moths, one of the most common pests to destroy fabric, love dark humid spots. If you live in a warm climate and store your fabric in a non-air conditioned home, consider using a fan or dehumidifier to prevent an infestation.

Store your fabric in the attic like my grandmother did? Move your fabric storage to a cooler area during warm-weather months, if possible.

Keep the storage area clean.

If even one little moth has entered your storage area and left behind evidence of its presence, that's like a welcome wagon for all his friends to join him. Keep the area around your [fabric storage](#) area clean. The easiest way to do this is to vacuum regularly.

Fill in cracks and crevices.

This tip is probably a big "duh" to most of you. Inspect the storage area for cracks and crevices that insects and mice might be able to squeeze through. (Don't put anything past those sneaky mice! They can fit through dime-sized cracks with no problem.) I learned this lesson the hard way when I lived in Brooklyn and had a mouse completely destroy some yarn I was storing. The entryway, I believe, was a tiny crack in the closet floor.

I now live in a house built in 1905, so I keep caulk and a caulk gun handy in case I spot any cracks that need to be filled.

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Do you have a lot of pretty fabrics like wool in your stash, too? Instead of storing them, use them to make a coat! In Steffani Lincecum's [Inside Vogue Patterns: Coatmaking Techniques V9040](#) class, you'll learn coat making techniques, including what order to sew the seams in and

professional finishing techniques. Your coat will look store-bought!

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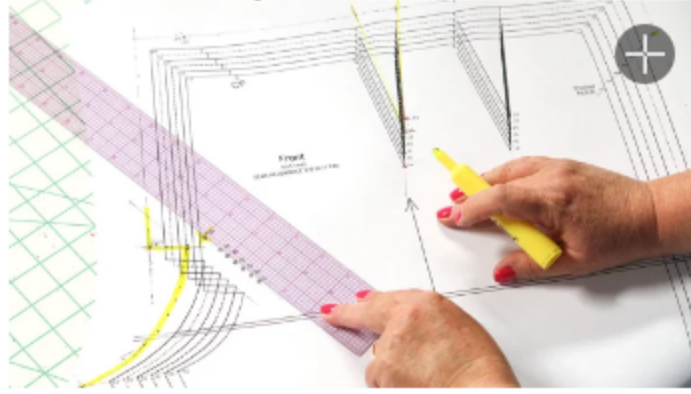
Has your fabric ever been attacked by pests? How did you get rid of them?

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