

UNIFORM CARE

A few suggestions on how to take care of your valuable (and expensive) uniform:

Kilt. This is the most expensive single item in your uniform and the big item with regard to care. Take extra-special care of your kilt. First, basic treatment:

1. Store it on a hanger with clips or a clamp device (the kind designed for pants or skirts). Unfasten all straps, fold the kilt once inside-out, fold it a second time, and clamp the top in the kilt hanger.

DO NOT use safety pins to attach the kilt to a hanger.

2. In general avoid poking holes in your kilt. Pin your kilt pin only through the front panel. Do not pin through both panels as this leads to tearing the fabric.

3. Kilts should not be sat upon in the car for any great length of time. Try to change into the kilt just shortly before the event if possible. At highland games, it not only spares the uniform but also helps prevent fatigue if you can change into shorts for the part of the day when you're not performing. (Take a kilt hanger!)

Do remember that each of us represents Louisville and LPB. So while in the kilt, wear the uniform sharply--shirt buttoned, necktie tied, etc. When weather conditions permit use the uniform as PR for our organization. If conditions dictate "dressing down" to reduce stress, remove the kilt so that you no longer visibly represent LPB.

4. At event's end, put the kilt on a hanger if possible until you get home or to the hotel. Then lay the kilt out flat and unfolded, inside up, on a clean floor or bed, or drape over a chair overnight to air dry. Then store on hanger.

5. Clean small stains as they happen using cool water and Woolite.

6. General cleaning: Most of us have our kilts dry-cleaned periodically. A potential problem with dry-cleaning, however, is that the leather is not meant to be treated with solvents used in the dry-cleaning process. The dyes used to color the straps may leach and could stain the wool, or the cleaning process may damage the leather. Most cleaners will ask for a waiver of damage before accepting your kilt. If you really want to dry-clean your kilt, try to find one who won't ask for the waiver. Then, when you get the kilt back, inspect thoroughly. (Note: Some of us have had very good luck with Highland Cleaners in Louisville.)

7. **PRESSING YOUR KILT**

Keeping your kilt neatly pressed is an important part of presenting a professional appearance. You will sometimes have to touch it up between cleanings; learn to do so correctly in order to avoid damaging this most expensive part of your uniform.

Here are some tips:

a. **WARNING:** Wool is susceptible to being marred or scorched by the iron.

- A light touch prevents damage: don't leave the iron in contact with the fabric long, and don't move it while touching the fabric.

- Press the kilt on the wrong side of the fabric--that is, press the inside of the kilt, not the outside.

- Use a pressing cloth to protect the material. (A piece of old sheet or pillowcase works well.) This can be dampened slightly if your steam iron isn't steaming.

b. **WARNING:** Wool stretches. This property makes it a tailor's dream, for it can be "molded" to drape beautifully, but it can backfire when you press a wool garment.

- A well-padded table may be a more suitable pressing surface for your kilt than a standard ironing board. This will enable you to lay the whole kilt flat instead of having to struggle with bits of it slipping off the ironing board. (Before you use that polished dining-room table, though, be sure that its surface is thoroughly protected from heat and moisture!)

- Have pleats in place before you touch the kilt with the iron. Pleats can be pinned into place before you press them.

- If you must use an ironing board, get someone to help you: it takes a second pair of hands to hold the kilt so that the part that is not on the ironing board is not pulling and stretching the bit you are working on.

- Place the iron on the garment briefly, then lift it straight up again; don't run the iron over the

surface of the fabric the way you do when you press your shirt.

3. Pressing a kilt is not fun, even when you know how. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure . . .

- Avoid wrinkles by not sitting around in your kilt unnecessarily, especially in damp weather.
- After wearing your kilt, lay it out flat to air it, then hang it on a kilt hanger (a.k.a. a skirt hanger), inside out.
- Steam minor wrinkles out of your kilt by hanging it in the bathroom while you shower.

Shoes. Keep them clean and polished. A waterproof wax (SnoSeal - tradename, available at most shoe stores) will soften and extend the life of your leather shoes.

An ounce of prevention: wear rain boots or overshoes in wet or muddy conditions.

Buy ghillie brogues if you can afford them. They really “make” the uniform. The British Shop, among others, sells these shoes with a thick, gum rubber sole that absorbs a great deal of the stress otherwise borne by your ankles, knees, and lower back.

Hose. We wear white cotton/synthetic “popcorn-top” hose. These turn grey quickly if not cared for properly. They can be machine washed (use care with bleach). The most important thing though is to take care of them out on the field. Avoid mud puddles if possible when wearing your ghillies and white hose. One trick is to bring knee-length rubber boots to splash about in places like General Butler State Park in mid-May. Change into your good hose and shoes only if the conditions allow. You may want to consider having a pair of backup hose. We do a few 2-day events where a second pair will come in handy.

Flashes do not require much care. One item on how they’re worn: place right up at the top of your hose where hose are folded over. Only 1 to 1.5 inches of blue fabric should be visible beneath the hose tops.

Kilt pin. Pin only through the front panel. Do not pin through both panels as this leads to tearing the fabric.

Kilt belt. Polish the buckle with metal polish occasionally. Polish the belt with black shoe polish-- but don’t do it the morning of a games. Do it at least the day before to allow the polish to dry overnight.

Sporran. Wipe clean once in a while. If needed, you can touch up scratches in the leather with shoe polish or dye. Regarding wearing the sporran: the top of the sporran should ride a hand’s breadth below the top of your kilt belt. Also try placing the straps through the belt loops in back of the kilt with the kilt belt over the top of the straps. This arrangement seems to help keep the sporran in place and hide the straps in back.

Shirts. Wash with white items; iron. Starch is optional.

Tie. Dry-clean only. Small spots may be carefully removed with a damp cloth.

Glengarry. Clean stains with cold water and small amount of detergent. I wouldn’t put one in the washing machine.

Sweater. No longer an official uniform item, but may be worn for cold-weather gigs. Depending on the material, dry clean, or hand wash. Some sweaters may be machine washed; cold water and gentle cycle are advisable. Lay out flat to dry.