

As a technical and thoroughly researched component of your sleep setup, the down sleeping bag requires adequate cleaning and good maintenance for both longevity and optimum performance in extreme outdoor conditions.

In this blog, we bivvy down on how to effectively wash a down sleeping bag for sweeter dreams and squeaky-clean camping trips.

Let's get down to it...

Your bag is built for adventure, but it's important to keep it clean. Image: Sea to Summit

What's Required?

1. **Down wash** – specialised down wash is formulated to clean and restore the water repellency, without damaging the fill. This is why it's important to use it instead of conventional detergents.
2. **Large front-loading washing machine** – Yep, you're going to have to get yourself down to the local laundromat! Home washing machines are too small, lacking enough circulation of water to clean the bag efficiently. Top-loading washing machines generally also have an agitator, which can damage the baffles on your bag. For these reasons, it's best to avoid them.
3. **Front-loading dryer** – It's ideal to use the biggest dryer you have available to you. If you're finding you need to stuff it into your dryer, it's too small and the bag won't dry efficiently. This can cause damage to your bag.
4. **Tennis balls or wool dryer balls** – this is to ensure that the down doesn't clump together as it dries.

You'll need some down wash, tennis or dryer balls, a large front loader, and a front-loading dryer.

What to Avoid

- Bleach, conventional detergents, or washing powder
- Top-loading washing machines
- Dry-cleaning

Washing Your Down Sleeping Bag in a Large Front Loader Machine

Check the wash instructions on your sleeping bag, as this will provide specific information about what temperature to set the machine and the settings to apply.

1. Turn the bag inside out and put it in the machine
2. Ensure there isn't residual washing powder in there first, before adding the volume of

down wash according to the label

3. Set the machine to the correct temperature, and set to the 'delicate' or 'gentle' cycle
4. Remove when the cycle has finished, and check it over

Add to the tumble dryer on the 'low heat' ('gentle') setting, with dryer or tennis balls to prevent clumping

After washing, pop your sleeping bag in a dryer with some tennis balls to prevent clumping.

Handwashing Your Down Sleeping Bag in the Bathtub

1. Turn the bag inside out with all the zips and tabs closed
2. Fill your bathtub with lukewarm water (or whatever temperature the bag's instructions suggest)
3. Add the recommended volume of down wash
4. Lie the bag out flat in the tub, and gently massage in the wash
5. Leave it to soak for about an hour
6. Drain the tub and fill it with water to rinse the bag
7. Leave to soak in the water for around 15 minutes
8. Gently press on the bag remove the soap, and repeat this a couple of times until no suds remain
9. Drain the tub, then press on the bag gently to remove excess water
10. If your dryer is not big enough, you can take it to your local laundromat. Or, lay it out flat on a drying rack or clothesline in a warm, ventilated area - indoors or outdoors. You will need to give it a gentle shake every now and again to ensure the down doesn't clump.

A down sleeping bag needs to remain in good condition to perform ideally in severe weather conditions. Image: Sea to Summit

Keeping Your Down Bag in Good Condition

Sleeping Bag Liners

Use a [sleeping bag liner](#) every single time you use the bag. This will minimise the sweat and oils from your skin that tarnish the bag and affect its insulation.

Go to Bed Clean!

On a longer trek, this may be tricky to avoid - but try not to sleep in your bag wearing dirty clothing. Wipe down your face and neck with a baby wipe too, as this is where most of the oils can rub off and onto the hood. Essentially, the cleaner you are in your bag, the less dirty

your bag will become.


 *Using a clean liner will prevent oil and dirt from building up inside your newly clean bag.*

Spot Clean

If you do spill or smear something on your bag, spot clean it as soon as you can with a damp cloth.

Air it Out After Use

When you arrive home from a trip, spread your sleeping out to air-dry for a couple of hours. This will dry any residual moisture from sweat or condensation.


 *If you do spill or smear something on your bag, spot clean it as soon as you can. Image: Sea to Summit*

Store it Properly

Avoid storing your bag in its compression stuff sack, as this can damage the down and reduce its performance. Instead, stash it in the larger storage bag that it comes equipped with. This will help to keep the fill in good condition for as long as possible.

That's all, Folks!

Don't put off washing your down sleeping bag any longer - just like the feeling of fresh sheets, a freshly laundered bag is going to feel amazing after a vigorous day of adventure!

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When was the last time you washed your down bag (if ever)? Go on, be honest!