

We all know how pricey quality made down bags can be. This is because they're a technical piece of gear that's been thoroughly researched, designed and manufactured to a high standard to keep you warm and comfortable in extreme conditions.

A funky smelling sleeping bag is not only going to make your sleeping experience a bit average, it's also probably not going to insulate as well as it should.

Given that you've forked out an arm and a leg for your sleeping bag, it makes sense to maintain it, which is why we've done all the work for you by coming up with a guide to washing and taking care of your down bag.

Your bag is built for adventure, but if it begins to pong - it's time for a clean!

What you need to wash a down bag

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 and avoid 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, and so there isn't 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. So, for that reason, you need to avoid them as well.
3. **Front loading dryer** - It's ideal to use the biggest dryer you have available to you. If you need to stuff it into your dryer, then it's too small and the bag won't dry efficiently. You also may end up causing damage to your bag this way.
4. **Tennis balls or wool dryer balls** - this is to ensure that the down doesn't clump together when you dry it.

You'll need a dirty bag, some down wash, dryer balls, a large front loader and a front loading dryer.

What to avoid when washing a down sleeping bag

- Using bleach, conventional detergents or washing powder
- Washing it in a top loading washing machine
- Getting your bag dry cleaned

How to wash your down sleeping bag in a large front loader machine

It's worth noting that you should be checking the wash instructions on your sleeping bag as that will give you specific information about what temperature to set it on, and what settings

to use.

1. Turn the bag inside out and put it inside the machine.
2. Make sure there isn't any residual washing powder in there first, and then add in the amount of down wash according to the label.
3. Set it to the correct temperature and put it on the delicate or gentle cycle.
4. Take it out and check it over.
5. Put it in the tumble drier on the low-heat (gentle) setting with dryer balls or tennis balls to prevent clumping.

 Once your bag has been washed, pop it in a dryer with some tennis balls to prevent clumping.

How to handwash your down bag in a bathtub

1. Turn the bag inside out with all the zips and tabs closed.
2. Fill up your bathtub with lukewarm water (or whatever the instructions say).
3. Add in the recommended amount of downwash.
4. Lay the bag out in the tub, and gently massage the wash into the bag.
5. Leave it there to soak for about an hour.
6. Drain the tub and fill it with water to rinse the bag, leave it to soak in the water for around 15 minutes.
7. Then gently press on the bag to get the soap out. Repeat this a couple of times until there are no suds left.
8. Drain the tub, and then press on the bag gently to get the excess water out.
9. If your dryer is not big enough, you can then take it to your local laundromat to dry it. Or lay it out flat on a drying rack/ clothesline in a warm, ventilated area - indoors or outdoors. You will have to give it a gentle shake every now and again to ensure that the down doesn't clump.

 If you can't get access to a large front loader, a bathtub is your next best option.

Tips for keeping your down bag in good condition:

1. Use a sleeping bag liner

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

2. Go to sleep clean

On a longer trek, you might not be able to avoid this, but try not to sleep in your bag while wearing dirty clothes. It's probably worth wiping down your face and neck with a baby wipe too, as that's where most of the oils are that can rub off on the hood. Basically, the cleaner you are when you get into your bag, the less dirty it can get.

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

3. Spot clean as you go

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

4. Air it out after it's been used

When you get home after a trip, if possible, you should lay it out to air dry for a couple of hours to get rid of any residual moisture from sweat or condensation.

 *You don't want to store your bag in its compression sack (pictured left) instead put it in its storage bag (pictured right).*

5. Store it properly

Don't store your bag in its compression stuff sack, as this can damage the down and reduce its performance. Instead, stash it in a larger storage bag that it comes with. This will help keep the fill in good condition for as long as possible.

That's all folks!

Now that we've talked you through how to wash, store and take care of your down bag, there's no excuse for it to be grubby on your next adventure.

Don't put it off any longer, just like the feeling of fresh sheets, a freshly laundered bag is going to feel amazing after a vigorous day of adventure.

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