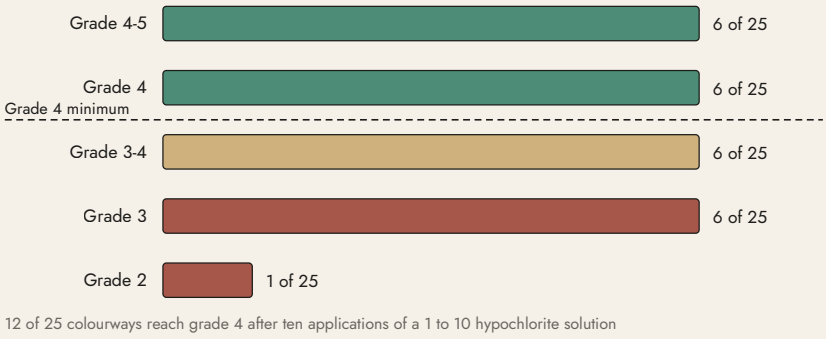
Cleaning durable seating: *wipeable* and bleach-cleanable fabrics

What 'wipeable' and 'bleach-cleanable' mean, how a bleach claim is tested, and how to write the cleaning regime into the specification.

AT A GLANCE

Construction	Claim usually made	What limits it	Ask for
Woven cloth with a W, S, WS or X code	Cleaned by the method the letter gives	A trade code, not a test. Dye, backing and any flame-retardant treatment decide what it survives.	The supplier's written cleaning instruction for the colourway.
Woven polyester marketed as bleach-cleanable	Tolerates a bleach solution	No single test: protocols differ in dilution, contact time and cycles, and the result differs by colour.	Protocol, dilution, contact time, cycles and grade, per colourway.
Coated cloth (vinyl or polyurethane), wipeable	Wipes clean; resists spills	Martindale is not valid for coated cloth; polyurethane can break down in damp and heat (hydrolysis).	Abrasion by the coated-fabric method, a hydrolysis report, a list of cleaners tested.
Leather and leather alternatives	Wipe with a damp cloth	Surface finish, colour transfer and chemical cleaners vary by type.	See the leather and suede sheets and the supplier's care guide.
Any cover with a flame-retardant treatment	As above	The treatment can deteriorate when the cover is washed or dry cleaned.	A fire report that states the cleaning or water-soak conditioning applied.

The bleach protocol and results are from one supplier's own report (21 August 2023), as that supplier describes a method it attributes to BIFMA and ACT; the underlying documents were not read. Treat it as an illustration of how a bleach claim is tested, not as a standard.



One supplier's report: 25 colourways of one fabric after the same bleach protocol, by grey-scale grade for colour change. Redrawn from the report's table; the supplier is not named. Original drawing by Make Bespoke Studio.

REMEMBER

- A claim is not a test: ask for the protocol and the report for your colourway.
- Do not accept a Martindale figure for coated cloth: ask for hydrolysis and cleaner data.
- A fire report should state the cleaning it was conditioned with.
- Write the approved cleaners and routine into the handover pack.

SPECIFICATION WORDING

CLEANABILITY CLAIM

Cover cloth [ ] in colourway [ ] to be supplied with the supplier's written cleaning instruction for that colourway, stating cleaner type, dilution and contact time. Where the cloth is described as bleach-cleanable, a test report for the colourway supplied stating the protocol [named], solution [1:10 sodium hypochlorite], contact time [ ] hours, number of applications [10], colour change on the grey scale [grade 4 minimum], no colour transfer and no physical damage.

COATED COVER

Coated cover [polyurethane / vinyl] to be supplied with abrasion results by [the ISO 5470 series], and for polyurethane a hydrolysis report to [ISO 1419] for [10] weeks. Supplier to list the cleaners and disinfectants the coating has been tested against. Martindale results are not accepted for coated cloth.

FIRE AND CLEANING

Fire test report on the complete seat composite from a [UKAS-accredited] test house, stating the water-soak or cleaning conditioning applied to the cover before the test. The cleaning method in the operation and maintenance manual to be the one used for that conditioning.

TERMS USED

Wipeable

A trade description for a surface that can be wiped clean of spills. It is not a test result and says nothing about repeated disinfection.

Bleach-cleanable

A claim that a cloth tolerates a bleach solution. Test methods differ in dilution, contact time and cycles, and results differ by colourway.

Cleaning code

The letters W, S, WS and X on an upholstery cloth: water-based cleaner, solvent, either, or vacuum and brush only. A trade convention.

Grey scale

A set of grey pairs used to grade colour change or staining from 5 (none) to 1 (severe) by eye or instrument.

Hydrolysis

The breakdown of a polyurethane coating by water and heat. Coated-cloth guidelines ask for an accelerated test (ISO 1419).

Water soak

A 30-minute soak of a flame-retardant-treated cover before conditioning and fire testing, to show the treatment survives wetting.

STANDARDS AND SOURCES

- ISO 1419:2019: Rubber- or plastics-coated fabrics: accelerated-ageing tests. Fourth edition, confirmed in 2024 (ISO page, via a search result); the text was not read.
- BS EN ISO 12947-2:2016: Martindale abrasion, determination of specimen breakdown. Current (BSI Knowledge); not applicable to coated fabrics. Read for the fabric performance sheet; the text was not read.
- BS 7176:2007+A1:2011 and BS 5651: Fire tests for upholstered seating, and the cleansing and wetting procedure for fire tests on textiles. Named in the FIRA guide; editions and status not checked, texts not read.
- BIFMA HCF 8.1-2019 and ACT Test Method 1-2020: Named in a supplier's report as the basis of its bleach protocol. Neither was read.
- FIRA and British Furniture Confederation, Fire safety of furniture and furnishings in the contract and non-domestic sectors (2010, updated 2011): Appendix 1, A1.2.

Full guide: https://makebespoke.com/trade/technical/durable-seating-cleaning-and-wipeable-fabrics. Make Bespoke Studio coordinates manufacture through its partner workshops. Figures are guidance only and your specification governs; some may be superseded, so contact the studio to verify.