



Museum Textile Services

Vacuumping Textiles

- You do not need an expensive vacuum to safely clean historic textiles. Any vacuum with suction control and a low setting can be used, such as a household Miele canister vacuum.
- It is no longer standard practice to vacuum historic textiles through a screen, as contact with the screen can cause damage and the holes in the screen will likely not be large enough to allow for the pick-up of larger pollutants.
- Use your best judgment when deciding whether or not to vacuum your textile. If it is extremely fragile, it is best to avoid damage and consult a conservator.
- The most cautious approach to vacuuming a textile is to use a soft paint brush to brush soil off the textile surface towards the vacuum.
- A micro-suction attachment kit provides precise control for vacuuming textiles with only moderate fragility. They can be purchased on the internet for as little as \$10, and come with a small hose, several micro-attachments, and an adapter to connect the hose with your vacuum.
- A small circular micro-attachment with bristles is good for vacuuming stable textiles that need a little abrasion to remove embedded soil. A small flat or round micro attachment is used on textiles where abrasion is not necessary.
- For stable textiles such as upholstered furniture, tapestries, and carpets, a full sized bristled vacuum attachment can often be used. We recommend covering it with net, (as shown on right) to avoid having the textile pulled in to the attachment during cleaning. It is OK if some of the bristles poke through the net.
- If your textile cannot support the abrasion of the upholstery attachment you can use the flat vacuum attachment with or without net. Our flat attachment has holes drilled in it to further reduce suction, as well as tape along the bottom on the contact areas to reduce drag and abrasion against the textile.
- When vacuuming the textile, be sure to consider its needs. On less stable textiles, be careful not to slide your vacuum attachment across the textiles surface, instead being sure to lift the attachment off the surface and replace it on the next area to be vacuumed.
- Go about your vacuuming in an organized manner. Sometimes it is hard to tell visually which areas have been vacuumed and which have not. To avoid confusion and stressing the textile by vacuuming it too much, use a visual aid such as a pin to keep track of where you have been.

