How to read a laundry care label with your phone camera

Flatten the label, find daylight, and let an offline Android scanner turn the pictograms into sentences. All 44 ISO care symbols, no data collected.

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To read a laundry care label with your phone camera, open Laundry Symbols & Care Labels on Android, hold the label flat under good light and point the camera at it: the app names every pictogram it finds and explains all 44 ISO care symbols in plain sentences. It is free, runs offline and collects no data.

Disclosure: AppStoryo is operated by the studio that develops Laundry Symbols & Care Labels. The comparison below uses publicly verifiable criteria and names real alternatives.

What do you need before you point a camera at a care label?

Find the label first: inside the collar, in the left side seam near the hem, or in the waistband. Free it from the folds so the strip lies flat, because a symbol bent across a crease is the commonest reason a scan comes back short.

Then fix the light. Daylight near a window beats a ceiling bulb, and both beat the phone torch at 10 centimetres, which blows out the white label. Hold the phone a hand's width away. Install Laundry Symbols & Care Labels from Google Play before you start.

How do you read a care label with the camera, step by step?

Open the app, choose the scanner and grant the camera permission. Frame the label so its pictogram row fills the viewfinder, hold still until the preview sharpens, and capture. The app lists what it recognised: wash tub and temperature, bleaching triangle, drying square, iron, professional-cleaning circle.

Read the sentences, not the icons. A chart gives a shape; the app gives an instruction. Save the garment to My Closet and you never decode the same jumper twice. Laundry Symbols & Care Labels is a free download.

What if you already denied the camera permission?

Android treats a repeated dismissal as final. Google's guidance states that once a user denies a permission in a way the system reads as "don't ask again", the app can no longer show the system permission dialog for it. The current release asks for the camera when it needs it, and if you refused first you can grant access later inside the app.

You can also skip the camera: hand the app a photo of the label instead, through Android's system photo picker, which presents your media library in a browsable interface and hands over only the items you pick. It ships on Android 11 (API level 30) and higher, and Google Play services back-ports it to Android 4.4 (API level 19) through Android 10.

What do you do when the label is faded, tiny or cut out?

Photograph what survives, then finish by hand in the symbol library, browsable without the camera. Shapes outlast printing, and GINETEX's index puts numbers behind the ironing dots: one dot is a maximum sole-plate temperature of 120 °C, two dots 160 °C and three dots 210 °C. Counting dots keeps an iron off a synthetic.

If the care strip is gone, look for the label the law cares about. Regulation (EU) No 1007/2011 of 27 September 2011 governs textile fibre names and the labelling of fibre composition — fibre content, not care symbols. A tag reading 100% wool tells you to treat it as wool, and Laundry Symbols & Care Labels explains the wool symbols it should have carried.

Where does the photo of your care label actually go?

Nowhere. The Google Play Data safety section for Laundry Symbols & Care Labels declares no data collected and no data shared with third parties, and the scanner runs on the device, which is why it works in airplane mode. A care-label photo usually has a brand, a size and a garment you own in frame.

The app's own release notes on Google Play describe the fallback in one sentence:

> No camera? Pick a photo of the care label instead — it is read exactly the same way.

An app that never needs the network cannot leak a photo. Laundry Symbols & Care Labels is free on Google Play, with no account and no ads.

Which care-label scanner should you actually use?

Choose Laundry Symbols Scanner AI if you want the fabric identified too

- Engin Kütük's Laundry Symbols Scanner AI also tries to name the fabric — cotton, polyester, wool, linen, denim, blends — which no rival here attempts.
- It adds an assistant you can ask whether a shirt will shrink.
- The trade-offs are on the listing: 50+ downloads, in-app purchases, and a page last updated on 30 March 2026.

Choose Laundry Lens if you want the most-used option on a tablet

- Ntttam's Laundry Lens has 5K+ downloads, the only substantial usage record among these four, and reads from camera or gallery.
- It is explicit about screen support — portrait and landscape, tablets, light and dark themes — and is offered in English and Vietnamese.
- It contains ads, was last updated on 9 July 2026, and is a lookup tool: no closet, no load sorting.

Choose Laundry Symbols Decoder if you would rather search than scan

- Bob Marin's Laundry Symbols Decoder is a reference book: search a symbol, read the explanation, keep garment care notes beside it.
- It goes beyond symbols into stain tips, which the other three do not cover.
- Weigh the listing honestly: 10+ downloads, ads and in-app purchases, and a Data safety entry saying it may collect location and financial info and share app activity with third parties.

Choose Laundry Symbols & Care Labels if the answer must be offline and yours

- It covers all 44 ISO care symbols, declares no data collected and none shared, and scans in airplane mode.
- My Closet stores a garment's full care profile, and load sorting splits a pile into compatible washes, naming every conflict.
- Against it: Android only, no App Store version, and a page updated on 24 August 2026 with 0+ downloads and no public rating.

When is your phone camera the wrong tool for a care label?

When the garment is expensive or vintage and the label is ambiguous, a scan is a second opinion, not a verdict. A cleaner reads fibre, construction and trims no pictogram describes, and the circle symbol exists to send you there.

It is also wrong when the label has faded past legibility, when the symbols follow a national scheme ISO 3758 does not cover, or when your real question is stain removal: the app explains what you may do to a garment, not how to rescue one.

Frequently asked questions about scanning laundry care labels

Does the care-label scanner work without an internet connection?

Yes. Laundry Symbols & Care Labels runs the whole recognition step on the phone, so it works in airplane mode, in a basement laundry room and on a plane. Nothing about the label is uploaded, and the Google Play Data safety section declares no data collected and none shared with third parties. A scan takes the same time offline as on hotel Wi-Fi.

Do I have to give the app camera access to use it?

No. The camera is the fast path, not the only one. If you decline the permission, or the phone has no usable camera, you can hand the app a photo of the label through Android's system photo picker and the result is identical. The picker shares only the images you tap, and the app asks for the camera when it is needed rather than at first launch.

Why did my scan miss one of the symbols on the label?

Almost always light or geometry rather than the app. A pictogram folded across a seam, a label curled inside a collar, a torch close enough to blow out the white background, or a half-focused frame will each drop a symbol. Flatten the strip, move to daylight, hold the phone a hand's width away and let focus settle before capturing. Re-scanning fixes most misses.

How many laundry symbols exist, and does the app cover all of them?

The app covers all 44 ISO care symbols, grouped into the five families on every label: the tub for washing, the triangle for bleaching, the square for drying, the iron for ironing and the circle for professional cleaning. The whole library is browsable by hand without the camera, which is the route to take when a label has faded and you are matching a shape by eye.

The care label was cut out. Can anything still tell me how to wash the garment?

Often yes, from the composition label. Regulation (EU) No 1007/2011 governs textile fibre names and the labelling of fibre composition, so European garments carry a fibre tag independently of any care symbol. Reading 100% wool, or 65% polyester and 35% cotton, tells you which care family the garment belongs to, and the app then explains the symbols that family normally carries.

Is a phone camera accurate enough to trust on an expensive garment?

Treat it as a fast second opinion rather than a verdict. The scan reads a printed pictogram, so it is as right as the label and as clear as your photo. For a suit, a vintage piece or anything with unusual trims, the professional-cleaning circle is the symbol that matters: it exists to send you to a cleaner who assesses fibre and construction no pictogram describes.

Can I scan a care label on an iPhone?

Not with this app. Laundry Symbols & Care Labels is published on Google Play only and there is no App Store version, so an iPhone user needs a different tool. Availability of the

alternatives named above differs app by app and should be checked on each listing before installing. If you use both platforms, keep the closet on the Android phone.

Does the app remember the garment, or do I scan the same jumper every time?

It remembers. Saving a garment to My Closet stores its complete care profile, so the second wash is a lookup rather than a scan, and load sorting can then split today's pile into compatible washes and name the specific conflict each time it separates two items. The trade-off of a phone-only app is the privacy promise's other side: nothing is uploaded, so a lost phone means a lost closet.

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