



Freshening Costumes with Vodka Spray

Costume designers and wardrobe workers know how important it is to keep costumes looking and smelling fresh throughout a production. That's where vodka spray comes in. This powerful tool is a favorite of industry professionals for its ability to eliminate odors and freshen fabrics without damaging them.

Whether you're a seasoned pro or just starting out, this article will explain how to help keep your costumes smelling their best.

What Is Vodka Spray?

Vodka spray can be pure vodka or a mixture of vodka and water sprayed onto clothing and costumes to remove odors.

How Vodka Spray Works

Costumes smell because bacteria on the skin and fabric break down sweat and body oils into volatile, odorous compounds, a process amplified by the warm, moist environment of worn clothing and certain synthetic materials. The smell lingers because bacteria can get deep into the fabric fibers and become trapped there, especially in synthetic materials, making them hard to remove with regular washing



The alcohol in the vodka works as a natural deodorizer, breaking down and neutralizing unpleasant smells. When sprayed onto clothing, the mixture penetrates the fabric and eliminates odor-causing bacteria, leaving the clothing smelling fresh and clean.

Vodka spray helps keep costumes fresh and odor-free between performances. It is an effective and eco-friendly alternative to commercial fabric deodorizers and fresheners.

It's also useful with a hand-made, beaded, or vintage piece that can't be washed or is dry-clean only. Instead of washing the garment, you can simply spray the smelliest areas to kill bacteria and eliminate unwanted odors. Vodka is a natural odor absorber that dries quickly without leaving any residue or stains.

While products like Pooph and Febreze will eliminate or reduce odor, they don't kill bacteria, won't work with water-sensitive fabrics, and are much more expensive with constant use.

Vodka Spray vs. Isopropyl Alcohol

Both vodka and isopropyl (rubbing) alcohol can be effective for freshening clothes, removing odors, and killing bacteria. However, vodka is considered to be more gentle on fabrics and less likely to cause damage or discoloration than rubbing alcohol.

Isopropyl alcohol typically contains a higher concentration of alcohol (usually around 70-91%) compared to vodka, which is typically around 40% alcohol. This higher concentration can make isopropyl alcohol more effective at killing bacteria and breaking down odors, but it can be more aggressive on some fabrics, particularly delicate or synthetic materials.



In general, vodka is a safer choice for use on most fabrics, while isopropyl alcohol can be more effective when stronger disinfection is needed. Ultimately, the choice between the two will depend on the specific cleaning needs and the fabric being cleaned. (Whether you use vodka or rubbing alcohol, it's always a good idea to spot-test a small, inconspicuous area of the fabric before spraying a larger area of the garment.)

From a budget perspective, vodka is cheaper when buying the large amount that you need for a production, or stocking your costume shop.

Which Vodka To Buy

Brand is not important. Look for the cheapest vodka you can find that comes in a large, plastic bottle with a handle or grip indentation. Glass bottles are heavier and can break, if dropped..

Make sure you're using plain vodka, not a flavored variety.

Mixing Vodka Spray

1. Gather your supplies. You'll need a spray bottle, vodka, and water.
2. Mix your ingredients. Add your vodka (and water, if you're using a 50/50 mix). Add a drop of your essential oil, if wanted.
3. Give the bottle a good shake to mix the vodka with the water and/or essential oil.

Some costumers prefer half water and half vodka, while others use no water in the spray at all. In general, use 100% vodka if you are spraying a costume that is made of a fabric such as wool or silk that doesn't react well to water. If you're using a costume that's been donated, or that has been in your costume shop for a long time, you may not know what the fabric actually is. In that case, pure vodka is the better choice.

If desired, you may add a few drops of essential oil to the vodka spray. Lavender, tea tree, and peppermint are all common choices for their natural odor-fighting properties. Make sure to use 100% pure essential oils, and check that none of your actors are allergic to anything in your mixture.

Spray Bottles



Industrial spray bottles like those on the left are the standard for vodka spray. They are heavy duty, so they won't quickly break. They also hold at least a week's worth of spray, so you won't have to refill often.

Some people prefer the continuous spray type of bottle used by hair stylists (shown at right). With this, you don't have to squeeze the trigger for every spritz, making it easier on your hands when doing more than a few costumes.



Spraying the Costume

Vodka spray can be used on beaded, leather, vintage, and other fabrics that typically can't be thrown into the wash. If you have a wool or silk piece that really needs a little deodorizing, again be sure to work with only 100% vodka solution.

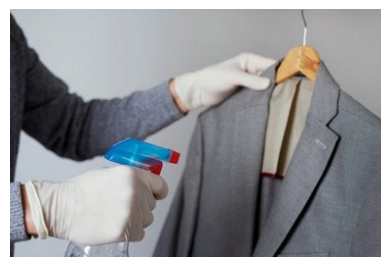
The process:

1. Hang the costume on a wood or plastic hanger.
2. Lightly spray with a light, sweeping mist to the parts of the costume that touch the parts of the body with the highest concentration of body odor (especially armpits and crotch), being careful not to oversaturate the fabric.
3. The nozzle of your spray bottle should be about 18 inches from the surface you are spraying, while moving the bottle in a sweeping motion.
4. Allow the vodka to dry completely before wearing or storing the costume.
5. If the costume has a strong odor, you may need to repeat the process several times.

When using vodka spray, you want to aim your spray bottle directly at the part of the costume that touches the skin. This could mean spraying at the armpits of a shirt through the neck hole, or opening the jacket to spray the inside lining. If you simply spray the outer shell of the costume, the odor-fighting properties of the vodka may not reach where needed.

Waiting Time Before Wearing or Storing

The last thing an actor wants is to put on a costume that has damp areas. On a day with both an afternoon and evening performance, you might need to hold off on doing a full spray of all of the costumes until after the evening show, depending on how short the time is between shows. However, if there are problem pieces that could use some deodorizing after every show, turn them inside out, spray, and let hang facing a fan during your dinner break.



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: I have one jacket in particular that is very smelly. Nothing seems to work to remove the odor. What do I do?

A: Turn the jacket inside out on the hanger and saturate it in vodka spray until it is wet. Then, hang the coat over a fan (still inside-out) to dry!

Q: Will vodka spray make the clothes smell like alcohol?

A: No, vodka spray dries quickly and won't leave behind any residue or scent.

Q: How often can I use vodka spray on a costume?

A: You can (and should!) vodka spray costumes at least daily. If you stay on top of body odor in your garments from the beginning, it is much easier to keep them smelling fresh than it is to reverse any smells that have built up over time.

Q: Can vodka spray remove stains?

A: Vodka spray is *not* a stain remover– it is simply an odor remover.

Q: Is it safe to use vodka spray on delicate fabrics?

A: Silk is the main fabric you should be wary of when vodka spraying. Typically, if it is a silk shirt, and you are using 100% vodka, you can get away with using a bit of spray—just keep your spray bottle at a good distance, and really use the sweeping motion with your spray, so you don't saturate any part of the costume too much. If the piece you are caring for is something extremely delicate, such as hand-painted silk, be sure to test an area before spraying the costume for the first time.

Q: My vodka in the shop keeps disappearing. What do I do?

A: If you are having an issue with your vodka supply disappearing faster than *you* are using it, consider letting your production manager know, and they might be able to take care of the issue.

A simpler solution is to put a new label on your vodka bottles that reads “COSTUME SPRAY – CONTAINS DETERGENT – DO NOT DRINK” or words to that effect. You can even go a step further by adding a drop or two of the aforementioned essential oils to your stored bottles, so when opened, someone can immediately detect that the bottle contains more than vodka. (Of course, this will not work if you need pure vodka because a cast member is allergic to the oil. In that case, you may want to keep a small amount of pure vodka in an inconspicuous container.)