

LAUNDRY ON YOUR OWN



TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION



DOING YOUR OWN LAUNDRY FOR THE FIRST TIME? NOT SURE WHAT TO DO WITH THE PILE OF LAUNDRY ON YOUR FLOOR?

Hang on! Help is here. Learning how to do your laundry is an important life skill that will help you look (and smell) your best. Learning how to do laundry is not difficult, and when done correctly can save you time and money.

Although the latest in washers, dryers and laundry products make cleaning easier, for reliable results, follow these basic procedures:

- Hang up your clothes when you take them off.
- Read the care labels and follow instructions.
- Treat stains before laundering.
- Sort clothes before washing and drying.
- Follow the instructions on laundry products.

LAUNDRY IS MUCH LESS OVERWHELMING IF YOU DO IT FREQUENTLY AND AVOID A MOUNTAIN OF DIRTY CLOTHES. USE THESE SIMPLE INSTRUCTIONS TO KEEP ON TOP OF YOUR LAUNDRY PILE AND ALWAYS LOOK (AND SMELLING) YOUR BEST.

HANG UP YOUR CLOTHES

The last thing that you need is a pile of stinky, dirty laundry in your room. You can save hours of washing and ironing if you just take a few minutes to hang your clothes on hangers rather than leaving them piled in a corner of your room. Hanging shirts, dresses and slacks can also help eliminate major wrinkles. Some fabrics like those made with wool aren't meant to be washed frequently, but instead can be hung to aerate the garment and get rid of any odors.

READ CARE LABELS

Following the manufacturer's recommended instructions can mean the difference between a garment that lasts and one that is ruined easily. Read the care labels in your garments. They contain clothing care procedures that are recommended by the clothing manufacturer. Symbols now appear on garment labels. It may seem like a secret code at first glance, but these universal washing symbols will let you know which cycle to use, how to dry and even the heat setting on an iron. By law, manufacturers must attach care labels permanently. They are usually on the inside of the collar, neckline or waist seam, but can be on other inside seams, as well. Although you can remove the labels, it is best to leave them attached to know how to care for your clothing.

LAUNDRY

WASHING

					
MACHINE WASH NORMAL	MACHINE WASH PERMANENT PRESS	MACHINE WASH DELICATE	HAND WASH NORMAL	MAX WATER TEMPERATURE	DO NOT WASH
					
MACHINE WASH 30°C OR 80°F	MACHINE WASH 40°C OR 105°F	MACHINE WASH 50°C OR 120°F	MACHINE WASH 60°C OR 140°F	MACHINE WASH 70°C OR 160°F	MACHINE WASH 95°C OR 200°F

DRY

					
TUMBLE DRY NORMAL HEAT	TUMBLE DRY LOW HEAT	TUMBLE DRY MEDIUM HEAT	TUMBLE DRY HIGH HEAT	DO NOT TUMBLE DRY	DRY CLEAN ONLY

BLEACH & DRY CLEAN

					
DRY CLEAN ANY SOLVENT	DRY CLEAN PCE ONLY	DRY CLEAN PETROLEUM ONLY	WET CLEAN	DO NOT DRY CLEAN	DO NOT BLEACH
					
DRIP DRY	DRY FLAT	DRY IN THE SHADE	HANG TO DRY	NON-CHLORINE BLEACHING	BLEACHING IS ALLOWED

IRON

					
IRON	LOW TEMPERATURE	MEDIUM TEMPERATURE	HIGH TEMPERATURE	DO NOT IRON	DO NOT STEAM

REMOVING STAINS

Spots and stains are easier to remove if they are treated quickly – not a few days after the stain appeared. If you wait, you may ruin your favorite shirt or jeans!

Before treating a stain, check the garment's care label for helpful information on fiber content and recommended care. Do not cut out the care label! To remove a stain, start by blotting the stain with a clean cloth; do not rub the stain. Work from the outer edge to the center of the stain. Be patient when following stain-removal directions.

One way to remove a stain is to pre-treat before laundering, using a stain remover. Pre-soak stain removers usually come in pump sprays, liquid soaps, or sticks. Follow the product label for instructions. Another pre-treatment alternative is to rub in a liquid detergent or make a paste of water and granular detergent, and then apply to the stain. Stain removers work best on tough, oily stains.

Chlorine bleach is a stain remover. Use it only on white and colorfast clothes. Although bleach can also improve the cleaning power of the laundry detergents, it weakens fibers (especially cotton) when used repeatedly. That makes clothes wear out quicker. ***Do not use bleach on silk, wool, spandex, non-colorfast fabrics, or fabrics with a flame-retardant finish.*** Oxygen bleach is safe for colored fabrics and is most effective in brightening colors and whites when used regularly. Once a clothing item is laundered, check for stain removal before putting items into the dryer. Re-treat stains that are not completely gone before drying; some stains must be treated several times. The heat of the dryer can set the stain and make a stain permanent.

SORTING

Sort clothes before washing to keep colors from fading onto other colors, to prevent transfer of lint and soil, and to make it easier to choose the best water temperature and detergent for your clothes. Be sure to empty pockets; shake off loose dirt; close zippers, hooks, and eyes; and remove belts, pins, and buckles.

Then sort the clothes by:

Color: Separate whites from colors, and light colors from dark.

Fiber content of fabric: Fibers that can be washed together include cotton and linen; wool and acrylic; and manufactured fibers (polyester and blends). Remember that some fabrics should be dry-cleaned only.

Texture: Separate smooth fabrics (such as polyester) from pile fabrics (corduroy). Wash fabrics that shed lint, such as towels made of terry cloth, separately from those that attract it, such as corduroy, velveteen and most permanent-press fabrics.

Construction: Wash delicate items separately, such as loose knits, lace, or any item requiring hand washing.

Soil: Separate heavily soiled from lightly soiled clothes.

SELECT LAUNDRY PRODUCTS AND WASHING TECHNIQUES.

SOAPS AND DETERGENTS

Read laundry labels and directions to choose the right detergent. Soaps are designed for light, gentle washing; detergents work to remove a variety of soil amounts. Use the recommended amounts.

Liquids : All-purpose laundry detergents that are especially effective on food, greasy and oily soils. Since in liquid form, they are also good for pre-treating spots and stains.

Powders : All-purpose laundry detergents which are ideal for general laundering. Effective on lifting out clay and ground-in dirt.

Ultra-Detergents : Most liquid and powder detergents are now concentrated and in smaller packaging, yet offer the same amount of cleaning power as larger packages. You need less ultra-detergent than un-concentrated product. Read package instructions for use.

Combination Detergents : One detergent that does two jobs. Designed with built-in fabric softeners in liquid or powder detergents, or powder detergent with color-safe bleach.

Fragrance or Dye-free detergents : Many detergent products are now fragrance-free and/or dye-free.

Detergent Packets : Single-load liquid laundry packets containing highly concentrated detergent.

High-Efficiency Detergents : Detergents (both liquid and powder forms designed for use in both front and top-loading HE washers. These products are formulated for use in low-water volume.

Remember:

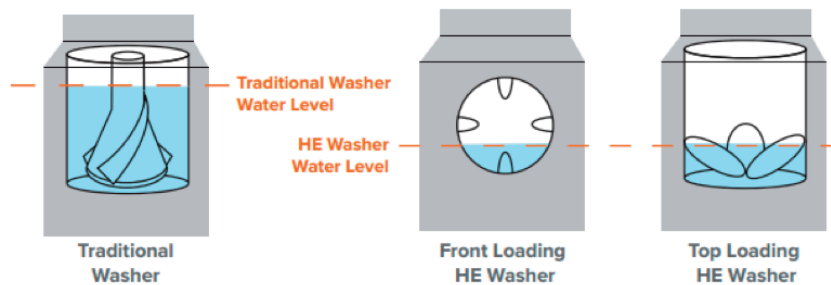
- Every load of laundry needs detergent to get clean.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for amounts to use. Measure the detergent before adding it to the water.
- More detergent may be needed for extra-large loads and less for very small loads.
- High efficiency machines, which use significantly less water than top loaders, use detergent marked HE. Regular detergent produces too many suds in low water levels and makes it difficult to remove all of the soap for the load.

WASHING MACHINES

Washing machines come in two basic categories, *traditional* and *high-efficiency (HE)*. They also come in front-loading or top loading styles.

Traditional washers have an agitator which moves back and forth or up and down. Clothing in the washer will be completely submerged in water.

High-efficiency washers use a tumbler system with low-water wash and rinse cycles. They do not have an agitator. These washers also use about 50 percent less water and 20-50 percent less energy than traditional models.



WATER TEMPERATURE

Washing machines are now designed to minimize the need for hot water. All detergents work better in water temperatures above 65 degrees. Check the care label instructions and fiber content for temperature guidelines.

Hot water is best to remove germs and heavy soil and is typically used for whites, bedding, towels, dirty clothing, and diapers. However, hot water can shrink, fade, and damage some fabrics.

Warm water is designed for man-made fiber, knits, and jeans. Most of your clothes can be washed in warm water without significant fading or shrinking.

Cold Water is for dark or bright colors that bleed or delicate fabrics. Washing with cold water saves energy.

LOADING THE WASHER

Fill the washer with water, add detergent, and then clothes. **Do not pack clothes into a washer.** Overloading washers can create extra lint, leave detergent on clothes, and shorten their life. Place them loosely and unfolded, so that water and detergent can circulate freely through the clothes. Vary the size of articles in loads. For example, wash large towels and wash cloths together, or jeans and dark shirts, or two sheets and smaller items requiring similar water temperatures. Never wind, wrap, or drape clothing over the washer agitator. This could tear and damage your clothes.

DRYING

Choose a dry cycle that fits the care label instruction. If items can be washed together, generally they can be dried together. Some items may shrink when dried. Again, read the label. You may want to remove such items from the washer and hang them to dry rather than drying in the dryer. Shake damp clothes to loosen them before placing them in the dryer. **Do not overload the dryer.** If you are using a dryer with a removable lint filter, clean it before starting the next dryer cycle. If you do not clean the filter regularly, your apartment or house may be at risk of fire. Regular cycles are intended for all-cotton fabrics. Use the permanent press cycle for clothes made of manmade fibers, such as polyester, nylon and acrylic. Avoid wrinkles by removing clothes from the dryer as soon as the cycle ends. Leaving them in the dryer will create more wrinkles.

Do not over dry clothing. Remove items with elastic bands, such as shorts, socks, and bras, while slightly damp. Some touch-up ironing may be necessary on some items.

Air drying. Read the garment care label. Some items should not be dried in the dryer but should be dried on a flat surface or hung to dry.

CHOOSING A LAUNDROMAT

If you are living in a dorm or apartment, you may not have a washer and dryer on the premises. Though less expensive than dry cleaning, a coin-operated laundry can be costly. Sorting clothing correctly can save your money and your clothes.

Choose a laundromat that is clean, well maintained and well lit. Look for businesses that provide tables for folding, hanging racks, and baskets for moving laundry from washers to dryers.

Before using any type of commercial laundry machine; check for left behind clothing, wipe down the inside of the machine with a disinfectant wipe to kill any germs left behind and smell inside the drum for bleach – some people overuse bleach, and you do not want to have any clothing ruined by bleach residue.

Be prepared to pay by the load. Washers and dryers are equipped to pay either by a card or coin operated. It is less expensive to bring your own laundry detergent. Be sure to bring hangers.

Adapted from *Laundry on your own*, by Pamela Brown, 1998, Texas Agricultural Extension Service with permission.

Sources:

<https://www.fabriclink.com/>

<https://www.cleaninginstitute.org/cleaning-tips/clothes/laundry-basics>

<https://www.textileaffairs.com/>

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