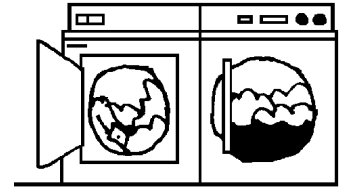


## Doing the Laundry

To keep our clothes and household linens looking nice and lasting longer, we need to learn how to wash and dry them properly. If you have helped do the laundry, you probably know that clothes must be sorted and water temperature selected. Let's see what other things we need to learn before we just "throw" those clothes in the washer. Always ask adult permission before you do the laundry or use appliances.



There are many different types of laundry detergents, fabric softeners, bleach and other additives. Some of these, especially bleach, are dangerous and should be used by an adult. Ask your mother to explain the laundry products she uses and be sure you understand how to use them correctly.

First, check clothes for **stains** or very heavy dirt. These areas need to be treated with a stain stick, spray, or full-strength detergent before they go into the washer. Always read the directions on these products first to be sure they are safe for the type of fabric and test a small area that won't show. Pre-treat the clothes as needed.

There are several things to consider when you **sort the laundry**. Often we just separate laundry into dark and light loads. Sometimes that works fine, but what about delicate garments, cleaning rags, and clothes with food stains? Do we put those in the same load even if they are all light colored? No. Delicate clothes need to be washed on a gentle cycle or by hand, but that would not be sufficient to clean heavily soiled clothes. Let's learn about the different settings on our laundry appliances.

**Washers and dryers have different cycles** so that clothes with different needs are washed appropriately. A **delicate cycle or knit cycle** uses gentle agitation and the wash time is short. The **permanent press cycle** has a "cool-down" period and does not extract as much water during the spin cycle. This helps prevent wrinkles. We use a **regular or heavy duty cycle** most often. These have a vigorous wash cycle that you can set for varying lengths of time and the spin cycle extracts the most water from the clothes.

**Dryers** also have various settings: a delicate or low heat setting, a permanent press setting, and a hot setting for towels and other sturdy fabrics are the most common. Washers and dryers vary a great deal: front loaders, top loaders, and now there are machines with steam

cleaning. Look at the machines you use and learn what settings are available. The appliance manual will give further information.

**Now let's sort the clothes.** Sort the dark clothes from the light or colorfast clothes.

Remove anything that is **delicate**: lingerie, garments with lace or special trim, some knit fabrics, sheer fabrics. It's always a good idea to **read the care label**. Laundry directions are written on labels in clothes and household linens; sometimes they are on the back of a label. Anything that says delicate, or hand wash, needs to be washed and dried separately.

If possible, wash **towels** in a load by themselves, especially when they are new. They give off a lot of lint in the washer and the dryer. If you put towels in the same load as socks and corduroy pants, the socks and pants will be covered with lint!

There's another reason to wash towels by themselves. Terry cloth towels are rough. If you wash them with smooth sheets or smooth knit fabrics, the rough towels rub against them in the wash and cause **pilling**. "Pills" are little balls of fiber that are created by friction against fabric. Pilling often occurs on garments under the arms and in other areas that get rubbed as we wear them. These pills can be removed with special clothes shavers. Proper washing will also minimize pilling.

Wash **sheets and pillowcases** together, without other clothes if possible. You can wash similar colored clothes with them, but the long sheets twist and often catch the other clothes, especially in the dryer where you will end up with a dry sheet tightly twisted around a ball of damp clothes!

Most of the rest of the clothes can be washed on the **regular cycle**, keeping the colorfast and light clothes separated from the dark colors. Set the washer dial according to how dirty the clothes are. Some dials simply say: "light – medium – heavy soil" and others indicate the number of minutes you want the wash cycle to last. Usually 8 – 10 minutes is adequate unless the clothes are very dirty. Increase the time if necessary.

**Hot water** helps sanitize fabric and is especially good for colorfast towels, diapers, and some sheets. **Warm water** is suitable for most clothing that is colorfast. **Cold water** is best for colors that may fade in the wash, but be sure to use a laundry detergent designed for cold temperatures. As a general rule, warmer water does a better job of cleaning.

Use **liquid or powdered detergent**; they both work well. Fill the washer with water. As it fills, add the detergent. Be sure it is dissolved and then add the clothes. Pouring the detergent directly onto the clothes may cause permanent stains. Read the detergent label and use the recommended amount. Using too much detergent can cause damage to your machine, and a big sudsy mess spilling out of the washer!

Load the clothes into the washer so they have plenty of room to move freely in the water. Overloading can damage the washer and the clothes won't get clean.

If you use **liquid fabric softener**, use an automatic dispenser or wait until the rinse water has filled the washer and then carefully add the softener. It can discolor the fabric if it comes in direct contact with the clothes.

Unless you hang clothes outdoors or in a basement to dry, you will need to use a **dryer**. When you remove the clothes from the washer, shake them out a little as you put them into the dryer. Use the heat setting that is appropriate for the clothes. Many people set the dryer on the hottest setting so the clothes dry faster. But high heat causes shrinkage and more wrinkles. It's fine for towels, but clothing, especially knit fabrics, do better at a lower heat setting.

Do not overload the dryer. That can lead to dangerous overheating. Also, the clothes will dry unevenly and come out wrinkled.

Clothes will last longer and look better when they are properly laundered. Read your washer and dryer manuals to learn how to best use all of the appliance features.

**Safety Reminder:** Always ask an adult before using cleaning and laundry products and follow their directions. Keep these products out of the reach of young children.

**A word of caution about bleach:** It is a very effective disinfectant and cleaner, but it is a powerful chemical that can harm you and your clothes. Only use it with adult supervision and permission. **Ammonia** is another strong cleaner that should be used only with adult permission. **Never** mix ammonia and bleach or products that contain these: this creates a very harmful gas!