



# Laundry

Laundry can seem like an endless task. We go through plenty of clothing, bedding, and towels, and it all needs to be cleaned. But even as we finish up this week's load, there's already more accumulating. It's no surprise, then, that after the refrigerator, the washing machine and dryer are typically the leading culprits in terms of high resource usage in the home -- especially if they're older models. But there are ways you can continue to use these convenient appliances while still taking care of the earth.

**BEST PRACTICE AREA:  
ENVIRONMENTALLY  
PREFERRED PURCHASING**

**BEST PRACTICE AREA:  
ENERGY EFFICIENCY**

**BEST PRACTICE AREA:  
SURFACE AND  
GROUNDWATER**

## DID YOU KNOW?

It has been estimated that if every person in New York City washed in cold water for one *day*, it would save enough electricity to power the Empire State Building for one *month*.

## LAUNDRY BY THE NUMBERS:

- 90%: the amount of energy used by a washing machine to heat the water—only 10% goes to running the motor.
- 7,000: gallons of water saved by using a front-loading washing machine compare to a top-loading machine.
- 88%: increase in washing machine efficiency between 1981 and 2003.
- 400: the number of laundry loads done by a typical American household annually

## WASH IT COLD!

Washing your clothes in cold water can be just as effective as washing in hot water. Many companies have developed cold water detergents that work equally well in cold water as regular detergents in hot water. If you're still skeptical try using warm water or a cold water rinse instead. The less energy you spend heating your water, the greener you'll be!

## 10 TIPS TO GREEN YOUR LAUNDRY DAY:

1. **Wear it more than once:** It doesn't go for everything (unmentionables and socks come to mind), but the simplest way to cut back on your laundry's impact is to--duh!--just do less of it. Wearing your clothes more than once before tossing them in the dirty pile is the first step in greening your laundry habits. You can consume up to five times less energy by wearing your jeans at least three times, washing them in cold water, and skipping the dryer or the iron.
2. **Use green laundry detergent:** Conventional detergents can contain ingredients that aren't good for you, your clothes, or aquatic ecosystems where the dirty water we wash down the drain can end up. Look for labels that indicate a product is readily biodegradable and phosphate-free, and made from plant- and vegetable-based ingredients.
3. **Choose concentrated detergent:** Concentrated laundry detergents have reduced packaging and a smaller carbon footprint (because more useful product can be shipped using less space and fuel). Plus, they deliver more bang for the buck.
4. **Make your own laundry detergent:** Do-it-yourself laundry soap is perhaps the greenest way to go. You'll need just a handful of ingredients that can all be found at most grocery stores, and you don't need a Masters in chemical engineering to put them together. Best of all, you'll know exactly what's going into your formula, and, after some practice, you can customize your mix with essential oils for a fresh fragrance.
5. **Maximize your washer for energy efficiency:** If you have a top-loading washing machine from the last century, chances are it uses twice as much water per load than a newer machine. Front-loading washing machines bearing the Energy Star logo typically use between 18 and 25 gallons per load, compared to 40 gallons for older machines.
6. **Hang it out to dry:** There are upward of 88 million dryers in the U.S., each emitting more than a ton of carbon dioxide per year. Because dryers use so much energy, skipping it altogether can make a real difference. Added bonus? Clothes last longer when you line dry because there's less wear and tear than when you use the dryer.
7. **Maximize your dryer:** Line-drying doesn't have to be an all or nothing choice. If you're sticking with the dryer for part (or all) of the time, cleaning the lint filter frequently will increase efficiency and shorten drying time. If your dryer has a moisture sensor, use it. This will automatically reduce the amount of drying time or shut off the machine when it senses that clothes are dry, reducing wear and tear on clothes and saves lots of energy.
8. **Don't iron if you don't have to:** Not only is ironing a tedious chore, it also consumes energy and can deteriorate fabric. So you probably won't mind if we put the kibosh on this boring activity. Still, no self-respecting environmentalist wants to look ruffled, right? To avoid looking haggard, simply hang clothes up immediately after the wash cycle is complete. The water still in them will work with gravity to pull most wrinkles out.
9. **Head to the Laundromat:** Commercial washers and dryers tend to be more efficient than domestic versions, so taking your bundle to the neighborhood laundromat may use less energy. If you drop your laundry off for service, ask the cleaner to use green detergents.
10. **Don't bother with dry cleaning:** Conventional dry cleaning is a decidedly un-green process; most businesses use the chemical perchloroethylene, which research studies have shown may be dangerous to our health. The best tip to green your dry-cleaning? Start buying clothes that don't require it! But if you must, try to dry-clean less often or seek out a cleaner who uses green products.

