

13 ** excerpt from Large Family Mothering Amy Maryon LAUNDRY

Having a plan when doing laundry is important for getting it all done during the week. Setting up your routine and “when” you do laundry is KEY to getting it all done. If you are tackling it all on one day, then get it done. Make it a goal to keep it rotated and get everything finished. If you can’t do it all in one day, because like our family, your septic would be overflowing, then make it a priority everyday to throw in one to two loads.

Area

If you can dedicate one area to laundry that is great. You need some shelves for clean baskets, a place to store detergents and other supplies, and place for dirty laundry separation. If you can have an additional table to fold things on, excellent, but not everyone has such a large space. In our new home, our laundry is in a closet area off of the hallway. I can’t have a set place for three laundry hampers. I must keep one in each bathroom. When I do laundry, I have to dig through the baskets to find each type I am washing that day. I liked it much better when I could put towels in one, lights in another, darks in a third. But you do what you can with what you have and you make it work!

Separation

Separation of laundry is important to maintaining your clothing. If you wash your nicer shirts or dresses with bath towels, it can get fuzzies on it. Jeans and other dark clothing will bleed somewhat and make your lighter clothing dingy. When separating sort according to these:

- towels/washcloths
- jeans/dark work shirts/dark socks and underwear
- dark clothing---nicer shirts and dresses
- lighter clothing/underwear/white socks
- reds or any other clothing that will bleed--keep separate.
- all whites or partial whites that you want bright do separately in a bleach or oxygen cleaner
- sheets/comforters---larger loads keep separate as to not overload your washer
- hand washables---check tags and do these in a bucket in your sink

It is okay to throw a few washcloths in with any clothing load. We do this every day. As soon as we are done with dishes, we put our wet washcloths and towels into the washer so that they don’t get smelly. They get washed with the next day’s laundry. I will throw in a load of towels, dark, or light clothing. I don’t throw in bath towels because one shirt will attract lint like crazy.

Washing

We wash everything in cold water. We have done that since I learned it was a waste of money to wash in anything but cold. This saves tremendously on your hot water bill. The only thing that we washed with hot water was cloth diapers. You need to do this to sanitize them. Bleached items, we do warm water too as to let the bleach get activated.

I start the wash and add a cup full of laundry detergent. As it is filling up, I put in the laundry that we are washing. Be mindful of not stuffing it all on one side. Layer it around the drum carefully to avoid it going off balance. Fill the clothing below the top of your middle agitator. Notice when the clothing is agitating around that the clothing is “actually” moving. If you have it stuffed full, the clothing can’t get properly moved around and washed. This will result in smelly clothing.

We do a normal or heavy wash for each of our loads. If we do a smaller bleached load, I will put it on a low setting. Note, if you do wash clothing with bleach, to ensure that there is none leftover for your next load, you can do an extra rinse cycle to make sure none is left. If you are brave, throw in a load of towels, something you don’t mind getting ruined. I would not recommend putting in a load of regular clothing, as there may be a small amount left. Use caution when using bleach, as a tiny amount will ruin clothing.

Drying

As soon as it is done washing, place it in your dryer. Make sure to remove any shirts or dresses that you don’t want to “shrink-up.” We now have a gas dryer and I was unaware of the “power” of how quickly it dries. We have shrunk up many shirts, that I now check through to hang anything I don’t want dried.

If you have access to a clothesline outside, hang out your laundry. It helps when you are taking it out of your washer to layer it according to how you are going to hang it outside. Towels together. Jeans together. Shirts together, etc. When you clip clothing, overlap it just a bit to the next article of clothing to use every inch of space on your line. Shirts hang upside down as they will clip easier. Jeans and skirts, hang from the waistline. It is normally harder to overlap and share with another pair so don’t even try. If you can get a clothing drying rack this is good for smaller items that you don’t want to take up much space on your line. We use ours for underwear, socks, washcloths, and leggings. When we had cloth diapers, I would use my drying rack to hang all of my inserts on. I placed it directly in the sunshine so that it would naturally bleach them.

If you live in a high allergy area like we do, the pollen can be thick during certain season and it coats everything. We only hang items out when we know it is low. I usually just hang blankets, bathing suits, towels, and jeans outside. The rest we put in the dryer and I will even hang up all of the shirts to let them air dry on a shower bar. If I was looking to save some extra energy.

There was a time when our dryer died, so we hung everything up. We did it by using a clothesline, a drying rack, and keeping up on it. As long as you don’t get behind, it is easy to stay up on dirty clothing. The moment you decide not to do laundry, is when it gets backed up and sometimes it seems it takes forever to dry. When we had no dryer and I had to be careful of the weather, I would do extra loads on the days it was nice because I knew I might not get the opportunity to hang things out. I was careful to hang up any bath towels that weren’t very dirty and reuse them. Any clothing that didn’t directly touch the body like skirts, jumpers, and jeans by a person who stayed indoors all day, didn’t get laundered each time. Pajamas that were on a cleaned body, got re-worn for a few days. This is possible to do, even in a large family.

Folding

As soon as laundry is dried, I separate it into the appropriate baskets:

- one for towels
- one for Mom and Dad
- one for the girls
- one for the boys
- one for the older boys

Any dresses or nicer shirts, I hang them up. Most of our clothing is everyday and able to stay thrown together in a basket. I don't fold them before placing them in the baskets, we fold them when we put them away. When we put clothing away each week, I take down the articles that I have hung on the bars above the washer and place them on top of each person's baskets to be delivered to the bedrooms. By sorting into the various bedrooms is easier for us because we don't have a set day that we do laundry. I wash and dry all week long so by having a basket for each person, I am able to keep them there out of sight until we put them all away.

If I did not have an area to store laundered clothing in, wash all in one day, and sort from a big pile and then put away that same day. We did this back when we had four smaller children.

I put away my husbands and my laundry. If I have a smaller child tagging along with me, I will ask them to put Dad's socks in his drawers, etc. The older boys do their own. I periodically go through and check their clothes. We often times find a missing sock or a missing t-shirt in their closets. The little boys, I put away myself. It is easier than having them help. I then help the girls separate clothing into the four girls piles. Everyone can put away their own underclothes. I then hand the smaller girls their clothing that is on hangers and they put them away. The two older girls, put away their own. My oldest daughter at home, is responsible for doing her own laundry, which she washes and dries herself.

Towels are folded as the basket gets full. I save this for a child who needs an extra chore for the day or for someone who doesn't have a morning chore.

What is the best washer and dryer?

For years, we got by with just one set of regular-drum washer and dryers. They worked and did their thing. Then we got a high efficiency-top loader washer and dryer and life changed. The amount of time I spent doing laundry went down a lot, due to the ability to do bigger loads. This was great when I had my hands full of six little ones under seven years of age! Cloth diapers got cleaner, and my husband's dirty and greasy work clothing got cleaner as well. I loved my HE washer and dryer. We went with the top loading format instead of front loading ones because of complaints from friends who said because of hard water build up, their seal was leaking. We never had any issues even with hard water.

Then life changed and we moved to another state. I was never able to use my high efficiency that we brought due to the size of the opening in our washer/dryer area. I used what they had. It was just a regular washer and dryer with a drum. I just did laundry more frequently. My children were also older and life wasn't so time consuming so I was able to keep up. I installed a clothesline to help with getting laundry done quicker and that was great.

Then we bought a home so we could be permanent in our new location. I was using the washer that came with the home and it works well. The only reason we are going to purchase another high efficiency front loader is to help cut down on the water usage in our home so that our septic is not overloaded. A septic

specialist told us that a regular washer can use 50 gallons of water each load. If we had a high efficiency washer, most use only 15-25 gallons. We added up how many loads we do a day, how many showers we took, how many flushes we did on a average day and it was getting pretty close to the size of our septic. We decided instead of “worrying” about staying within a two load per day limit, that we would invest in another high efficiency washer machine.

Tips that have helped me over the years:

Train each of your children to pull out their socks when taking them off, pull their pant legs straight, and to check their pockets. My children “know” that mom is not going to check their pockets so if something is left inside, it can very well get washed. I have washed an electric razor before, an Mp3 player, lots of money, and many times a wallet. This teaches them that it is not my job to do that. It takes them only seconds verses me minutes to check everyone’s clothing.

Consider buying all white linens. Even if your color schemes change you will always have uniform matching towels. You can always bleach these and a new white towel will match an old white towel. The same goes for bed linens---whites never fade, they look cleaner.

Close zippers and other fasteners to keep them from snagging things.

Fold or hang up clothes as soon as they are finished drying to cut down on wrinkles.

Keep an ice cream bucket that you can do hand washables in.

Use bleach only when needed. Nothing beats bleach for whiteners but it will break down the fibers in your clothing quickly. Sunshine is a natural way to brighten and remove stains on clothing. Hydrogen peroxide will help remove blood from clothing that has been stained.

Taking good care of clothing ultimately means buying fewer clothes. Follow care instructions---drip dry, etc.

If you have an area like a shelf to keep your sorting baskets separated all the time, get heavy duty square ones. They will last longer and not break as easily as round ones. If you can’t have your baskets out all the time, get round ones to stack easily and out of the way.

Thicker plastic laundry hampers last longer than flimsy ones that have lids. We do away with lids and keep them sitting in the shower of the bathroom out of sight.

Keep a small mending kit near your laundry room---even if you have a separate sewing area. You are much more likely to fix a hole or sew on a button if all your items are together. Keep a pair of scissors, some dark and light thread, and sewing needle handy. Don’t let your mending pile stack up, if you can fix it, take a few moments and do it. If you are not, then get rid of it.

Train everyone to put away their own laundry. Let go of ideals of folded socks, underwear, and pajamas. As they get older they will want their drawers neater. You put away the clothing that needs to stay neat, but they can do the others.

If you have only worn something for a few hours or have worn it but have not gotten it dirty like a jumper, pair of jeans, jean skirt, sweaters, etc, hang up, let air out, and then put away. Wash only clothing that sits next to your body---underwear, leggings, socks, t-shirts etc. Wear an apron to keep food and stains off your clothing. If it is not very dirty by the end of the day, hang it up for the next day. If you had a busy day in the kitchen, throw it in the next load.