

Tip Sheet: Clean Up Your Laundry Act!

Of all the major appliances in the typical American household, the electric clothes dryer uses a high 12% of a home's electricity. <https://michaelbluejay.com/electricity/dryers.html>

Action: Wash when you have full loads. Use cold water to wash and rinse. Air dry your laundry in summer.

Advanced: Apply portions of the laundry principle to your dishwasher. Wash only full loads and air dry. And later, in the colder seasons, consider ways to dry your laundry, or a portion of your laundry, by hanging it dry inside.

Tips for air drying laundry:

- Install a clothesline. Get a drying rack. Locate a hanging rod, like a shower rod.
- Hang shirts on plastic hangers on your clothesline, shower bar, or clothing rod.
- Hang clothes as soon as the wash is finished. Leave air space to circulate around wet items while drying.
- Wash and hang clothes in the morning to maximize daytime drying time.
- If needed, use a dryer for a couple minute to fluff the clothes to dry without wrinkles.
- Some homeowners' associations prohibit outdoor clotheslines, however, in some places that is not enforced.
- If you create indoor drying space in the winter, it can help add humidity to your home.

Other tips you can use when laundering:

- Reduce the amount of the laundry you need to do by using items that are not dirty for a longer time between washes. Clothes last longer when not exposed to dryer heat.
- Many fabrics are made with synthetic plastic fibers. When laundered, the fibers break forming tiny microfibers which end up in the water—including oceans and our drinking water. Washer or dryer filters do not catch them. Heat can release more microfibers; washing with cold water releases less. Full laundry loads cause less friction so they release fewer fibers than smaller loads. Other ways to reduce microfibers include using liquid rather than powder detergents, hanging clothes to dry or drying on low heat, and washing the fabrics less often. See more details at <https://www.sustainably-chic.com/blog/7-tips-on-how-to-avoid-microplastics-when-washing-your-clothes>)
- If you still use a dryer for some items, use a moisture sensing setting to stop drying as soon as it senses clothes are dry. Use low heat for a longer time to use less energy.
- If purchasing a new dryer, look for an Energy Star model to use about 20% less energy. https://www.energystar.gov/products/appliances/clothes_dryers
- When purchasing a new washing machine, consider a front-loading model. They use far less water than top-loading models, and since they spin faster they extract more water so less energy is required for drying. And look for Energy Star models of these, too.

