Lighten the Load

These time-saving, effort-shrinking tips make every step in the laundry cycle—from gathering to washing to putting away—a little bit easier.

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produced by Janna Lupkin

Sort smart
Train family members to sort their own dirty laundry as they make it. A tote with three compartments makes it no-excuses easy. Canvas mega sorter, $25; landofnod.com

In the bag
Collect each person’s socks and underwear in a separate zippered mesh bag, then send the whole bag through the washer and dryer. (For easy loading, hang bags from ribbon tied through the zipper.) Large mesh wash bag, $5, containerstore.com

On the spot
Stock stain removers in each bedroom, bathroom, and wherever else dirty clothes are collected, and make sure everybody knows how to use them.
Gather your gear
Think through everything you might need to treat stains, wash, and dry, then stock a shelf accordingly (hang one if needed). Easy access equals efficiency.

In the clear
A clear canister not only makes powdered detergent look neater, right, it also eliminates messy pouring and shows you when you’re running low. Set soaps and supplies on a heavy-duty turntable to contain spills. Lazy Susan, $25; containerstore.com

Info, please
Hang a stain-removal chart for easy reference, below. If your kids hate scratchy labels in their clothes, cut them off and staple to index cards. Post the cards or file them in a recipe box.

Laundry room time-savers
1. Catch loose change and other pocket treasure in a jar. (House rule: Mom keeps the silver.)
2. Assemble stain-removal gear, such as peroxide, dish soap, and white vinegar. A high-sided, open-front bin keeps bottles upright and easy to grab.
3. Designate a bin for orphan socks. Eventually, pairs will be reunited.
4. Stack dryer sheets in a shallow dish—it’s easier than grabbing them out of the box, plus they scent the air.
5. Keep a spray bottle of water handy. Mist a wrinkled shirt, fluff it in the dryer for five minutes, and you just might not have to iron.

Print This!
Get this handy stain-removal chart at BHG.com/stainchart
Create some space

Two practical, affordable pieces give any laundry area must-have spots for folding and hanging.

Counter offer

If your laundry room lacks counter space, fake it with a kitchen cart, right. At 34 inches, it’s a comfortable height for folding. Add a “to donate” bin to capture outgrown clothes before they find their way back into circulation. Flytta kitchen cart, $159; IKEA

Garment district

The secret to unwrinkled shirts: Hang them up as soon as the dryer buzzes. A garment rack stocked with hangers, below, makes it easy. Adjustable garment rack, $25; containerstore.com

EDITOR’S PICKS

Three to Try

Take some of the hassle out of doing laundry with these handy products.

1 Tired of hoisting drippy, sticky mega jugs of soap? Just toss a Dropps detergent pac into the wash water before the clothes—no measuring, no mess. Dropps detergent pacs, $8 for 26; Target stores

2 Attach a Bounce dryer bar to the drum of your dryer and you’ll get two months worth of soft, static-free laundry, without having to remember the dryer sheet. Bounce dryer bar, $6; Walgreens stores

3 Who has time to hand-wash bras? Pop one into the Berry Ball and you can machine-wash it without fear of twisted straps or misshapen cups. Berry Ball, $14; berryperry.com
Complete the cycle

If your kids aren’t putting away their own laundry, they should be. Also, impose a three-use minimum on towels and jeans. Explain it to your family this way: The less laundry they make, the more time for fun.

Full circle

The same divided tote that gathered dirties is perfect for returning clean clothes to bedrooms, *above*. Stack clothes by type to make putting them away easier.

Label-conscious

Help kids get clothes in the right spots by labeling the tops of their drawers, *left*. When the drawer is closed, the label is out of sight.