

Simple, Effective Laundry Tips for Saving Energy (and Money)

The two best and most remarkable tips for saving energy (and money) when doing laundry are to 1) wash your clothes in cold water, and 2) hang-dry your clothes (costs nothing in electrical usage or carbon use). Up to 90 percent of the energy needed to wash clothes is attributed to heating water, so using cold water is the biggest energy saving action you can take when washing clothes. You also save \$60 a year for an average family.

Eight Energy Saving Tips for the Washing Machine

1. Wash full loads only (but don't overload) to save water, time, and energy.
2. Weigh a load of clothes once to get an idea of what 15 pounds looks and feels like. When buying, size your washer and dryer for equivalent load sizes.
3. Use cold water.
4. Adjust water level to the lowest practical setting.
5. Use the shortest cycle needed.
6. Avoid using too much detergent to eliminate the need for extra rinse.
7. Pre-soak especially dirty clothes.
8. Use a front-loading washer to reduce water use and drying time.

Top-Loaders or Front-Loaders?

Top-loading washers use from 30 to 60 gallons of water and 300 to 500 watt-hours per load (not including water heating up).

Front-loading (horizontal axis) washers use about 200 watt-hours per load for the longest possible load. The water well pump requires an additional 33 watt-hours to pump the 25 gallons (with extra rinse) needed by the machine. If you have municipal water, you'll save on water and sewer costs. The front loader's action is gentler, reducing wear and tear on clothes, and it spins much more water out of the clothes, allowing for shorter drying time.

Clothes washers are rated for efficiency using the Modified Energy Factor (MEF), a figure that considers washer capacity, electrical energy used, water heating energy required, and how dry the clothes are when they come out of the washer. The higher the MEF, the more efficient the washer is. When buying new, look for a Modified Energy Factor of 1.42 or higher.

Energy Saving Tips for the Dryer

1. When drying, separate your clothes and dry similar types of clothes together. Lightweight synthetics, for example, dry much more quickly than bath towels and natural fiber clothes.
2. Don't overdry clothes. Take clothes out while they are still slightly damp to reduce the need for ironing - another big energy user. If your dryer has a setting for auto-dry, be sure to use it instead of the timer to avoid wasting energy.
3. Don't add wet items to a load that is already partially dried.
4. Dry two or more loads in a row, taking advantage of the heat still in the dryer from the first load.
5. Clean the dryer filter after each use. A clogged filter will restrict flow and reduce dryer performance.
6. Dry full loads when possible, but be careful not to overfill the dryer. Drying small loads wastes energy. Air should be able to circulate freely around the drying clothes.
7. Check the outside dryer exhaust vent. Make sure it is clean and that the flapper on the outside hood opens and closes freely.
8. In good weather, consider hanging clothes outside and using totally free solar energy to do the drying.

