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Home Tips: Wash Laundry Worries Away

Keeping the laundry piles manageable is easier when everyone pitches in

WACO, Texas (Sept. 16, 2008) - School is back in session, which means washing machines are probably back in spin cycle full-time.

Soccer uniforms and school clothes will pile up quickly on top of your normal laundry heap. If you get your children involved in the process, you could cut your laundry workload in half. Follow these three steps to make dirty laundry less of a chore.

Step 1 –Start with Sorting

- o Put three (or more) plastic bins in your child's bedroom or bathroom. Use one bin for colored clothes, one for whites and another for towels and jeans. If you have an athlete in the family, consider including another bin for uniforms to keep grass and mud from staining other clothes.
- o Get creative to make the sorting bins more fun for young children. Use trash cans with plastic lids and draw faces on them with a permanent marker. You can also buy pre-decorated laundry bins at most major retailers.

Step 2 – Set the Schedule

- o Post a washing schedule above the dirty laundry bins. On the appropriate day, have your child carry the proper bin to the laundry room to be washed. This will keep the dirty clothes pile manageable.

Step 3 – Finish Up

- o Encourage your child to help fold clothes. It's not the most fun activity, but it gives you another chance to ask about his or her day at school.

Reducing your laundry workload also relieves stress on your washer and dryer. Doug Rogers, president of Mr. Appliance Corp., said the back-to-school season is one of the busiest times for washer repairs.

“Don't try to squeeze as many clothes as possible into your washing machine,” Rogers said. “A normal load of laundry weighs about 12 pounds, but once the clothes are wet, they become twice as heavy. The cost of washing an extra load is far less expensive than a repair bill.”

Overloading a washing machine can lead to transmission and motor failure and broken drive belts. There are usually no warning signs — the machine just stops working.

Check the efficiency of your laundry room. Preventative maintenance can save you money on your utility bill. For example, a clogged dryer vent can increase your overall utility bill by \$7 per month.

Use this checklist to see if your laundry room is costing you extra money.

- o Replace washing machine hoses every three to five years to prevent flooding.
- o Use cold water instead of hot, when appropriate. Your home's hot water heater typically uses more energy than any other appliance.
- o Clean the dryer's lint trap regularly. Restricted air flow makes your dryer work harder and increases its operation cost. Also, excess lint buildup increases the chance of a fire.
- o Make sure the washer is level and sitting on a well-balanced floor. An uneven washer is noisy and can break during the spin cycle.

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