



Household Management 101

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How To Do Laundry (Part 3/7): Use A Laundry Sorter

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The next step in how to do laundry is to use a laundry sorter to sort the dirty clothes. The reason I suggest this is because it allows you to combine two steps into one.

You can both [gather your dirty clothes](#), by placing them in dirty clothes hampers as soon as they come off, and at the same time also sort the clothes into a laundry sorter.

You can sort laundry by having several laundry baskets in a central location, each of which is designated for a specific type of clothing, such as whites, darks, delicates, etc.

Or, my personal favorite is a [three bag laundry sorter](#) such as the one pictured.

The reason I love multiple bag laundry sorters is that when a bag is full, this is a visual reminder that you have enough laundry to do a full load of washing.

In addition, when you are ready to wash the clothes in that bag you can just lift the bag out of the laundry sorter and carry it to the laundry room.

Bags are also easier for smaller children to carry than bulky laundry baskets, so it makes it easier for them to help with this task.

Why It Is Important To Sort Laundry?

Sorting can be a bit of a hassle, if you don't combine the steps of gathering and sorting as I suggested above.

But the hassle is worth the effort because sorting protects one of your biggest investments, your family's clothing, from becoming dingy, succumbing to wear and tear faster, and even from being ruined by improper laundering.



Criteria To Use When You Sort Laundry

Have you ever tried to look at all the [tags on your clothing](#) and follow the instructions exactly for laundering?

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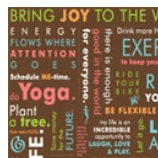


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If you sorted strictly by this criteria you would end up with lots of very small piles of laundry to wash, which is not very efficient.

On the other hand, if you dump everything in together to create an extremely large load you will be efficient, but you lose all the advantages that sorting provides for your clothes.

The trick when you sort laundry is to find the balance between making large enough loads to be efficient but not taking so many risks with your clothes, by bleaching when it says not to, for example, that you ruin something.

When you sort laundry, sort using the following criteria:

- Color
- Type of fabric, and
- Dirtiness of the laundry

Even small children, as young as two, can be taught to sort, at least by color and put their dirty clothes directly into the laundry sorter.

My son could sort by color when he was two and a half or so, and I suspect my oldest daughter could have too, if I had just taught her how.

I think we, as a society underestimate kids' ability to do chores, especially at young ages.

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When you have little kids, or you are the only one doing laundry, your main criteria should be color, not type of fabric, so you don't go insane trying to keep up with the laundry.

I have found that, at least when you have small children, buying clothes that can take a tough washing, and don't have to be dry cleaned, or washed separately, or only lined dried, or other special instructions that limit how it can be washed or dried are the best ones to buy.

I have gotten into the habit of rejecting clothing on the rack if it requires special

laundering that I don't already do on a regular basis.

I now realize that this special laundering means it will not get worn as often, because it will sit in the dirty clothes longer, waiting to get washed, so it is generally not worth buying in the first place.

I also suggest sorting by placing all the towels to wash together, and another pile or two for the bedding, and then another pile for the dishrags. This is also an easy method for sorting, but gets the job done.

Additional Steps To Take While Sorting Clothes

1. Check For Stains

When you are sorting, and have to think at least for a moment about each individual item anyway, it is the perfect time to look at each item and see if it has any [stains that need to be pretreated](#).

This is an especially important step when you have kids, because they are messy and get stains in some of the strangest places, and once you wash and dry the clothes, if you haven't pretreated the stain can set and become permanent.

Important places to look on children's clothing that are sometimes overlooked are cuffs of long sleeve shirts and pants. These areas seem to be magnets for stains.

2. Remove Stuff From Pockets

The other important thing to do is remove all things from pockets.

When an adult forgets money in their pocket, or a receipt, it can be a bit of an inconvenience, but generally it is not too bad (unless they left something difficult to replace in there, like a cell phone, which I once washed and ruined. Oops!).

However, when you don't check your children's pockets, or get them in the habit of doing it themselves, you can be in for some big surprises.

What? You didn't know that red crayon was in your son's pocket? Well, it marked up some of the clothes in the wash, but not too bad.

The bigger problem occurred when it went in the dryer and melted both on the dryer and the entire load of laundry.

[I have heard of that happening](#), and I shudder to think of the large amount of work to deal with that mess afterward.

It is definitely worth it to use a laundry sorter, and properly sort laundry, to save yourself some big headaches in the future.

See the next part in the [How to Do Laundry Series: How to Wash Clothes](#) for the next step in the laundry cycle.

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