

LAUNDRY LIST

HERE ARE SOME SIMPLE TO-DO'S THAT CAN HELP KEEP YOUR WASHER AND DRYER RUNNING SMOOTHLY.

Lynn Walters was sunning herself on a beach in Hawaii when she got an urgent call from her daughter back home in Johnston, Iowa: The washer had malfunctioned and flooded most of the first floor. Even though her daughter was only upstairs, by the time she discovered the problem, the kitchen's hardwood floors and all the carpeting were ruined. Whether your washer and dryer are decades old or this year's models, take these simple steps to avoid surprises:

- **Don't "set it and forget it."** Never start a load—in the washer or dryer—and then leave the house or go to sleep. You need to catch small problems such as an unbalanced load before they become big and cause a flood or fire, says Jill Notini, vice president, communications and marketing with the Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers. Also, always keep water supplies turned off when the machine is not in use.
- **Hire a licensed contractor** to install the stainless steel connection on a gas dryer (or the outlet for an electric model).
- **Use metal venting** rather than plastic, and keep it as short and straight as possible. Regularly check vents for lint buildup, and clean or replace.
- **Regularly inspect cords, hoses and vents** to make sure they aren't frayed or crushed. Rubber water supply hoses are prone to bursting; replace them with braided steel versions.
- **Clean the lint filter** after every load; every six months, scrub with hot soapy water to remove fabric softener residue.
- **Follow care instructions.** A rubber-backed rug might be OK in the washer but not safe for the dryer.
- **Watch what you dry.** Never dry things that have been in contact with flammable liquids. "A washer will get out a lot of oil, but not 100 percent, and it can ignite in the dryer," Notini says. Instead, air-dry outdoors or in a well-ventilated room.



Choosing a Washer

It's enough to make your head spin. The reason the average washing machine has become a whopping 45 percent more efficient since 2001? A faster spin cycle.

A speedier spin removes more moisture, which means clothes dry more quickly. "You really want to invest in a washer that makes your dryer more efficient," says Maria Vargas, spokesperson for the Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star program. Newer models also use less water and less energy to heat the water.

➤ **Front-loaders** are generally the most energy-efficient and use the least water, but they are more expensive. (Energy Star rebates and tax deductions that are available in some states can help with the cost.) Both compact and regular-size models are available.

➤ **Top-loaders** have been improved with Energy Star efficiencies. They're less expensive than front-loaders and also come in compact versions.

➤ **Stackables** fit in tight quarters. Some full-size models also stack.

➤ **Single-tub combos** let you wash and dry in a single machine and eliminate the need for venting. Their only drawbacks: Wash/dry cycles take a bit longer, and loads have to be smaller.

For more safety tips, call:
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