

real solutions

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Real Solutions is a periodic newsletter produced by Susan Stewart designed to provide practical organization tips to simplify your life.

Life Beyond Laundry

Five minutes before Cindy and the kids need to leave for sports camp, Nicole is hollering that she can't find any socks. Cindy hasn't done laundry in over a week and there are piles of dirty clothes throughout the house. She eventually tells Nicole to wear a pair of dirty socks. Cindy knows she has to do the laundry sooner or later, but it is such a big job that she dreads it! It usually takes someone running out of clean something or another to get her to face the task.



It is 10:00 pm and on her way to bed, Tracy makes a quick stop in the laundry room. Each night she throws a load of laundry in the washer to take advantage of using electricity during "off peak hours" as well as a way to keep on top of the laundry. When she wakes up early tomorrow, the load will be thrown into the dryer.

The next day during chore time, her daughter Brook is responsible for sorting the clothes from the dryer into each family

Left with no other choice, Cindy sets forth to tackle the laundry while Nicole is at camp. Gathering the dirty clothes from all over the house takes about a half an hour. She starts sorting piles in the hallway because the laundry room is too cramped. Now let's see.... there's whites, lights in cold water, lights in warm water, bright colors, darks, towels, sheets, swim suits and Zachary's baby clothes. With all of these piles, she's in for a full day of washing, folding, and putting away clothes.

As she begins to fill the first load of wash, she notices a spot on the front of Megan's shirt. Since the pre-spot is above the washer in a cabinet that Zachary can't reach, she begins to search for the step stool. Now, where could that be?

Later that day, Cindy is hanging clothes that can't go in the dryer, all over the house. There is no room in the laundry room to hang them. There is also a huge daunting pile of clean laundry that need to be folded and put away sitting on the couch. Actually, half of it has been slung around the living room since the kids were trying to find a place to sit. Cindy is bored and discouraged that the load of laundry all rests upon her.

member's basket. Each person has a basket with a different colored ribbon tied to it. After the clothes are sorted, they are carried to each person's room to be folded, hung and put away. Brook and Brandon are each responsible for emptying their own laundry baskets. It took some training and a little creativity to enable them to do this but it was worth it. For example: Tracy hung a rod doubler in Brook's and Brandon's closets so they would be able to reach all of their shirts which are to be hung. She also put small baskets inside their drawers to separate underwear, pajamas and socks. Sure, they still do their share of complaining about this task but Tracy believes it is good for them to learn this responsibility and it also cuts down on the amount of tasks she has to do in a day.

Later that evening after the kids are bathed, they are reminded to pick their clothes up off the floor and bring them to the laundry room where they place them in the light or dark basket. This makes it easier on Tracy to know when it is time to throw in a load of clothes because they are all collected into one spot.

On Saturday morning, all of the sheets are stripped off the beds and washed. Additionally, all of the towels are collected from the bathrooms and washed as well. Since this is all done at once, there is little need for sorting.

Sunday evening is ironing night for Tracy. She retrieves her ironing pile from the clear drawer in her laundry room designated for clothes that need to be ironed. Setting up the ironing board and ironing during one of her favorite TV programs makes the time pass more quickly. It also gives her a sense of accomplishment knowing she is starting off her week with a closet full of clean and ironed clothes.

According to The Tide Clothesline at www.clothesline.com the average household washes 7.4 loads – about 50 lbs. - per week and the average load contains 16 items. They go on to say that in a typical household, more than 6,000 articles of clothing are washed each year!

real solutions for real life

Set a routine or schedule for doing laundry. Keep in mind that the same system does not work for everyone. Consider your personality, lifestyle, size of family and location of laundry room to come up with a system that will work for you.

The burden of doing the laundry does not need to rest on one person. Come up with a plan to get everyone involved in sorting, folding and putting away.

Keep it simple. How many categories of laundry do you really need?

Sort on a daily basis. If your laundry room is close to the bedrooms, have family members put their dirty laundry in designated baskets for lights and darks. If your laundry room is on another level, consider having a lights and darks **hamper** in each room.

Don't wash towels after every use unless you truly enjoy washing towels. After all, you were clean when you used your towel.

Wash **sheets** and towels on weekends or a day when you have the time to replace them.

People often leave clothes that need to be dry cleaned or hand washed on the floor because they don't know what to do with them. Designate a **spot** in the laundry room or master closet for these. Make sure it is easily accessible as well as visible so you don't forget about them.

Drying racks take up a lot of room, so consider installing a **retractable** clothesline or a wall mounted **rack**.

Have kids help sort clothes straight out of the dryer. Have a different colored basket for each person or tie a colored ribbon to each **basket**.

Wheeled **carts** with room for baskets works well for some people. It may be easier to wheel your clothes to where you fold them (in front of the TV) and to the rooms they need to be put away in.

Giving children the responsibility of folding/**hanging** their own clothes, saves you time and decreases the likelihood of them throwing every little thing into the dirty clothes.

Make it easy for kids to put their own clothes away. If clothes are to be **hung**, make sure the rod is low enough for them to **reach**. For small children, drawer **dividers** inside a drawer are easier to use than a folded pile. (i.e. As long as my 6 year olds' underwear makes it into the underwear section in the drawer, that is good enough for me.)

Weed out clothes in kids' drawers and adult drawers. It is overwhelming to try to put away clothes in a drawer when they don't fit.

Consider installing a **fold** down ironing board if your laundry room is small. If you have more room, use an ironing board **organizer** to hang the ironing board and iron. This gives them a home to return them to and gets them off the floor.

Have a plan for ironing. Designate a place to put things that need to be ironed. Iron once a week. Or, take dress shirts to the dry cleaner to be laundered. They launder and iron them for as little as \$1 a shirt.

Keep ironing to a minimum by spraying casual shirts with a water bottle and giving them a few shakes. Hang immediately.

For more organizing tips go to www.perfectlyplaced.org

