



ENERGY E-TIPS

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Clothes Washers

In this edition of ENERGY E-TIPS, we continue our discussion on household appliances with clothes washers. For more information on what has been previously discussed, please visit the Energy E-tips website http://www.arhomeandgarden.org/News/Energy_ETips/energy_etips.htm.

Average Arkansans families use clothes washers almost 400 times annually to wash their clothes, whether in their home or at a Laundromats. Energy Star qualified models are advertised to cut energy costs by about 33% and water costs by more than 50%. However, there are so many options that may become confusing to the consumer on which option is energy and cost effective.

Beginning January 1, 2007, all ENERGY STAR® residential clothes washers met the minimum Modified Energy Factor (MEF) of 1.72 for ENERGY STAR® models. The MEF measures the energy used during washing process, including machine energy, water heating energy, and dryer energy. Higher the MEF corresponds to more efficient clothes washer. In addition, new ENERGY STAR® models have a maximum Water Factor (WF) of 8.0. The WF measures the gallons of water used per cycle per cubic foot. The lower the WF, the less water the machine uses.

Clothes washers come in two designs: front-loading and the more familiar top-loading version. Front loading machines are similar to the washers used in Laundromats.

The following are some tips for using your washing machine:

1. **Always use HE (High Efficiency) detergent.** Front-loading clothes washers are designed to use High Efficiency detergent. Using regular detergent creates too much suds, which will affect the machine's washing and rinsing performance. Over time, it can lead to odor problems.
2. **Fill it up.** Clothes washers use about the same amount of energy regardless of the size of the load, so run full loads whenever possible.
3. **Wash in cold water.** Water heating consumes about 90% of the energy it takes to operate a clothes washer. Washing in cold water will generally do a good job of cleaning. Switching your temperature setting from hot to warm can cut energy use. Using the cold cycle reduces energy use even more.
4. **Use a drying rack or hang clothes outside.** Where and when possible, air-drying clothes instead of using a dryer not only saves energy, but also helps them last longer.
5. **Avoid the sanitary cycle.** This super hot cycle, available on some models, increases energy use significantly. Only use it when absolutely necessary.
6. **Activate the high spin speed option.** If possible choose a high spin speed option to reduce the amount of remaining moisture in your clothes after washing to reduce drying time.
7. **Leave the door open after use.** Front-loading washers use airtight seals to prevent water from leaking while the machine is in use. Leave the door ajar for an hour or two after use to allow moisture to evaporate.



8. **Rinse the washer every month.** Some manufacturers recommend rinsing the washer each month by running a normal cycle with 1 cup of bleach to help reduce the risk of mold or mildew buildup.

Buying a New Clothes Washer:

1. **Set a budget.** Clothes washer prices vary widely. Think about the features you really need and want and look for clothes washers with those features in your price range.
2. **Determine the configuration.** You can buy a top-loading washing machine or a front-loading washing machine. While a frontloading washing machine will use a third of the water of a top-loading washing machine, the top loading unit may cost less.
3. **Look at the size of the clothes washer.** If you have a big family, you may want a larger model to accommodate a lot of clothes at one time. This will cause the price of the unit to increase. A smaller model may be cheaper but will be able to wash fewer clothes at once.
4. **Consider any added costs.** Think about how much more money adding a clothes washer to your home will add to your utility bills at the end of the month. A clothes washer uses a great deal of both water and energy and will cause both of these bills to increase.
5. **Look at the energy efficiency of clothes washers.** A less expensive clothes washer may use large amounts of water and power to operate, while more expensive models may be energy efficient and use much less water and energy.
6. **Use a measuring tape to find out how much space you have for your washing machine.** You don't want to purchase it, then bring it home and find out it doesn't fit. Record the height, length, and width of the space and take it with you to the store.
7. **Decide whether you want a front-loading or top-loading clothes washer.** Top-loading washers are convenient because you don't have to strain to bend over when loading them, but front-loading washers use less energy and are better for the environment. You will also want a front loader if you need to stack a dryer on top of it.
8. **Know how much laundry you need to do on a regular basis.** A family of four will most likely generate a moderate amount of laundry, while one with a dozen kids will make enough to keep a commercial-capacity washer busy. Naturally, the more capacity you require the higher the price.
9. **Consider the features each washing machine offers.** Are there small, medium and large options for setting the water level? Is there a heat setting to allow you to wash colors in cold water and whites in hot? Are the knobs manual or digital? These are all features you should take a look at when deciding which washer is for you.
10. **Read the energy-star label, which explains how efficient the washer is.** These models typically use less water, making them a great option for those who rely on a public water system and are billed for their water usage.
11. **Make sure the clothes washer has a compartment for bleach and fabric softener.** These handy features allow you to set the cycles and forget about your soiled clothes until they are clean, without having to check back to add liquid.
12. **Look for the best price.** Once you have decided on a make and model shop around and compare prices until you have found the best deal.

References:

Energy Star Website: <http://www.energystar.gov>
Laundry at Home or Laundromat Cost Calculator:
<http://www.csgnetwork.com/laundrycostcalc.html>

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