

Section 6 – Prepare to live independently



Washing your clothes

The Laundry

Doing your own washing is an essential life skill needed at uni, so we recommend that you know how to use a washing machine before you go to University. The key is to be organised so that you never run out of clean clothes.

Here are a few tips to help you out.

- The first one is obvious – buy extra socks and pants, as these are the things you really don't want to wear twice.
- Then, buy a small laundry basket and do a wash whenever it gets full.
- Doing the laundry is a pretty boring task, so rope in a friend. Arrange a time once a week where you load up your washing, grab a fancy coffee and have a good catch up.
- Washing whites, colours and delicates - Your parents will probably tell you that whites and colours should in no circumstances ever be put in the wash together. However, life is too short to sit there in your room sifting through smelly socks. New, dark-coloured items like jeans and jumpers could release dye in the first couple of washes, but will usually be fine after that.

Use your common sense though – it probably isn't worth the risk of putting your favourite white t-shirt in with your darkest indigo jeans.

Some wools and synthetic fabrics will need to be treated with more care, with either a delicate cycle in the machine or washing by hand. The last thing you want is to ruin your delicates though, so if in doubt go for a hand wash or take them to your resident laundry expert back home.

Using detergent

You'll be astonished at the variety of different powders, tablets, liquids and softeners that there are. One easy way to choose is to go for what your family use at home. Alternatively, here's a few pointers:

Tablets that go directly into the drum are the easiest and least messy option

Biological detergents have special enzymes in them to help break down stains and dirt. They're good for quick, low temperature washes, or if you're washing really filthy sports kit.

Non-biological detergents don't have the enzymes, which makes them kinder to sensitive skins.

Fabric softener is an optional extra. It will make your clothes feel softer and smell nice, but is bad for the environment and could aggravate sensitive skin.

Loading the washing machine

It's important that you don't overfill the machine. Your clothes won't wash properly! Aim for the machine to be roughly 75% full. If you're not sure, do a 'thumbs up' between your clothes and the ceiling of the tub. If you can't, the tub is too full and you should empty a few things.

Don't forget to check the pockets of your clothes for tissues, money, bank cards, gig tickets, drinks receipts etc. If you do miss something and it explodes into a thousand tiny shreds on your washed clothes, use the rough side of a washing-up sponge scourer to scrub them tidy.

Using the washing machine

When you come to use your detergent, just follow the instructions on the box. Powders and liquids will go in the draw, which will probably have three compartments – use the one marked II for your detergent, and the one with the flower symbol for conditioner.

Most tablets just get chucked in the drum with your clothes. The box will also tell you how much detergent to use, based on how much stuff you're washing and how dirty it is.

It's important to pick the right setting, otherwise you could end up with a wardrobe full of crop tops and three quarter length trousers – not a good look!

The labels on your clothes will tell you what to do, including what temperature and cycle to use, how to dry them and how to iron. Then it's just a matter of picking the right setting on your machine.

How do I dry my laundry?

Easy, really – stick it in the dryer! You don't want to shrink your stuff after you've got so far though, so pick the temperature wisely. Choose 140° - 150° for general stuff, 160° for cottons like bed sheets and towels, and 110° - 120° for delicates.

Again it's important to check the labels, as some clothes are not suitable for tumble dryers and will have to air-dry in your room instead. So get yourself a clothes horse / drying rack.

Finally, make sure that everything is completely dry before you put it away, otherwise you'll end up with clothes that smell even worse than they did in the first place.

Good luck!