

LAUNDRY 101

CONTINUED It if you're not removing stains or sanitizing," says Steve Boorstein, host of the DVD *Clothing Care: The Clothing Doctor's Secrets to Taking Control!*

**WARM WATER**

Good for: Nylon, spandex, polyester, preshrunk white cotton, durable rayon blends.

"Warm water gives a bit of heat that helps activate regular detergent and stain removers," explains Boorstein. It can be an energy-saving alternative to hot.

But: Flimsier or heavily dyed cottons or rayons may bleed or change shape.

**COLD WATER**

Good for: Acetate, acrylic, cotton, denim, jersey; washable linen, silk, wool, lingerie and other rayons (on the delicate cycle); dark and bright-colored clothing. "Cold is less likely to shrink items or compromise fit," says Lindsey Wieber Boyd, cofounder of The Laundress, a specialty detergent and fabric care company.

But: Warm is better for killing bacteria and lifting stains. If you do wash stained items in cold water, spot-treat first, then use a detergent made especially for cold water, like Tide Coldwater. "It can remove stains that would otherwise be hard to get out," says Zeitler.

6 DRY IT RIGHT

Shorter is better: Too much heat shrinks and abrades fabrics, and causes utility bills to spike. Use a longer spin cycle in the wash, then dry small loads of similar weight (i.e., all towels) so heat circulates evenly. Another energy saver: "Cleaning your lint filter makes heat more effective," says Dolly Wade, assistant director of housekeeping and laundry for Copeland Oaks and Crandall Health & Rehabilitation Center in Sebring, Ohio. ▶

PROBLEM SOLVED! What to do with that shirt made from 98% cotton and 2% spandex? If label directions aren't clear, treat the material comprising the largest percentage of fabric. Consider a cooler wash to avoid potential shrinkage or color issues.

5 ways to get whites whiter

1 DO AN UNDRESS CHECK "Inspect white clothing as soon as you take it off," says Boorstein. Check the underarm, neck and crotch areas for stains, and if you can, launder machine-washable items immediately before messes set or harden. If you're busy or you don't have a full load ready to go, pretreat and hang the item, and wash later.

2 TALK TO YOUR DRY CLEANER Oily stains will need pro help. Make sure your dry cleaner has designated solutions for keeping whites white—a specific machine or dedicated solvent, for example. It helps prevent whites from turning yellow or dull, a common problem when dry-cleaning whites, says Boorstein.

3 LAUNDRER THE RIGHT WAY Wash pretreated clothes in the hottest water suitable (or choose the "whites" cycle). Add oxygen bleach (like OxiClean) or other whitener. If stains linger, soak items in 5 inches of warm water with whitener for 30 minutes and return to wash. Or apply lemon juice (good for food stains) and put in the sun until dry to bleach, then wash again.

4 INSPECT YOUR IRON "Make sure it doesn't drip dirty water and has no starch buildup on the soleplate," says Boorstein. Otherwise you could iron spots right into your clothes. If your iron has a self-clean setting, use it regularly to avoid dirty drips, and run a warm iron over wax paper to remove starch. "If you do spot a yellow impurity, wash clothing right away," he says. While using distilled water in an iron is good for it (distilled is free of the minerals and impurities that can clog an iron's moving parts), it doesn't make a difference in terms of keeping whites white.

5 RETHINK OLD HABITS If your first instinct is to reach for the chlorine bleach, you may want to reconsider. While it cleans the heck out of sturdy white cottons when added to hot water, many experts don't recommend it for polyester, nylon or other synthetics.

