

HealthyCleaning101 Presents:

# SAFE CLEANING CHEAT SHEET – LAUNDRY DETERGENTS

**SAFETY FIRST!** Always read and follow the label on any product you use. Other notes for laundry products:

- Always store laundry products out of sight and out of reach of children
- Keep all products in their original containers with the original labels visible
- Don't mix laundry products or any other cleaning products, as these can produce dangerous gases
- Keep a copy of your local Poison Control Centre handy – you can find yours [here](#)

## Labels, labels, everywhere...

The label on the garment and the label on the laundry product both have important information that will tell you how to clean the garment most effectively!



- The **product label** will tell you how to use it properly, as well as what kinds of fabrics it can and cannot be used on.
- The **fabric care label** will tell you the manufacturer's instructions for cleaning it. These labels often include laundry symbols, such as above

If you want to know what the different symbols mean, check this [Guide to Apparel and Textile Care Symbols](#).

**Important tip!** Before you use a new product or wash a new garment, do a colourfast test. Colourfast means the fabric colour won't fade or run when it's washed. Put a little stain remover on a non-visible part of the garment, like an inside seam, and wash it off after about 5-10 minutes to make sure the colour holds up.

## What type of product should I use?

Laundry detergents come in different forms and serve different purposes based on your needs and the needs of the garment.

- A **general-purpose detergent** is a full-strength detergent that can be used with many different types of fabrics
- A **light-duty detergent** can be used when washing clothes by hand or in the washing machine. They work better for delicate fabrics, such as baby clothes, or clothes that are only lightly soiled

### General-Purpose (♣) and Light-Duty (♦) Detergents

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>High Efficiency (HE) Detergents</b> – Detergents (both liquid and powder forms) designed for use in both front- and top-loading HE washers. These products work best in low water volume. ♣</li> <li>• <b>Liquid Detergents</b> – Especially effective on food and greasy and oily soils. They are also good for pre-treating spots and stains prior to washing. ♣ ♦</li> <li>• <b>Powder Detergents</b> – Ideal for general wash loads. Powders are especially effective at lifting out clay and ground-in dirt, making them ideal for children's play clothes. ♣ ♦</li> <li>• <b>Concentrated Detergents</b> – Concentrated detergents are available in liquid or powder forms. They come in smaller packages yet are designed to offer the same cleaning power as similar products in larger packages. You'll need less concentrated detergent than regular product, so follow label instructions and use the measuring cap or scoop that comes with the product. ♣</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Single-Use Detergents</b> – Compacted and/or concentrated powder, liquid, or tablet detergents that come in unit-dose sizes for measuring accuracy and laundering convenience. ♣</li> <li>• <b>Fragrance or Dye-Free Detergents</b> – Many laundry products are now fragrance-free and/or dye-free. Read the labels for details. ♣</li> <li>• <b>Soap Bars</b> – Formed detergent bars are generally made from tallow or a combination of tallow and cocoa (coconut oil). They were the precursors of the chip and powder forms of detergent. ♣</li> <li>• <b>Combination Detergents</b> – One detergent formulated to do two jobs. Look for: Liquid or powder detergents with built-in fabric softeners; powder detergents with color-safe bleach; liquid detergents with bleach alternative. ♣</li> </ul>
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## Ingredients to look for

The following are common ingredients that you might find on the product label of your laundry detergent:

- **Surfactants/Cleaning Agents** – Improve the wetting ability of water, loosen and remove soil with the aid of wash action, then emulsify, solubilize, or suspend soils in the wash solution until soils are washed away.
- **Builders** – Enhance or “build” the cleaning efficiency of the surfactant by inactivating water hardness minerals.
- **Enzymes** – Break down complex stains and soils, including protein-based stains (grass and blood) and starch-based stains common to many foods. Enzymes can also improve the appearance and feel of fabrics.
- **Polymers** – Help to capture and hold soils and dyes, sending them down the drain to avoid re-depositing on washed fabrics.
- **Oxygen Bleach** – A type of bleach that maintains color and whiteness and may be used with all fabrics.
- **Solvents** – Prevent separation or deterioration of ingredients in liquid products.
- **Softeners** – Reduce fabric friction or static electricity, and help to provide a soft, fluffy appearance for fabrics.
- **Stabilizers** – Maintain high-sudsing function, where suds level is an important indicator of cleaning power. They also help maintain stability of the product and its shelf life, especially the enzymes and oxygen bleach.
- **Preservatives** – Substances used to protect against natural effects of product aging, e.g., decay, discoloration, oxidation, and bacterial attack. They can also protect color and fragrance.
- **Fragrances** – Provide pleasant scent to fabrics, plus cover the odors of the detergent and the soils in the washing solution.
- **Colourants** – Added to lend individuality to the product, or dramatize a special additive contributing to product performance.

## Still have more questions?

**Q: What water temperature should I use in my wash cycle?**

**A:** As always, follow garment care labels and detergent labels. Use cold water for fine fabrics, sensitive colors, and items that could shrink. Cold water lessens the amount of wrinkling and helps keep colors from fading. Use warm water for moderately-soiled clothes – natural and man-made fabrics. Use hot water on durable whites, badly-soiled, permanent press, and colorfast items. Never use hot water on fine washables.

**Q: What are care labels and why are they important?**

**A:** Garments can look the same, but need very different care. North American standards require that the garment manufacturer attach a permanent label with directions for care. It must remain legible during the useful life of the garment, and should be easy to locate.

Care labels should provide accurate information for cleaning garments and other fine fabrics. Always read and follow garment care and product labels before washing, drying, or dry cleaning.

**Q: Should care labels ever be removed?**

**A:** Garments are required to have care labels attached, so you can review them before purchasing a garment. If you remove the label after purchasing, you will not have the full information regarding proper care or warnings.

**Q: How can I prevent my dark colors from fading?**

**A:** There are several ways to reduce color fading:

- Before treating any garment, always read and follow care label instructions.
- Sort your laundry and keep dark colors together.
- Turn garments inside out before washing and drying.
- This reduces abrasion of the fabric and prevents the dulling effect of pilling.
- Don't overload the washer or dryer. Clothes should move freely to prevent detergents from depositing on the fabrics.
- Cold water is best for protecting darks.
- Don't over dry; remove clothes when slightly damp.
- To help prevent fading when drying clothes outdoors, leave them inside out.