



HOME & COOKING · TAPE THIS ABOVE THE MACHINE

The Laundry Symbol Decoder

Those hieroglyphics on your clothing tags, translated. Check the tag before it goes in — shrinking a sweater is a one-time mistake.

Washing (the bucket)

	Machine wash	Any cycle is fine. The tub = washing machine.
	1 dot = cold	Cold water. When in doubt, this is the safe answer.
	2 dots = warm	Warm water — everyday cottons, towels, sheets.
	3 dots = hot	Hot water — think white socks, not your good shirts.
	Hand wash	Sink, cool water, gentle soap, no wringing. 10 minutes.
	Do not wash	Dry clean or spot clean only. Water will end it.

Bleach (the triangle)

	Bleach OK	Any bleach when needed.
	Non-chlorine only	Color-safe (oxygen) bleach only — the "for colors" bottle.
	No bleach	None. Not even a splash "to brighten it up."

Dry cleaning (the circle)

	Dry clean	Take it to the pros. (Letters inside are notes for them, not you.)
	Do not dry clean	Chemicals will hurt it — wash per the other symbols.

Drying (the square)

	Tumble dry	Dryer is fine.
	1 dot = low heat	Low heat — anything with stretch (leggings, gym gear).
	2 dots = medium	Normal setting — most everyday stuff.
	Do not tumble dry	Air dry only. The dryer is where sweaters go to shrink.
	Line dry	Hang it up — shower rod counts.
	Dry flat	Lay on a towel — sweaters, anything knit.

Ironing (the little iron)

	1 dot = low	Low — synthetics, anything shiny or stretchy.
	2 dots = medium	Medium — wool, most blends.
	3 dots = high	High — cotton and linen, the wrinkly ones.
	Do not iron	It'll melt. Hang it in the bathroom while you shower instead.

Dad's laws of laundry

- ☐ Cold water + normal cycle is safe for ~90% of your clothes
- ☐ Sort into 2 piles: lights and darks. That's it, you're sorting
- ☐ Less detergent than you think — half a cap is usually plenty
- ☐ Stains: blot, cold water, treat *before* the dryer sets it forever
- ☐ Empty the lint trap every time. Every. Time.

Dad's Quick Take: More dots = more heat. An X means don't. That's 80% of the decoder right there.