

Cold Wash

Take-home challenge!

Overview

Try switching to cold-water laundry at home to save energy. Students track and reflect on the experience and share what they learned.

Learning outcomes

- Understand the energy savings of cold-water washing.
- Engage family members in sustainable habits.
- Reflect on challenges and successes of making change at home.

Proof to submit

Tracking sheet results (number of loads, estimated energy saved) or student reflections.

Curriculum Connections

- Science: Energy use, heat, electricity, environmental impacts
- Mathematics: Data collection, estimation, comparing results
- Health & Physical Education: Personal and family habits, routines, decision-making

Materials

- Laundry access (where this is not feasible – e.g., limited access or shared laundry/laundromat use – students can interview a family member or reflect based on class discussion)
- “Cold Wash” tracking sheet

Activity

Grades K to 6

With family help, students try to do one load of laundry in cold water at home. They reflect on what was easy, fun, or surprising about the experience and share a drawing or reflection in class.

Grades 7 to 12

Students lead a one-week cold-wash trial at home. They record how many loads were washed in cold water, estimate energy saved, and gather family feedback. Back in class, students summarize the results in a short written or visual reflection (such as a chart, infographic, or poster) that highlights the impact and lessons learned.

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Optional Extension: Explore Your Washing Machine

Look for the EnerGuide label on your washing machine or research the model online. Find out what the label tells you about the appliance's energy use.

Students can investigate questions such as:

- What information does the EnerGuide label provide?
- How much energy does the washing machine use?
- How might using cold water change the energy required for a load of laundry?
- How could choosing an energy-efficient appliance affect energy use over time?

Note: If an EnerGuide label or information about the washing machine isn't available, students can use information provided by their teacher or research a sample washing machine.

Resources for teachers

Visit the [Live Net Zero Classroom Challenge website](#) for additional resources and information.

Tip

Washing clothes in cold water saves significant energy since most laundry energy goes to heating water. If hot water is necessary, use the lowest temperature setting that works for your load and select a cold rinse

Cold Wash - Tracking Sheet

Name

Date

Load #	Time of day	Duration of cold wash (minutes)	Estimated energy saved (e.g., kWh)
Total			