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Clothing

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Wardrobes that Work for Busy Families

by Dr. Linda Manikowske, Extension clothing and textiles specialist

Wardrobe Management

Managing family wardrobes is a big job and one that can put a strain on money and time resources. Limited resources make it more necessary to have good management skills. Here are some ideas that might make the job a little easier:

Remove out-of-season clothes from storage used every day for each family member. If this is not possible, separate and store in less accessible areas of the closet or in drawers. Clothing stored in closets or drawers should fit and need no repair.

Store clothing that will be handed down to other family members in boxes labeled by size and age of the child. Items that will be sold at a garage sale or given to charity should also be boxed and stored until it is possible to discard them in this way.

Children can handle selecting outfits and getting dressed much better if they can see what they have to wear.

Select clothing to be worn for work the night before. For children, discuss what they might wear to school and lay it out. This saves time and arguments during the morning rush.

Plan one week of outfits if possible. Having enough clothing to get through the work week without having to do laundry reduces stress.

Children need to learn at a young age what to do with clothing that they take off. If it is soiled, it should be put

in a hamper or soiled clothing container of some kind. Garments not soiled after one wearing should be folded and put in drawers or hung in the closet. Be sure children are able to do some of these tasks themselves. Consider lower closet poles or peg hooks at the appropriate height for children.

Create a card file in which to keep receipts from clothing purchased for different family members. Keeping all receipts in a storage box or drawer is also an option. If a problem occurs with garment performance or you change your mind and wish to return a garment, the receipt will be available.

Clothing Care -- Sharing the Load

Proper care of clothing items extends their useful life, saving the dollars it would take to replace them. Family members can learn how to care for clothing and share in the responsibility as their age and capabilities allow. Teaching children to sort and wash some clothing items can be very helpful to busy parents. Children who participate in sports can make sure their clothing is clean and ready for the next event. Try these ideas:

Create a card file in which to keep clothing care information that might be on hang tags that come with garments. Care information should be permanently attached to garments. However, there might be additional information about finishes or fiber content on hang tags that will be needed at a later date.

Analyze the job and break it down into steps. For example, family members can deliver their clothing to the laundry area on a particular day. They can make sure pockets are emptied, zippers are zipped, and socks are turned right side out.

Keep stain removal supplies on hand -- spot remover or dry cleaning solvent for greasy stains, cotton balls, bleach (chlorine and color safe). Also keep a stain removal guide in the laundry room.

Stain removal is a continuous process but one that can be costly as it puts clothes out of the wearable category when stains cannot be removed. "Stain Sticks" are a new product which can be kept handy for family members to do some prespotting before putting the garments in the hamper.

Family members can fold their own clothing. Each member can have their own basket and pick up their own clothing from the laundry area, fold it, and put it away. Children age eight and older can learn to fold towels and other household items and put them away.

If teens purchase garments that require special care such as hand washing or ironing, they should learn to take responsibility for care of these garments. When making future purchases, they'll be more aware of the time needed to care for these garments.

Rather than saving all laundry to do on one day, use small amounts of time to better advantage. Begin a load of laundry while dinner is cooking and finish it after dinner. Children can learn to fold clothing while watching television.

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