


 **CLEANLINESS FACTS**

TIPS AND TRENDS FROM THE SOAP AND DETERGENT ASSOCIATION

475 Park Avenue South New York, New York 10016

CLEANING PRODUCT PACKAGES**Proper Disposal Is Important**

Among the three environmentally sound options for solid waste management — reduce, reuse and recycle — recycling is an important action consumers can take to reduce solid waste.

Paperboard and plastic are the two most common packaging materials used for household cleaning products. To promote plastics recycling, the plastics industry has developed a coding system. A number within the “chasing arrows” triangle indicates which of the seven types of resin is used in each plastic package. Most household cleaning product bottles are made from either #1 or #2 resins. The #1 — PETE (polyethylene terephthalate) is easily recognizable because it is clear. Soda bottles are most often made from PETE, as are many window cleaner, all-purpose cleaner and disinfectant bottles. The #2 — HDPE (high density polyethylene) is translucent or opaque. It is the most common plastic used for household cleaning product packaging, including some laundry detergents, all-purpose cleaners, disinfectants and dishwashing detergents. Contrary to what many consumers believe, colored plastic containers with the #2 code (HDPE) can be recycled.

The Soap and Detergent Association points out that cleaning product manufacturers are using recycled plastic in their packaging. Many detergent and fabric softener bottles are made of three layers with the inner layer made of recycled plastic. And, some cleaning products bottles are made from 100% recycled plastic. Consumers can encourage more of this type of packaging by consciously purchasing products that use recycled plastic.

Many cleaning product packages and shipping cartons are made of recycled paper.

 **TABLE OF CONTENTS****May/June 1993**

CLEANING PRODUCT PACKAGES	
Proper Disposal Is Important	1
MANAGING ENERGY USE	
Efficiency Can Mean Lower Costs	2
LEARNING TO PITCH IN	
Even Youngsters Can Help	2
RESIN FURNITURE	
High Style with Low Maintenance	3
MISCELLANY	
Color Adds Snap to Storage Containers	3
Walk-in Kitchen Pantry	3
Storing Winter Clothing	4
Caring for Athletic Uniforms	4
Hot News in Housewares	4
Spring Cosmetics Get Personal	4
Q & A	
Answers to Your Questions	5
WHAT'S NEW?	5
"KEEP IT CLEAN" BRIEFS	6

Some paperboard cartons can be recycled — check with your local recycling center. Many communities accept #1 or #2 plastic for recycling. Some communities require that plastics be sorted by type or require the removal of caps, labels and/or pump dispensers. Aerosol cans may or may not be recycled, depending on community guidelines. ■


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MANAGING ENERGY USE

Efficiency Can Mean Lower Costs

When operated efficiently, washing machines, clothes dryers and dishwashers clean better, use less energy and are more cost effective.

Dishwashers use from 9 to 16 gallons of hot water per load, depending on the cycle selected. When soil is light, use a cycle that requires less water. Operate the dishwasher only when full. Use the "rinse-hold" cycle or hand rinse soiled dishes while accumulating a full load. Prerinsing is not necessary, simply scrape off food residue, use the recommended amount of automatic dishwasher detergent, and let the dishwasher do the rest.

Water temperature is an important component of energy savings. Generally, the water heater should be set at 140°F to allow for cooling as the water circulates through the pipes. When it enters the dishwasher, it should be about 130°F, the temperature necessary to remove animal fat soils. However, if the dishwasher has a built-in water heater, the home water heater can be set at 120°F for energy savings. Whenever possible, skip the drying cycle. Instead, select the "air/no heat" cycle or after the final rinse, set the dial to the "off" position. Let the dishes dry overnight with the door closed.

When it comes to washing machines, save hot water for heavy or greasy soils or diapers. Use warm water for most loads. To compensate for decreased water temperature, additional laundry detergent may be required. However, cautions The Soap and Detergent Association, the performance of all laundry products is diminished if they are used in water temperatures below 60°F. Pretreat or presoak stains and heavy soils prior to washing. Match the water level to the load size. Full loads are the most water and energy efficient.■

LEARNING TO PITCH IN

Even Youngsters Can Help

With summer on its way, many parents anticipate spending more time with the kids. This may be the perfect opportunity to teach children about sharing responsibilities at home.

When everyone works together, chores go faster and the work is more fun. The Soap and Detergent Association recommends choosing chores that are appropriate to the age of the child. Children under five can pick up toys, keep their rooms neat and remove unbreakable items from the dishwasher. With help, they can water plants and dust low furniture. Kids ages five to nine can make their beds, take care of pets, set and clear the table, fold the laundry and help with simple cooking tasks. Preteens and young teens can wash and dry dishes, clean their rooms, dust and vacuum. Older teens can tackle the bigger jobs, such as cleaning the kitchen and bathroom, washing windows, cooking and food shopping.

Since so many chores revolve around meal preparation, this is a good time to teach children about microwave safety. Even young children can learn to do supervised tasks, such as pushing a button or closing the door. Once children are ready to begin using the microwave, parents should take some precautions. Install the microwave on a counter where kids can reach it easily and see the control panel clearly. Put microwave-safe cookware and utensils in a special, easily accessible place. Because dishes can get very hot, even though the oven stays cool, teach children to always use potholders.

Make sure the child understands that different foods are cooked differently. Take the time to teach how to warm or cook favorite foods and snacks. Be extra careful with microwave packages designed to heat and crisp foods such as pizza, french fries and popcorn. These may contain heat sensors that get very hot. Foods with sugared fillings, such as jelly donuts and fruit-filled pastries, can be scalding hot on the inside while cool on the outside. Teach children to break them open before biting into them.■

RESIN FURNITURE**High Style with Low Maintenance**

Summertime consumers crave outdoor furniture that is stylish, durable, easy to maintain, lightweight and affordable — all qualities that resin furniture possesses.

Resin is a form of plastic. Most formulas combine polypropylene with other chemicals that make the finished product more flexible, sturdier and better able to withstand the elements than previous generations of plastic furniture. Other improvements include dust and static-free properties and a glossy finish. Styling improvements include more generous chairs and sturdier tables.

Although white is the best selling color, hunter green, gray and black — particularly for indoor use — are selling well in some areas. Several manufacturers are exploring different ways to introduce color, reports The Soap and Detergent Association. These include colored inserts in seats and backs, snap-on seat cushions, woodgrain textures and multicolored table tops in marble and granite finishes. In some cases, resin is combined with other materials, such as melamine, acrylic or glass.

Stackable chairs are extremely popular. They are easy to store and styled to be suitable for indoor as well as outdoor use in dorm rooms, play rooms and as spare chairs. Because they are light, compact and won't scratch the floor, they are particularly welcome as extra dining room chairs.

Prices can vary widely. In general, the more expensive versions are thicker and heavier than the less expensive ones. High-end resin furniture is usually heavier and often has a lacquer finish that resembles high-gloss paint.

Resin furniture can retain its sleek, clean look for years with minimum care. Most soils and stains can be cleaned off with a non-abrasive all-purpose cleaner, a glass cleaner or a cleaner-polish, following the package directions. Or, wipe the surface with a sponge or cloth dipped in a solution of hand dishwashing detergent and warm water. Rinse thoroughly and dry with a clean, soft cloth. ■

MISCELLANY**Color Adds Snap to Storage Containers**

Consumer appetite for color has invaded the food storage container market. Clear containers are now sporting lids in snappy tones. Although it is important for most consumers to know at a glance what is inside the container, see-through containers are no longer clear or off white. At least one manufacturer has introduced see-through blue, with great success, reports The Soap and Detergent Association.

Part of this craze for color comes from the fact that consumers are using these containers all over the house to hold everything from buttons to hairbows to screws and nails. New packaging has been designed to suggest these multiple uses. In addition, people have discovered that these containers are versatile enough to go directly from the refrigerator to the microwave, eliminating the need for separate microwave-safe cookware.

Walk-in Kitchen Pantry

Busy families will find that a well-organized, walk-in pantry cuts down on trips to the store and makes meal preparation easier. Use an existing closet in or close to the kitchen — or borrow floor space from the room to create one.

Add custom-built shelves in varying depths to save valuable space and make everything highly visible. For easy cleaning, The Soap and Detergent Association suggests finishing the shelves with high-gloss paint or polyurethane.

Group foods by types so they are readily accessible. Store dry goods in air-tight, see-through containers so it's easy to see when you are running low. Use lazy susans to be sure nothing gets buried in the back of a shelf. Tuck potatoes, onions and other root vegetables away in wire or mesh baskets. For quick identification, label shelves and alphabetize canned goods. Date items when purchased, then use the oldest ones first.





Storing Winter Clothing

Because most people's closet space is at a premium, winter clothes are usually packed away during the warmer months. The Soap and Detergent Association offers some guidelines for safe summer storage.

Wash or dry clean all garments, even those that do not look soiled. Stains or other soils left in a garment may set, causing permanent discoloration. Do not add starch to any items, because starch is a food source and it will attract insects. Once stored, garments should be inspected from time to time. Some stains do not show up at the time of cleaning but may appear later. If you notice one, take the item out of storage and treat the stain.

Store clothes in a cool, dry, well-ventilated place. Too much heat can cause fabrics to yellow and dampness can promote mildew. Choose a dark closet or other area without windows. Do not leave any lights on. Continued exposure to sunlight or artificial light can cause many bright colors to fade. Use padded hangers to prevent creases and distortion. Use cedar and mothballs to help repel insects.

Caring for Athletic Uniforms

On the playing field or off, spring uniforms are magnets for dirt and soil. Most athletic uniforms are made from synthetic fibers. The care label will give the fiber content and care procedures. Follow these recommendations carefully, advises The Soap and Detergent Association.

Prior to cleaning, test the uniform for colorfastness and separately wash any garment that is not colorfast. Otherwise, the color may bleed on other items. Washing on a low temperature will reduce the chance of bleeding.

Laundering is the most effective method for removing heavy soil from most athletic uniforms. Mud stains and grass stains may require extra treatment using a pretreating product.

Follow the drying procedure recommended on the care label. If machine drying is recommended, shrinkage and wrinkles can be minimized by drying the garments on a low temperature, removing them as soon as they are dry and immediately hanging on a hanger.

Hot News in Housewares

As consumers become more interested in entertaining at home, houseware items, such as bakeware, cutlery, gadgets and cooking jars, are becoming more popular, observes The Soap and Detergent Association.

Practical items, such as non-stick cookware, in fashion colors and with easy-to-clean surfaces are very popular. Non-stick-on-stainless is one of the newest entries in this category. Retailers report that utilitarian items, such as jar openers, garlic bakers, meat tenderizers, veal pounders and nonstick rolling pins are selling well.

Items with high fashion appeal include ice cream scoops in jewel tones with color-coordinated serving dishes, a decorative teakettle with matching ceramic accessories and plastic food storage containers in tinted, transparent colors. Cookie jars are handpainted and textured in themes designed to appeal to kids and adults.

Spring Cosmetics Get Personal

Today's woman chooses makeup because it complements her own style, not because the color is fashionable. Cosmetic companies are getting the message, producing colors that are user friendly.

For Spring '93, many companies are offering new versions of their most popular clean and natural shades, notes The Soap and Detergent Association. In some cases, spring colors are going in two directions — one grouping for neutral colors, another for bolder shades with a more dramatic impact. Products that offer light-diffusing properties, as well as minimize wrinkles, are targeting the over-35 set.

In place of seasonal colors, many companies are expanding their total range of colors, then allowing the consumer to match them up as she wishes. For example, a customer can pick from 36 shades of eye shadow to create her own two-color compact. All of these developments reflect a consumer who is confident about what looks good on her and is too busy to keep up with changing colors. ■

Q & A

Answers to Your Questions

Q: Can plastic be recycled indefinitely or does it break down and have to be disposed of as solid waste in the end?

A: Plastics recycling is still new technology, but initially it appears that it can be recycled over and over. In most cases, the recycled plastic used for laundry product packaging (25 - 50% recycled) is mixed with virgin plastic. In this case, the recycled plastic can be reused. If recycled plastic becomes no longer suitable for packaging, it can be used for other types of more durable goods, such as plastic lumber. In addition, there is new research being done to develop end uses for recycled plastics that are more competitive with virgin plastics.

Q: In the phosphate-free laundry detergents, what builders are used in place of phosphate? Would you comment on the environmental safety of those builders?

A: There are several major builders being used today: sodium carbonates, sodium silicates, zeolites (sodium aluminum silicates). And, in liquid detergents, you will find sodium citrate being used. All of these builders have been thoroughly studied using accepted methods of environmental hazard evaluation to assure that they are clearly safe for the environment.

Q: What is washing soda?

A: Washing soda is a common name for a commercial form of hydrated sodium carbonate. It is also called "sal soda" and "soda" and is often used as a detergent booster.

PLEASE WRITE TO US WITH YOUR CLEANING PRODUCT QUESTIONS AND WE WILL ANSWER AS MANY AS POSSIBLE. WRITE TO "CLEANLINESS FACTS" AT THE ADDRESS LISTED ON PAGE 1.

WE WILL RESPOND TO QUESTIONS ABOUT HOUSEHOLD CLEANING PRODUCTS. PLEASE UNDERSTAND WE CANNOT RESPOND TO QUESTIONS ABOUT INDIVIDUAL PRODUCTS. ■

WHAT'S NEW?

A little bit of ice can go a long way with the Chill Wizard, a beverage chiller that can turn a warm can of beer or soda ice cold in two minutes. Attach the beverage can to the motor drive, add a small handful of ice to the receptacle and turn on the motor. As the can spins in the ice, the beverage is chilled. The unit runs on two AA batteries or household current and is designed for outdoor activities, such as picnics, camping and tailgate parties, or for at-home use, when someone wants a fast "cold one."
(Reotek; 735 Bryant Street;
San Francisco, CA 94107)

"The Less Challenging Home" is a new booklet designed to show that a barrier-free kitchen can be created using off-the-shelf appliances. Innovations include three countertop levels, including one for children and seated individuals and a cooktop positioned above an open area for wheelchair access. The dishwasher, electric wall oven and microwave unit are installed along one 42-inch-high counter with an 8-inch recessed kickplate that accommodates a wheelchair's footrest.
(Whirlpool Appliance Group;
Administrative Center; Benton Harbor, MI 49022)

A new specially formulated latex paint is designed to help eliminate the dirt and grime that is inevitable on the walls of kids' rooms. Kids' Room Paint is a nontoxic, satin enamel that resists stains and is easy to wash. The 35 stock colors coordinate with popular nursery and juvenile bedding, as well as with wallpaper borders from two major manufacturers. In addition, the paint can be custom mixed for other colors.
(Dutch Boy Paints; 101 Prospect Ave. N.W.;
Dept. HM393, Cleveland, OH 44115) ■





"KEEP IT CLEAN" BRIEFS

To keep upholstery in tip top shape, constant care is your best strategy. Regular vacuuming removes the small soil and food particles that accumulate and get ground into the fabric. These soils cause the fabric to look unsightly and cause premature wear. And, turning cushions on a regular schedule will prolong their life by helping them wear evenly. Use headrest and armrest covers to protect the areas that get the most wear.

Odors in microwave ovens can be caused by food build up, strong flavored foods, repeated overcooking of foods, or smoke from overcooked foods such as popcorn or bacon. To remove odors, clean up all food soils. Mix 1/2 cup lemon juice and one cup water in a microwave safe bowl or measuring cup. Boil in the microwave for several minutes, then let stand for 5 - 6 minutes.

Fiction: Always use the exact amount of detergent suggested on the package label.

Fact: The recommended amount of detergent on the label is based on average conditions — 5 to 7 pounds of clothes which are moderately soiled and are washed in an average amount of moderately hard water. Change any of these conditions and you should change the amount of detergent. Slightly more detergent may be needed for: larger loads, heavily soiled clothes, a larger-capacity washer or hard water conditions. Use slightly less detergent if the water is soft, the clothes are lightly soiled or the wash load is small.

Fiction: Never rinse clothes in cold water.

Fact: A cold water rinse with a warm water wash is effective for many wash loads, and it makes environmental sense. Cold rinse water saves energy, makes ironing easier and helps prevent permanent press fabrics from wrinkling. ■

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