Laundry is the bane of my existence. It seems just when I get the laundry basket empty and put away, along comes another load or two. But doing all that laundry costs of money. When my kids were little, I counted the number of loads I did per week for a one-month period. After that, I quit counting, it just made me tired.

Laundry is another place to trim the bills. The first advice is a no-brainer—don’t do a load unless you have a full load. It takes the same amount of water and electricity to do half a load, so just don’t do it. Wait until you have a full load.

Water temperature is a major factor in getting your clothes clean in your washer. Did you realize that nearly 90% of the energy used in running your washer is used to heat the water? So if we wash in colder water, we will save a ton of energy, right? That is the case, but there are a few more factors to think about. The warmer the water, the better it cleans. But you have to consider the type of fabric in the clothing. Some fabrics can’t take hot temperatures. So here are some general rules to think about. Hot water should be used on heavily soiled or greasy clothes. The lighter the soil, the cooler the water can be.

The water temperature is important in selecting the type of laundry detergent. If your water temperature is below 65°, powdered detergent will not dissolve. With cooler temperatures, use a liquid detergent. For those of us who live with a well, it is important to know what the well water temperature is. I checked my water temperature and found that it was about 70°—adequate for cleaning. If you have a well, check your temperature. Regardless of what temperature you decide to wash in, use cool water to rinse in. There is no improved rinsing with warmer water.

Most of us use too much laundry detergent. Using 1/2 to 3/4 the recommended amount of laundry detergent will get clothes just as clean and leave less soap buildup.

Plain white vinegar is a good substitute for fabric softener. Environmentally safe and nonalergenic, just add 1/2 to 3/4 cup in a load. If you are using fabric sheets in the dryer, cut them in half. They will soften the clothes, and last longer.

Or if you are partial to the smell and convenience of the dryer sheets, but don’t like the expense, you can make your own. Use a washcloth dipped in fabric softener and wrung out as a fabric dryer sheet. It will last for 4-6 dryer fills, depending on the items and softener used.
If your washer can be set for a separate spin cycle, spin the clothes an extra time to reduce the time required for drying.

To improve the energy efficiency of your dryer, frequently clean out the lint trap, and once a year, unplug the dryer, undo the hose vent, and use a wire coat hanger to clean it out. Not only does the lint buildup interfer with the drying of the clothes, it has also been known to cause fires.

If your dryer has a setting for auto-dry, use it instead of using the timer. Over drying can cause shrinkage, generate static electricity, and shorten the life of your clothes. Save on drying time by drying similar clothes together, or dry multiple loads in quick succession (to take advantage of residual heat).

There’s not too much we can do about the laundry we have to do, but we can do something about how much it costs.