Dry your Laundry Indoors

A Guide for Choosing Between Line or Automatic Drying

Homemakers like to dry laundry indoors because:

- They can wash anytime, not just when the weather is fair.
- Steps and carrying heavy loads are reduced when laundry can be dried near the washer.
- Possible damage by wind, sun, soot, dust, and dogs can be avoided.
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Laundry can be dried indoors on lines or in an automatic dryer. Lines can be either stationary or movable so that they can be raised when not in use. Automatic dryers are available using electricity or gas.

Choose the method of drying best suited to your family’s needs. To make the decision carefully weigh facts related to your floor space, time, energy, money, and personal satisfaction.

**If You Are Considering Inside Lines**

Remember that enough lines may take considerable space. For instance, to hang three washer-loads of laundry, you will need 11 lines 12 feet long. These lines require a space 5 feet 8 inches wide by 12 feet long, or 68 square feet. If lines can be raised when not in use, this space can be more useful.

Upkeep and operating expenses can be forgotten once the lines are put up.

You can save one-third of the energy needed for hanging up the wash by having the clothes basket at your waist height instead of on the floor.¹

**If You Are Considering an Automatic Dryer**

You may save space. A front-opening dryer and space for its use takes 3 feet 9 inches by 5 feet 5 inches (20.3 square feet).² Drip-dry garments need extra hanging space and drainage.

You will save time and energy. Twenty times more of the homemaker’s time and energy are needed to use lines than to use a dryer.²⁻⁵

Special installation will be needed. An electric dryer needs an individual electrical circuit of 120 volts, or, preferably, 240 volts (three No. 8 wires, 40 amp. capacity). A ¾ inch gas line and a 120 volt electric outlet are needed for a gas dryer. Venting a dryer may require either plumbing connections or an air pipe to the outside.

Operating costs vary. In one study an electric dryer used 2.7 kilowatt hours of electricity and a gas-heated dryer used 9.6 cubic feet of gas for an average 8 pound load. To get actual costs, multiply these figures by the local rates for a kilowatt hour of electricity and a cubic foot of gas.

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Comparative Space Needs

Automatic Dryer (Front-opening) 20.3 square feet.

Lines for 3 Washer-loads (11 lines 12 feet long, spaced 4 inches apart) 68 square feet.

The space within the dotted lines includes the amount needed for the worker, the basket of clothes, and the dryer or lines. Both sketches are drawn to the same scale.

If You Choose Drying Lines

How many lines will you need to dry all the wash you are likely to do in one day? How much floor space will you need for these lines?

The number of lines needed for hanging one, two or three washer loads or for hanging the entire week's wash is shown in Table 1, for lines 10, 12 and 14 feet long.

After you have selected the number of lines you need, look beneath this number in Table 2 for the width this many lines will take. Lines are usually spaced 4 or 8 inches apart. Width needed for lines is given for either spacing and includes room for working in front of the lines.

Example: Suppose the space you have set aside for drying lines will take lines 12 feet long. You want to wash three loads in one day. In Table 1, you see that three loads hung on 12-foot lines will require 11 lines. How much space will these 11 lines require? In Table 2 you find that they will take a space 5 feet 8 inches wide, if spaced 4 inches apart. The total area needed for your lines, then, will be 12 feet long by 5 feet 8 inches wide.

| Table 1. Number of Lines Needed for Drying Varying Numbers of Loads of Laundry |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Length of Lines | Number of Washer Loads | | | Complete Laundry | | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | Family of 4 | Family of 6 | | | |
| 10-foot lines | 4 | 9 | 13 | 21 | 29 | | | |
| 12-foot lines | 4 | 7 | 11 | 17 | 25 | | | |
| 14-foot lines | 3 | 6 | 9 | 15 | 21 | | | |

| Table 2. Space Needed for Inside Drying Lines |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of Lines | 3 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 9 | 11 | 13 | 15 | 17 | 21 | 25 | 29 |
| Width of Space | 4" apart | 3'0" | 3'4" | 4'0" | 4'4" | 5'0" | 5'8" | 6'4" | 7'0" | 7'8" | 9'0" | 10'4" | 11'8" |
| 8" apart | 4'0" | 4'8" | 6'0" | 6'8" | 8'0" | 9'4" | 10'8" | 12'0" | 13'4" | 16'0" | 18'8" | 21'4" |

*Spacing plus 24-inch passage*
Research Finds Space Needed for Drying Lines

The number of drying lines needed for hanging different numbers of washer loads was found by home economists in housing research at the State College of Washington. They used the number of washer loads done on any one day to find the number of lines needed—assuming that most of the day would be required for laundry to dry indoors.

The type of washer used influenced the amount washed in one day. Homemakers with automatic washers washed two or three times a week and seldom washed more than three loads in one day. Those with conventional washers were more likely to wash the whole week's laundry on one day. The laundry of two representative farm families was used in these experiments. One family had four members—father, mother, boy 8 and girl 14. The other family of six included, in addition, a girl 6 and boy 16.

Lines 10, 12 and 14 feet long were used for the experiments because these are common lengths in building. Results of the experiment are given in Tables 1 and 2 on page 3.

A detailed report of the research is available from the Home Economics Department of the Agricultural Experiment Stations, State College of Washington, Pullman, Washington. This study is part of a continuing project. Its purpose is the determination of the space required for activities and storage in the farm home workroom.

References:


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