

**Energy connections:** Take a look at your existing utility connection for your dryer. Some washers and electric dryers operate on 30-amp, 240-volt circuits. Gas dryers need a gas line. The added cost of utility work needs to be considered in the total cost of the appliance.

**Other convenience features:** Many washers come with bleach, detergent, and fabric softener dispensers that will automatically dispense them at the correct time. Consider how often you use these additives. If you use them often, you might want to choose a model with automatic dispensers.

**Appliance control panel:** Study the control panels of the appliance you are considering. Be sure they are easy to read and understand. If it has knobs, make sure they are easy to use. Many appliances have touch-control screens.

**Service:** What type of service does the seller provide? If the seller does not provide service, determine if there is an authorized service provider for these appliances close by.

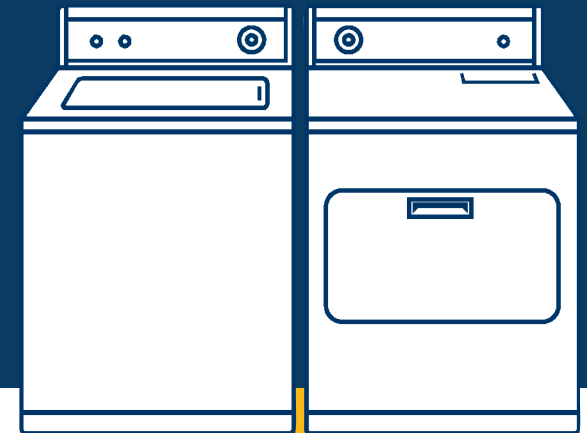
**Guarantee:** What are the terms of the guarantee on the appliances? How long is the time period? Does it cover parts and labor for repairs or only parts?

**Energy Guide labels:** The bright yellow Energy Guide labels provide consumers with information about the estimated amount of energy each model will consume on an annual basis. The information allows you to compare the energy use of a washer model with similar models. Washing machines have Energy Guide labels, but clothes dryers do not.



**Energy Star:** The ENERGY STAR® means a product meets strict energy efficiency guidelines set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Energy. ENERGY STAR® qualified washers use 50 percent less energy than standard washers

# Purchasing Laundry Appliances



For more information, contact your county Extension agent for Family and Consumer Sciences, or visit the Web site for Family and Consumer Sciences, College of Agriculture, University of Kentucky, at [www.ca.uky/agcollege/fcs](http://www.ca.uky/agcollege/fcs)

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Washers and dryers come in all shapes and sizes and with a variety of great features. Before you buy either, consider your personal laundry needs. Here are some things to think about.



**Types of fabric:** If you consistently wash fine fabrics and lingerie, look for a washer that has gentle wash and spin cycles and a dryer with a delicate dry cycle. If you regularly have heavily soiled items, look for a washer that has a soak cycle as well as a regular to heavy soil cycle.

**Size of loads:** Full-sized washers come in two sizes—large and super capacity. Some washers come with smaller capacity tubs. If you regularly wash large items, such as a sleeping bag or comforter, you should look for a super capacity washer and dryer. For normal washing needs, a large (regular) capacity wash tub is sufficient.

**Water use:** Consider a washer with a variety of water level choices. Adjusting the water level to the size of the wash load helps conserve water and save energy. Front-loading and some top-loading washing machines use about one-third the water that a regular top-loading machine uses. Wash results are similar in both types of washers.

**Agitation settings:** Most top-loading washers offer choices of agitation between normal and gentle. Often, this is preprogrammed for the cycle selected. A gentle agitation is good for simulating hand washing with delicate fabrics.

**Water temperature:** Most washers come with water temperature controls for the wash and rinse cycle. Other washers are preprogrammed by the manufacturer for water temperature to match the various cycle options. Think about whether you want to control the water temperature or if you are willing to accept the predetermined water temperature for the appliance you plan to purchase. A few machines may heat the water once it reaches the washer.

**Spin cycles on washers:** A fast or normal spin cycle extracts more water from the clothes than the slow or gentle spin cycle. More water removed in the spin cycle reduces the amount of drying time required.

**Dryer heat selection:** Most dryers have at least three heat settings—air fluff

(no heat), delicate (low heat), and regular (high heat). Some dryer models have a choice of heated air with no tumbling, which is useful for such items as sweaters and canvas shoes. If you regularly wash sweaters, canvas shoes, etc., this feature with a drying rack might be something to consider. Some special cycles (e.g., permanent press) offer a preprogrammed cool-down time before the tumbling stops. This helps eliminate wrinkles in some fabrics. An automatic sensor is a nice feature that helps you avoid over-drying clothes.

**Energy use:** When considering the cost of your washer or dryer, think beyond the purchase price. Look for the ENERGY STAR.® Consider the energy and water costs over the lifetime of the appliance. The average life of a washing machine is 12 years, while the average life of a dryer is 13 to 14 years.

**External size:** Are you limited by the space in your home where the appliances will be installed? Some washers and dryers can be stacked to fit into small spaces, a laundry closet, or in the kitchen of some apartments or homes. Combination washer/dryer units are also available.

**External finish material:** It may be more desirable to have a porcelain enamel top on washers and dryers if you use them as work surfaces. Some washers and dryers have a painted finish that is less resistant to scratching and laundry chemicals, such as detergents, bleach, and fabric softener.

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