

## Week 4: Clothing and Laundry

**1. Stop buying those large plastic jugs of laundry detergent:** The laundry detergent aisle at your grocery store is Plastic Central; those bulky and colorful high density polyethylene plastic jugs are incredibly harmful for the environment and contribute to a large portion of our household plastic pollution. In North America alone, more than 30 billion loads of laundry are run every year, which adds up to about 900 million laundry jugs, and only about 30 percent of these are recycled. That means **630 million plastic jugs are finding their way into North American landfills on a yearly basis.**

Buy laundry detergent in cardboard boxes, which are much easier to recycle. Or try [laundry soap sheets](#) - they work great! These pre-measured, dissolvable sheets carry all the laundry cleaning power of liquid detergent without the plastic containers.

**2. Fabric softener is another plastic to avoid.** Obviously, jugs of fabric softener are as bad as detergent jugs, but did you know that dryer sheets are typically made from nonwoven polyester (also known as a plastic)? Each sheet can only be used once, and they can't be recycled, so they end up in landfills for years to come.

Try [wool dryer balls](#) instead. They are an eco-friendly, sustainable alternative to single-use dryer sheets and fabric softener. They work by bouncing off clothes to soften them, and they also help clothes stay separated in the dryer so air can flow more freely, reducing drying time by 25 percent, per load. Best, they last up to an impressive 1,000 loads.

**3. Wash synthetic fabrics on delicate setting with cold water.** All clothing sheds microfibers when you wash it, but the washing of synthetic textiles (fleece, acrylics, polyesters, and blends) is the main source of microplastic pollution in the ocean, because their microfibers contain plastic that is released into rivers and oceans.

Fleece and other synthetic fabrics break down less with cold water and a gentle cycle. Also, consider washing your clothes less often.

**4. Use a microfiber filter.** The jury is still out on the efficiency of filters, but a few products claim to keep microplastics out of wastewater when you wash your clothes. The [Cora Ball](#) is a pinecone-esque laundry ball that catches microfibers in the wash; the [LINT Luv-R](#) is a filter that attaches to the washing machine outflow; and a [Guppyfriend bag](#) is a self-cleaning fabric bag made of a specially designed micro-filter material that you wash your clothes in.

**5. Purchase sustainable fabrics.** We would like to think that natural fabrics are good for the environment, but nothing is that simple. When you shop for clothes, look for [sustainable fabrics](#) like organic cotton, hemp, linen, vegetable tanned leather, and an amazing array of new environmentally friendly fabrics.

**6. Practice "Slow Fashion".** Clothing costs are at an all-time low because of an industry business model called Fast Fashion: Production of cheap, low-quality clothes that need to be replaced more often (not quite single-use, but almost!) This has serious consequences on our health, our planet, and on garment workers' lives.

Slow fashion, in contrast, advocates for buying better-quality garments that will last longer, and values fair treatment of people, animals, and the use of the planet's resources. When you shop for clothing look for durability and quality. Shop in smaller (local) stores rather than chain stores. Buy styles that are timeless rather than trendy, and plan to wear your clothes for many years.

**7. Remember stewardship:** We strive for balance, to use what we have wisely and with due care for other creatures, and to live as lightly on the earth as we can. We are answerable to the rest of creation and ultimately to God for how we understand and take our place in the community of life.

**Queries:** *Do we take time to inform ourselves of the impacts of our lifestyle on the world as a whole? Are we willing to make lifestyle changes? Whatever form our responses take, are we led by an awareness of the sacred duty placed on every one of us to care for the Earth and all living things?*