

'Where Do My Socks Go?' and Other Laundry Mishaps, Solved

By [Terri Williams](#) | Oct 12, 2018



LarsHallstrom/Stock



Editors' Picks

TRENDS

**How to Make Big Bucks on Airbnb:
Vacation Home Secrets From the Netflix
Center (Gone With the Wind)**

We've all been there: You pour out a clean load of **laundry** only to find socks missing and holes in your favorite T-shirt. It's frustrating to think that your washer and dryer—two of the handiest **household appliances**—are responsible for your laundry mishaps and may even be ruining your clothes.

But before you trash your beloved machines, understand that it's quite possible that user error is also the cause of those holes, tears, shrinking, and other clothing bummer. So what's actually happening inside your washer and dryer, and why are some of your favorite items worse for wear after having been laundered? Let's discuss.

Holes and tears

You might expect your clothes to be soaked when you take them out of the washing machine—but you never expect to see holes and tears. Your clothes are likely getting snagged on other items in the machine with embellishments, clasps, hooks, or Velcro, according to **John Cohen**, vice president of Molly Maid. You can prevent snags by turning many of these items inside out.

Leanne Stapf, vice president at the Cleaning Authority, recommends hand-washing bras in the sink.

“Hooks can get caught in the cylinder of the machine or can tear or rip surrounding clothing,” she says. “If you don’t feel like hand-washing, you can buy a mesh lingerie bag to place your delicates in to keep them safe in the washing machine.”

Overloading your appliances can also damage your clothes.

“If there are too many items in the washer, gaps between the washer and dryer drum can catch fabric and create holes,” says Cohen. “Don’t overload, and if you notice frequent tears, consider having your washer or dryer serviced by a professional appliance repair company.”

Missing socks

One of the world’s greatest mysteries is why single socks go missing in the laundry. With each and every load there always seems to be at least one sock left over, which makes us question our sanity and whether it’s possible for a dryer to come to life.

Small items such as baby clothes or washcloths might also go missing, but Stapf tells us that these items are likely getting stuck in a washing machine's hose and vents. As with lingerie, Stapf recommends putting your small wash items in a mesh bag or hand-washing them.

Running shoes

Another myth: Your running shoes can handle anything. Granted, they can handle hot pavements and rocky trails, but that doesn't mean your running shoes can handle the washing machine.

"The washing machine can alter how running shoes fit, so try to scrub the stubborn dirt off with a toothbrush and anti-grease soap instead," Stapf says.

And don't even think about putting running shoes—or any other kind of shoes—in the dryer.

"The dryer's heat can weaken the adhesives used in the process of making the shoes, so don't risk ruining them," says **David Wilson**, senior commercial director of clothes care at GE Appliances.

Loose coins

Those coins you forgot to take out of your pockets add a new meaning to the phrase "money laundering."

"It seems like such an innocent mistake, but loose change can find its way into your drain pipe, and cause a blockage," Stapf says.

And if that's not bad enough, if you have a front-loading washing machine, coins can crack the glass or scratch the metal.

Shrinking

Not everything that goes into the washing machine should also go into the dryer.

"Fabrics that are 100% cotton or wool are notorious for shrinking when dried with high heat, because the fibers contract in the dryer," Cohen says.

You should also avoid putting clothes with a lot of spandex, wool, or rayon in the dryer, according to **Doug Rogers**, president of Mr. Appliance. Air-drying these items is probably your best bet, but doing so can result in wrinkles.

"Consider using a fabric steamer or hang items in the bathroom during a hot shower to quickly release wrinkles," Cohen says.

Always check the care labels on your laundry, and consult the owner's manual for your appliances for correct laundering procedures.