



## Appliance Guide

1. Refrigerator
  - a. Keep it clean! Wipe up spills, and keep the door gaskets and the areas that they seal against clean. When door seals are torn or distorted, it is usually the result of inadequate cleanup of sticky spillage. If the gaskets are still a bit sticky after cleaning, rub them with cornstarch or talcum powder (especially the gasket on the side nearest the door hinge).
2. Electric Stove
  - a. Keep it clean! Use the proper drip pans. Do not use black drip pans: chrome is better. Shiny new drip pans reflect heat upward into the cooking pan. Black or dark, rusty pans absorb heat and re-radiate it underneath the stovetop where it can damage the receptacles and wiring. You may notice a hole in the center of the drip pan. It allows an updraft past the burner. Do not cover this hole with aluminum foil.
3. Gas Stove
  - a. Spills and boil-overs can short out the spark ignition electrodes, as can cleaning solutions. Use care when cleaning around burners (also see advice regarding touch pads under Microwave Ovens). Aluminum foil is not recommended, and its use in the oven is actually dangerous. The oven cavity in most gas ranges is actually the “chimney” for the oven burner. The oven bottom has openings (usually slots) for the gases produced by the burner to rise through. Covering the oven bottom with foil often restricts these openings, resulting in insufficient air for the proper operation of the oven burner; and much higher (possibly deadly) amounts of carbon monoxide can be produced. It is a good idea to use an exhaust fan whenever you are cooking with any stove, especially a gas stove.
4. Dishwasher
  - a. Do not use when not home or when you are asleep.
    - i. Proper operation of a dishwasher is essential to getting good results from it. Start by rinsing dishes before loading the dishwasher. You don’t have to completely wash them, but you want to avoid putting anything but a small amount of soft food into the dishwasher.
    - ii. Do not wash things with labels or wrappers in the dishwasher; they will clog it.
    - iii. Face the “business side” of the dishes toward the center; don’t block the “pop up” center section of the lower wash arm. Place dirtier dishes on the bottom rack (e.g. plates, bowls, pans), and less soiled items on the top rack (e.g. drinking glasses, etc.).

- iv. Don't let anything poke down below the dish-rack; it may block the rotation of the wash arm, resulting in poor cleaning.
- v. Only soap meant for a dishwasher should be used.
- vi. Here in Bellingham, we have soft water (rain water in Lake Whatcom), so we don't need much soap, nor do we usually need a rinse agent, such as Jet-Dry or the like. Some types of dishwasher soap or gel tabs have caused excessive bubbling. If this happens, try using less soap or eliminate using the gel tabs. If it continues, switch to a different soap.
- vii. Most of the energy used to clean dishes comes from the heat of the water. A dishwasher works best when the incoming water temperature is 120F or higher. In fact, no dishwasher will get dishes clean with cold water.
- viii. Do not attempt to run the dishwasher when the hot water has been depleted by showers, laundry, etc. Run the hot water at the sink until it comes out as hot as it will get, then start the dishwasher. If it has a "temperature boost" feature, try it.

#### 5. Washing Machine: Top-Loading

- a. Do not use when not home or when you are asleep.
- b. A washing machine, especially a top loader, is designed to wash garments.
  - i. Large, bulky items usually won't wash well. Load the clothes loosely to the top row of holes in the tub.
  - ii. Space items of similar weight evenly around the tub, considering what the items will weigh when saturated with water.
  - iii. If your machine has a variable water level feature, be sure to make the water level correspond to the load size.
  - iv. Washing too many clothes without enough water will damage the clothes and the washer. To the washer, it is the same as an overload.
  - v. Sometimes, despite our best efforts, the items shift during agitation, and are out of balance during the spin portion of the cycle. If this happens, stop the washer, re-arrange the load, and re-start the spin cycle.

#### 6. Washing Machine: Front-Loading

- a. Do not use when not home or when you are asleep.
- b. Fill the tub loosely all the way to the top. Tumble action washers use less water, and therefore need less soap.
  - i. If you see a window full of white suds, you are using too much soap. Too much soap actually impedes cleaning. Soap suds are mostly air, which won't clean clothes: water cleans clothes.
  - ii. Since front loaders have latches on the door, they usually can't be opened until the end of the cycle, so no manual re-balancing is not possible.
  - iii. Keep in mind that the "gentle" or "delicate" cycle on all washers will have a slower spin speed than "regular" or "normal", so there will be more water left in the clothes and will take longer to dry in the dryer.

## 7. Dryer:

- a. One load in the washer equals one load in the dryer.
- b. Remember to clean the lint screen before every load.
- c. A dryer's exhaust is piped to the outdoors through a vent pipe. This system will not do its job if it is clogged with lint or bird nests, etc. If your dryer dries slowly, or if you have steamed up windows or lint and dust in the air when you run the dryer the vent system probably needs attention.
- d. Every once in a while, especially if you are experiencing slow drying, hold the lint screen up to the light and look closely at the mesh. It can get clogged with an almost invisible buildup of fabric softener or soap residue. Use a stiff brush to clean it.
- e. Clogged dryer vents can cause house fires! Proper operation can not only reduce fire danger and moisture damage, but can also speed up drying and significantly shorten your wash day.

## 8. Microwave Oven

- i. Keep it clean! Spatters inside the oven cavity "cook" until they become spots of red-hot carbon and burn through the paint, at which point the microwaves ground out and produce sparks.
- ii. Cover the food when cooking. A paper plate works well for this purpose.
- iii. Do not spray cleaning solutions directly on to the touch pads; put it on a rag and wipe the surface with the rag. Cleaners can get in between the layers of the touch pad and ruin it.
- iv. This rule applies to anything that has touch pads, not just microwaves.

## 9. Garbage Disposal

- a. Do not put anything in the disposal that you wouldn't put in your mouth.
  - i. Avoid grinding fibrous material such as celery or potato peels. They won't usually harm the disposal, but will likely clog the drain pipes.
  - ii. Run plenty of water while you are grinding food waste to prevent pipes from clogging. Sometimes a disposal will jam, usually on a foreign object.
  - iii. Rotating the shaft backwards will usually free it, allowing you to remove the object.
  - iv. Be sure the disposal is off before attempting this process!
  - v. Place ice cubes in disposal to "clean" the unit. The hard ice helps knock down the scum layers that build up below the seal.
  - vi. Avoid placing the following items in a disposal:
    1. Plastic or metal
    2. Anything that is not biodegradable food
    3. Bones / Pasta / Hamburger / Bacon or Grease / Egg Shells / Rice
    4. Corn, lettuce, or fibrous fruits and vegetables
    5. When in doubt, throw it out!