What Can I Use if I’m Out of Laundry Detergent?

You toss your clothes in the washing machine, reach for the detergent… and it’s empty. Classic. But don’t panic or run to the store just yet—chances are, you already have something at home that’ll work just fine.

Out of Laundry Detergent?

Here are safe and effective **best substitutes for laundry detergent** that can get you through a load or two in a pinch.

1. **Shampoo (no conditioner)**
   Use about the same amount you’d use for liquid detergent—just make sure it’s a basic shampoo, not one with added conditioner or oils.
2. **Dish Soap (like Dawn)**
   Use sparingly—about 1–2 teaspoons per load. Great for whites and small loads. Too much = suds city. Avoid if you’re washing delicates or dark colors.
3. **Hand Soap**
   Liquid hand soap works fine in small amounts. Avoid heavily scented varieties or anything with added moisturizer.
4. **Rinse Out Your Old Detergent Bottle**
   Add a little hot water to the nearly-empty bottle, swish it around, and pour it into the washer. You’d be surprised how much detergent is still in there.
5. **Bar Soap (grated)**
   Use a cheese grater to shred plain bar soap, then dissolve it in warm water before adding it to your machine. This is basically old-school laundry soap.
6. **Baking Soda + Hydrogen Peroxide**
   Mix ½ cup baking soda, ½ cup hydrogen peroxide, and 1 cup warm water. Pour it into the drum—not the dispenser. Works well for light stains and freshening clothes.
7. **Just Water (Seriously)**
   If your clothes aren’t super dirty, warm water and agitation might be enough. Let your laundry soak a bit first. Some people only use detergent every other time—it’s eco-friendly, too.



One important note: **use less than you think you need**. Laundry detergent is specially formulated to rinse out easily. Most household soaps aren't—so too much could leave residue on your clothes (or worse, flood your laundry room with bubbles).

Do NOT Try Using These Alternatives for Laundry Detergent

Just because it's "soap" doesn't mean it belongs in your washer. Avoid:

- **Dishwasher Detergent (like Cascade)** – Too harsh, and it can damage seals and hoses in your washer.
- **Body Wash** – Often full of moisturizers and fragrances that don't rinse out well.
- **Bleach alone** – It disinfects, but doesn't clean clothes. Plus, it's too harsh on colors and fabrics if used improperly.

Final Thoughts

Next time you’re out of laundry detergent, don’t panic. You’ve probably got a substitute on hand that will get the job done just fine for a load or two. Just remember: use less, rinse thoroughly, and save the dish pods for the dishwasher.

Got another laundry hack? Leave a comment and share what’s worked for you!

Original article: https://tonyherman.com/out-of-laundry-detergent/
PDF version: https://tonyherman.com/out-of-laundry-detergent/?apa_pdf=1

Special Offer for Readers

1,000+ Channels • On-Demand Movies • **5 Devices**

$69.99/mo (~$2.33/day)

Try it for a month and see if you like it, then switch.

Start Your Trial

Click to learn more about CUE Broadcast

Tip: Get 3 friends of family to sign up and you it for free.