



## all sorted out

A family's dreary basement laundry room receives a much needed makeover, thanks to a few high-efficiency strategies. All without losing a sock in the process.

**GET A LOAD OF THIS:** The cheery yellow room you see above, with the adorable children straight out of a detergent commercial ("Mmm, this towel smells so fresh!"), used to be a drab dungeon that Erin Zammett Ruddy, 32, a busy wife, mom, and freelance writer, tried to avoid at all costs. "We heaved dirty clothes down the stairs into the dark, not caring where they landed," says Erin, the mother of Alex, two, and Nora, seven months. To help make the laundry room a place that she could tolerate or, even better, enjoy, *Real Simple* teamed up with makeover guru Chip Cordelli to get (one flight) down and dirty.

written by  
Allegra Muzzillo  
photographs by  
Jonny Valiant

▼ **before**  
Clean clothes were hung to dry from the rafters ("That can't be safe," says Erin), dirty clothes (not shown) colonized the floor, folding space was nonexistent, and detergent, bleach, and other common basement dwellers (paint, tools, cleaning supplies) were in reach of tiny hands.



▲ **sort-it-out strategy: designate a dumping ground for dirty clothes** The rolling cart's trio of compartments are convenient repositories for the family's darks, whites, and delicates. Its top shelf and rod give just-ironed shirts and linens proper homes. Sunny walls and a welcoming rag rug add a bright pick-me-up.  
**to buy:** Triple laundry sorter, \$69, [stacksandstacks.com](http://stacksandstacks.com). Aura paint in Sunshine, \$57 a gallon, [benjaminmoore.com](http://benjaminmoore.com) for stores. Windowpane cotton mat (8 by 10 feet), \$169, [potterybarn.com](http://potterybarn.com).



**sort-it-out strategy: create a play space to keep kids in sight (but out of the way) ►**

Before, Erin couldn't spend time in the basement without worrying about what Alex was getting into upstairs.

Now a chalkboard easel entertains him, and a burlap-covered fiberboard offers a nonconcrete place to hang art.

**to buy:** Easel (similar to shown), \$129, landofnod.com. Homasote panels (four by eight feet), \$120 each, ecohaus.com.



**▲ sort-it-out strategy: choose multitasking storage**

A sideboard lit by a yellow pendant lamp—plus, when needed, a gooseneck lamp—provides an ideal folding surface and a lockable nook for non-kid-friendly items. Wall-mounted shelves allow detergents and stain fighters to stay within (adult) arm's reach.

**to buy:** Värde birch cabinet, \$249; and Grundtal stainless-steel rail shelf, \$20: ikea.com for stores. Ivanhoe Dino 12-inch yellow warehouse lamp, from \$129, barnlightelectric.com. Kvarrt wall/clamp spotlight, \$7, ikea.com for stores.



**◀ sort-it-out strategy: take advantage of underutilized space**

Erin can now transfer wet delicates and woolens straight from the washer to this over-the-door rack. The fold-down surface gives her a space to lay things flat to dry.

**to buy:** Over-the-door drying rack, \$30 (available in late September), bedbathandbeyond.com.

