Homemade Laundry Detergent

A simple powder detergent made in about 15 minutes from a few pantry staples. Gentle, budget-friendly, and it works in both standard and high-efficiency (HE) machines.



About 48 loads	15 minutes	1-2 tbsp	6 months
YIELD	MAKE TIME	PER LOAD	SHELF LIFE

Ingredients

- [ ] 1 cup washing soda (sodium carbonate)
- [ ] 1 cup borax
- [ ] 1 bar (about 140 g / 5 oz) plain castile or laundry soap, finely grated
- [ ] 1/2 cup baking soda (optional, for odour control)
- [ ] 10-15 drops essential oil (optional, e.g. lavender or lemon)

You Will Also Need

- Cheese grater or food processor
- Large mixing bowl and spoon
- Airtight glass jar or container (about 1 litre)
- Tablespoon measure to keep with the jar
- Label and pen

Method - Step by Step

1. **Grate the soap.** Grate the bar finely with a cheese grater, or pulse it in a food processor until it looks like fine crumbs. Finer pieces dissolve better in the wash.
2. **Mix the powders.** Add the washing soda, borax, and baking soda (if using) to a large bowl. Stir well so everything is evenly combined.
3. **Add the soap.** Stir the grated soap through the powder mix until it is spread evenly throughout.
4. **Add scent (optional).** Drop in the essential oil, stir again, and leave the mix for 10 minutes so the scent settles into the powder.
5. **Store it.** Pour into your airtight jar, add the label from page 2, and keep a tablespoon measure inside or beside the jar.

Quick tip: Make a double batch and store half in a second jar - it keeps the main jar dry, and you always have a backup ready when the first jar runs out. For best results, shake the jar gently before each use so the soap and powders stay mixed.

How Much to Use

This powder is concentrated and low-sudsing, so a little goes a long way. Using more does not clean better - it can leave residue on clothes.

Load	Amount	Tip
Regular load	1 tablespoon	Add to the drum before the clothes, or to the detergent drawer.
Large or heavily soiled load	2 tablespoons	Warm water helps the powder dissolve fully.
HE (high-efficiency) machine	1 tablespoon	Low-sudsing, so it is suitable for HE machines. Check your manual first.
Hard water area	2 tablespoons	Add 1/2 cup white vinegar to the rinse drawer as a softener if needed.
Cold wash	1-2 tablespoons	Dissolve the powder in a little warm water first, then pour it in.

Variations

Sensitive skin: skip the essential oil and use a plain, fragrance-free castile bar.

Extra freshness: use lemon or tea tree oil instead of lavender.

Borax-free: replace borax with an extra 1/2 cup washing soda and 1/2 cup baking soda. Cleaning power will be a little milder.

Whites boost: add 1 tablespoon of oxygen bleach powder to the load for whites only.

Troubleshooting

Residue on clothes: use less powder, grate the soap finer, or dissolve it in warm water first.

Clothes feel stiff: add 1/2 cup white vinegar to the rinse cycle.

Dull whites: wash whites separately and use warm water.

Weak cleaning: check the powder is dry and fresh, and do not overload the machine.

Storage and safety: Keep in a sealed, labelled jar in a dry place for up to 6 months. Keep out of reach of children and pets - this is a cleaning product, not food. Avoid breathing in the powder while mixing, wash hands after making it, and test on a small hidden area first for delicate fabrics. Avoid using on silk and wool, which need a gentle, pH-neutral wash.

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Use 1-2 tablespoons per load | Date made: _____ | Cut out and tape to your jar

Notes: Write your favourite scent, the soap brand that dissolved best, or any tweak that worked for your machine here - it makes the next batch easier.