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Taking the Drudgery Out of Ironing Day

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THE ironing is done for another week, and I'm dead tired, as usual." This remark, or a similar one, is heard in a great many homes every Tuesday.

A fresh and smoothly fitting cover on the ironing board is of value, as one that is scorched and torn will catch the iron and slowly wear on the nerves of the ironer. Covers may be made with a draw string in the hem, which will especially help in fitting the tapered end. They may be held in place by special clamps on the back of the board or by tapes or hooks which can be used to face the cover together. Any of these methods will be much more satisfactory than tacking a cover on, as they make it possible to remove the cover frequently to launder it. The padding should be cut the same shape as the board, but about 2 inches larger on all sides.

The height of the ironing board may be adjustable. This feature will make it possible for two or more members of the family to use it with comfort. It is far better for it to be too high than too low, however, as it is always possible for the shorter person to stand on an improvised platform.

The type of iron which is used helps to determine the case with which the ironing may be done. In selecting an iron, every visible part of it should be examined and the value of its special features carefully considered.

The sole plate or bottom part of the iron will receive first consideration. A surface which is dull and perfectly smooth will give off heat readily and will iron easily. If the ironing surface is large, with slightly rounded back corners and a pointed nose, a minimum of strokes will be required to iron a given garment. Beveled edges and a cut away nose on the sole plate have a distinct advantage when ironing around buttons, in gathers and smocking.

In the electric iron, the heating element, which you will not be able to examine, will be of two types—encased or enclosed. In the first case the element is imbedded in the sole plate and is very well protected from injury. An enclosed element, which is found between the sole plate and the weight, is not so well protected, usually, but is more accessible in case repairs are needed. The most important thing about the heating element is the distribution of heat. Every part of the sole plate should be heated uniformly, and it should have no hot spots, for these may cause scorching. The evenness of heating may be ascertained by allowing the heated iron to stand on several thicknesses of cheese cloth or a piece of white paper long enough for a search pattern to be visible.

The binding posts are the connecting link between the source of electricity and the heating element. These should be such as will not introduce friction, firmly attached and long enough to form a good contact in the iron plug. Some protection is needed for the binding posts to keep them from being loosened while the plug is attached. This is usually given by a casing into which the plug fits snugly.

Several coats of nickel plating are usually applied to the cover of the iron to give it a bright finish and attractive appearance. Every coat will add to the cost, but will increase the power of the cover to retain heat. Too close contact between the cover and the sole plate will cause much heat to be carried into the upper part of the iron.

The distance between handle and cover will be found to vary widely among the different irons. This space should be wide enough so the hand of the worker will not become uncomfortably warm. The shape of the handle will help to determine how long a person can iron before becoming too tired. A handle which slips in the hand or becomes loose enough to slide with each stroke will cause waste of time and energy, while one that is firm and fits the hand well will help to speed up the process. Less fatigue will result if the handle is large enough to spread the hand out and has a thumb rest. This will make it necessary to use the large arm muscles rather than putting so much strain on the smaller muscles of the hand.

A stand on the heel of the iron is a great convenience, as it saves the work of returning the iron to the stand every minute or two, and the lifting made necessary by a two or three decker stand. In selecting an iron with the attached stand, it is necessary to examine it carefully to see that it will not catch the clothes, that it will stand steadily while resting on the stand and that the weight of the iron is on the stand and not on the end of the plug.

The cord should be about six feet long and if possible should plug into a wall outlet. If no such outlet is convenient, a special cord with a coiled spring may be used. This will take up the slack when the full six feet of cord

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is not in use. A non-breakable plug will eliminate most of these difficulties. A switch in the plug is a convenience, but is not essential.

The electric iron with automatic heat control and the iron with three heats, high, medium and low, have been found by some women to be very valuable, and these features will, no doubt, become more popular as women learn to use them.

An iron which heats quickly will often save much delay. One which holds heat a long time will save fuel when properly used. All of these factors should help to determine which is the best iron on the market for the price you wish to pay.

There are several kinds of irons which will meet the needs of the woman who does not have electricity, such as gas, gasoline and charcoal irons. Many of these are found to be very satisfactory and will save the necessity for working near a hot kitchen stove and carrying the iron back and forth.

In arranging the equipment needed for ironing it may be necessary to group everything else around the built-in ironing board. In this case both dampened clothes and freshly ironed ones will be on the left of the worker, the clothes horse or table holding the ironed clothes being farthest away, so that no steps will be wasted in getting the new roll from the basket. Placing the basket on a high stool will eliminate all necessity for stooping. If the floor upon which the worker must stand is a hard one, a rubber mat or cork board may be placed in front of the ironing board. This will greatly reduce the fatigue resulting from standing several hours. Some kinds of clothing, small pieces and coarse linens, may be ironed while sitting on a high stool. It may be necessary to practice for a few times before this can be done easily, but it is well worth the effort. The grouping of equipment will be the same if a portable ironing board is used, but the location may then vary with the light, weather and other conditions.

It is possible to maintain too high standards for the ironed garment, thus making of ironing a longer and harder process than it should be. Any woman, I believe, is justified in reducing her work as much as possible, by folding, shaking and hasty ironing of coarser garments, tea towels and bath towels.

The ironing machine, if well selected, and suits to one's particular needs, can be a real time and energy saver, and should not be considered an extravagance if it is really needed.

If the tools used for ironing are the right ones, the grouping of equipment done with forethought, and the place used for ironing is a pleasant one, the second hard task of the week should lose much of its drudgery.