

# How to Dry Your Hands with One Paper Towel

Estimates put paper towel usage at 13 billion pounds annually for the U.S. alone. <sup>[1]</sup>At home, you can use a cloth towel to dry your hands. In a public restroom, you may be limited to the paper towels provided, but it's possible to dry your hands using only one towel. In doing so, you could help to save hundreds of millions of pounds of paper waste per year.

## Steps

- 1 Wash and rinse your hands thoroughly.** Turn the water off while you soap up, and make sure the water is completely off when you are through.
- 2 Shake.** Shake excess water into the sink. Joe Smith <sup>[2]</sup> suggests shaking 12 times, but if you don't want to count, just shake several times, until most of the excess water is removed.
- 3 Take just one paper towel.** If you're in the habit of grabbing a whole handful, you may need to be mindful about taking just one.
  - Some dispensers crank out towels by the roll. In this case, simply dispense a more modest-sized piece. Aim for about 12 inches (30cm) or less.
  - For motion-activated dispensers, you can often get a smaller chunk of towel by tearing as the machine begins to dispense.
  - Most folded or stacked towels dispense individually. In this case, all you have to do is take only one.
- 4 Fold the towel in half.** The little bit of added bulk improves absorbency.
- 5 Dry your hands completely.**
- 6 Discard the towel, or use it to open the restroom door upon leaving.**

## Tips

- There is disagreement on whether paper towels are really more hygienic than air dryers for hands. A Mayo Clinic study found that both paper towels and hand dryers had about the same results <sup>[3]</sup>, whereas a 2008 Westminster University study found better hygiene from paper towels as compared to warm-air dryers. <sup>[4]</sup> These studies and others all make clear the importance of thorough hand drying.
- Paper towels can be composted, but seldom are, especially in public restrooms. Paper towels generally should not go in with other paper to be recycled.

## Warnings

- Change fabric towels frequently, especially if kitchen towels are soiled or have come into contact with uncooked meat, meat juices, or eggs. \*Avoid using hand towels to dry dishes, for cleaning surfaces, or for contact with food.

## Sources and Citations

1. <http://blog.oceanconservancy.org/2012/10/12/paper-towels-whats-the-big-deal-anyway/>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2FMBSblpcrc>
3. <http://americandryer.com/pdf/MayoClinicHygieneReport.pdf>

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