

# IRONING

## The Easier Way

**Are you using the best tools for the job and are they in good condition?**

**Do you have all supplies within easy reach?**

**Do you sit to iron?**

**Could you change the order of ironing?**

**Do you make both hands work?**

**Do you make one job do for two?**

**Could you leave out any part of the job?**

**Do you iron the easiest and quickest way?**

---

**University of Kentucky ● College of Agriculture and Home Economics, Extension Service ● FRANK J. WELCH, Dean and Director**

CIRCULAR 540

## CONTENTS

	Page
CAN YOU IMPROVE YOUR METHODS OF IRONING? .....	3
Removing Wash from Line .....	3
Sprinkling .....	3
Hand Ironing .....	3
Folding .....	4
CAN YOU IMPROVE DIFFICULT DETAILS? .....	6
Ironing Slacks .....	6
Ironing a Pleated Skirt .....	6
Ironing Gathers .....	6
Sprinkling, Ironing and Folding a Shirt .....	5
Steps in sprinkling a Shirt .....	6
Steps in ironing a Shirt (with illustrations) .....	7
Steps in folding a Shirt .....	11
CAN YOU IMPROVE YOUR EQUIPMENT? .....	11
The Lap Table .....	11
The Ironing Board .....	12
Irons .....	13
Seating Equipment .....	14
Other Accessories .....	14
CAN YOU GROUP EQUIPMENT TO SAVE MOTIONS? .....	15
CAN YOU PLAN A GOOD TIME FOR IRONING? .....	15

## TIPS FOR YOU

Get rid of nonessentials, such as fancy doilies and piano covers.

Use mats instead of table cloths — some kinds need no laundering.

Scald dishes and save washing dish towels.

Avoid use of intricate trimmings, and of colors that fade.

Choose materials that iron easily or do not have to be ironed.

# Ironing the Easier Way

By Ida C. Hagman and Frances Stallard

## CAN YOU IMPROVE YOUR METHODS OF IRONING?

### Removing Wash From Line

Fold articles to avoid wrinkles. A table placed near-by saves steps and stooping; it gives a good place to fold and sort. Let starched garments get bone dry. Unstarched articles may be taken from the line when slightly damp, folded, and rolled for ironing. If a dryer is used, take out articles to be ironed before they are completely dry.

You will want to omit ironing wherever you can. Knit garments, corduroys, chenilles, and rubberized articles should never be ironed. Turkish towels and diapers are more absorbent unironed. Some man-made fabrics require little or no ironing. Some rayon fabrics spot unless they are ironed before they are entirely dry. Sheets need not be ironed. **Starched articles and outside wearing apparel need careful ironing.**

### Sprinkling

Sprinkle clothes evenly and lightly. Too little water leaves dry spots while too much dampening takes long ironing. Flick the water with a clean circular brush or whisk broom dipped in warm water. See illustration below. Or dampen with a perforated bottle cap on a bottle, with a rubber spray bulb, or with tips of fingers.

Pull garments into shape as you sprinkle. Fold hems and double thicknesses inside. Roll in firm, not tight, bundles. For the family wash, pack the rolls in a basket in the order of use: last things to be ironed will go in first. Cover the top snugly with a clean cloth or piece of plastic.

Some people prefer dampening wash in a large plastic bag. This is a quick method of sprinkling, but more desirable for a few articles than for a large number of different type pieces.

In warm weather, keep unironed dampened pieces in the refrigerator to prevent mildew.

### Hand Ironing

Adapt the temperature of the iron to the fabric. Use a hot iron on heavy linens and cottons; slightly less hot on lighter weight



A circular brush is very satisfactory for sprinkling clothes evenly and quickly. Notice the placing of unsprinkled articles in a basket to the right of the worker and the sprinkled articles in a basket to her left. A bowl of water is conveniently placed. This task can be done with greater ease when the worker is seated.

linens and cottons. Decrease heat in this order as you iron wool, silk, and man-made fabrics. Set iron, if controlled, at the lowest setting if you do not know the fiber. If your iron is not controlled, begin ironing man-made fabrics with a cool iron. Disconnect uncontrolled electric iron at the first sign of shine. It is a good idea to iron first things requiring the lowest temperature, then those requiring higher temperatures, and then to taper off the ironing with some requiring lower temperatures. Iron the more difficult garments before you get tired.

**Arrange** article on the board to get the most ironing surface. With flattened palms, smooth out wrinkles from the center out. As you iron, continue to smooth out and pull with one hand while you iron with the other.

**Guide the iron** in straight strokes with the thread of the material. This is very important when ironing bias garments.

**Do not bear down** on the iron nor move it about rapidly. In other words, do not make hard work of ironing.

**Iron each article**, especially seams, until completely dry, otherwise they will pucker when dry. Wool should be left slightly damp, then hung to dry.

**Iron on wrong side** all fabrics that get shiny when ironed on right side—dark cottons, linens, silks, wools and man-made fibers. Use a press cloth when touching up difficult details on the right side. When ironing black or other dark fabrics, cover the board with a dark cloth. Iron fabrics that have a raised surface on the wrong side over extra padding. If you prefer the pattern in damask to stand out, iron the table cloth on the wrong side. If you want a shiny finish, iron it on the right side.

**Iron embroidered articles** on the right side, then on the wrong side, over a thick soft pad.

**Iron extra parts first**—inset pockets, shoulder pads, facings, ruffles and trimming. Then iron the parts that dangle from the board. Iron top of long garments, then the lower part. When ironing a zipper, iron along sides of it when closed, never over it.

**Touch up** any parts that have been mussed. If articles are carefully handled during ironing, very little retouching need be done.

### **Folding**

Fold flat pieces in convenient sizes for storage. Towels and pillow cases are usually folded in thirds, then crosswise. Table cloths and other large pieces may be folded as they are ironed. Usually a lengthwise (occasionally crosswise) fold is made and one side ironed. Fold in center crosswise, and iron upper surface. Continue folding and ironing upper surface until all parts are ironed. Change position of creases each time you iron the article.

Iron large well-dampened damask dinner napkins on wrong side. Then fold hemmed edges together with the top one a fourth inch from the edge. Iron the top side. Bring the folded edge to within a fourth inch of the edge and iron the top side. Fold right-handed selvage to within a fourth inch of opposite end. Iron; again fold within a fourth inch of the edge and press. Press top side. No folds will show beyond the square and the napkin may be placed with open edges toward place and edge of table.

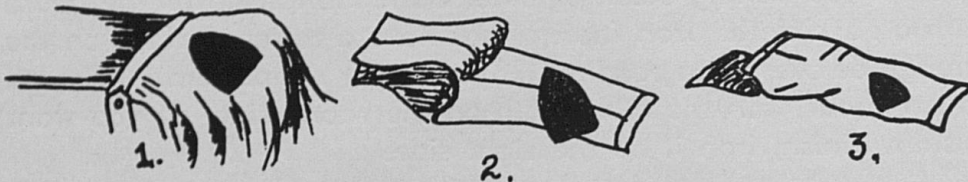
If sheets are ironed, fold so that four thicknesses may be ironed at a time. Ironing the hem alone may be enough if sheets are folded smoothly when taken from the line.

**Hang flat pieces** on a rack to dry. Hang blouses, dresses, skirts on hangers as soon as they are ironed. Shirts, too, should be hung on hangers if they are not to be folded.

## CAN YOU IMPROVE DIFFICULT DETAILS?

### IRONING SLACKS

The use of pants stretchers will make it unnecessary to iron slacks. Minor touching up may be needed. If ironing is necessary, follow these suggestions:



Iron pockets and plackets first. Finish the top over end of board.

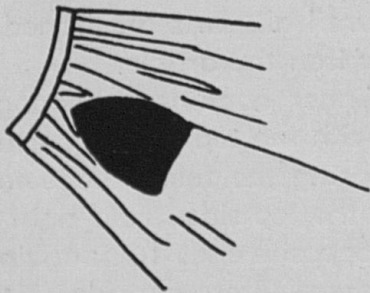
Then lay a leg flat; place folds so that creases will be centered and iron.

Turn leg, and iron to crotch. Repeat same procedures on other leg.



### IRONING A PLEATED SKIRT

Lay, pin, or baste pleats in place as shown in illustration at left. Iron from the bottom to top of skirt, first on right, then on wrong side.



### IRONING GATHERS

Work in and out, as shown in illustration at left — never over the gathers.

### Sprinkling, Ironing, and Folding a Shirt

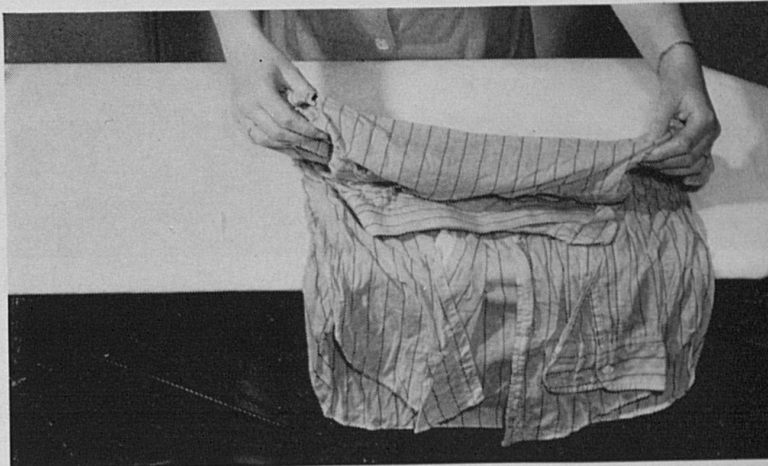
#### STEPS IN SPRINKLING A SHIRT

- a. Spread the shirt on table.
- b. Fold button side over back. **Sprinkle.**
- c. Place right sleeve of shirt over front. **Sprinkle.**
- d. Spread cuff. **Sprinkle.**
- e. Fold buttonhole side over back. **Sprinkle.**

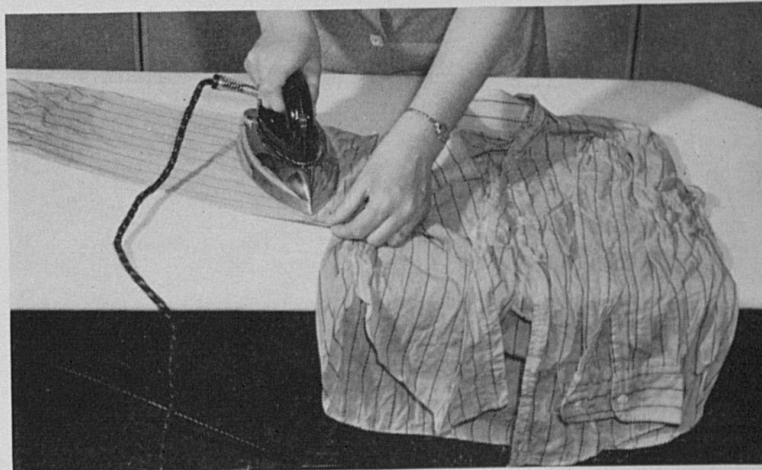
- f. Place left sleeve over front. **Sprinkle.**
- g. Spread cuff. **Sprinkle.**
- h. Grasp points of collar and fold yoke one-third of the way down. **Sprinkle.**
- i. Fold tail of shirt over collar and yoke and roll into a bundle.

### STEPS IN IRONING A SHIRT

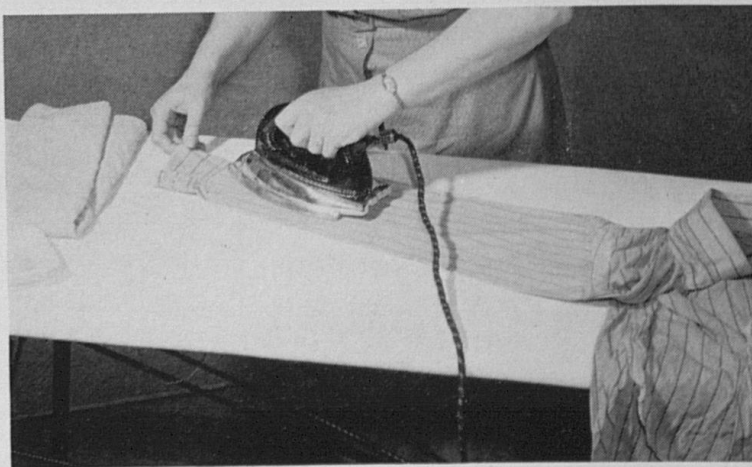
Unroll shirt at extreme left end of table or board with tail hanging off front of ironing surface.

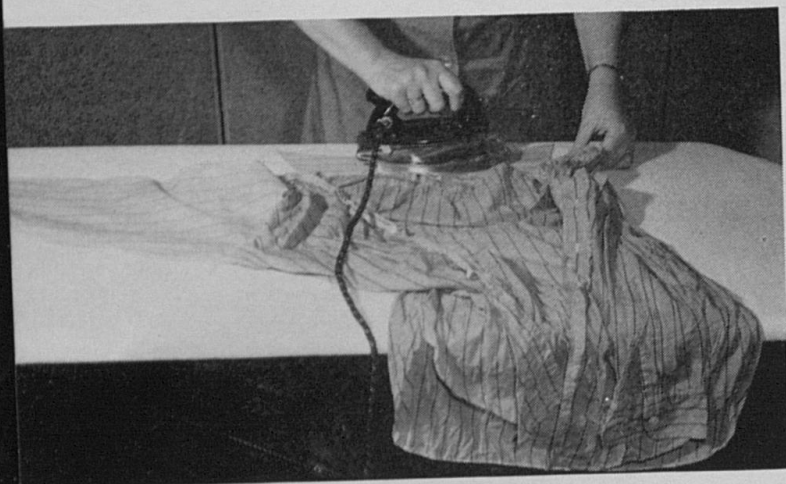


Place right sleeve with placket side up. Smooth with hands toward shoulder and cuff. Start ironing at center of sleeve toward shoulder.

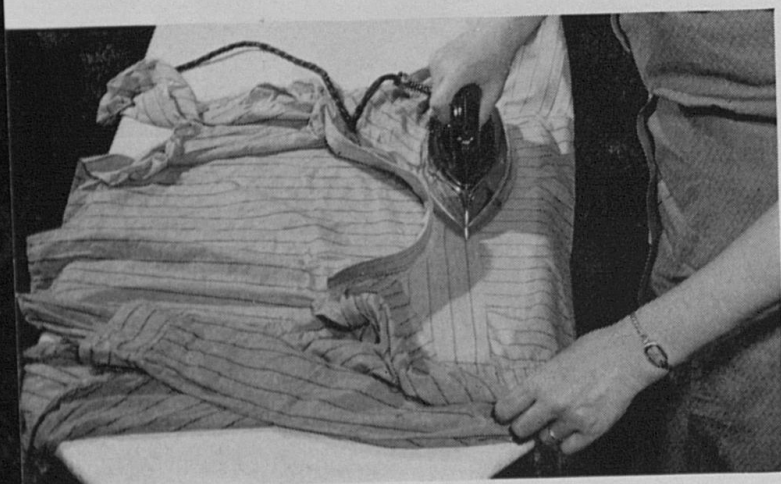


Change iron to left hand, iron into the cuff, shift iron to right hand, iron inside of cuff. Turn the sleeve over. Iron in the same manner as the first side of sleeve was ironed.





Iron the outside of collar and inside of band. When there is extra fullness in collar, iron from points toward center and from collar edge toward band.



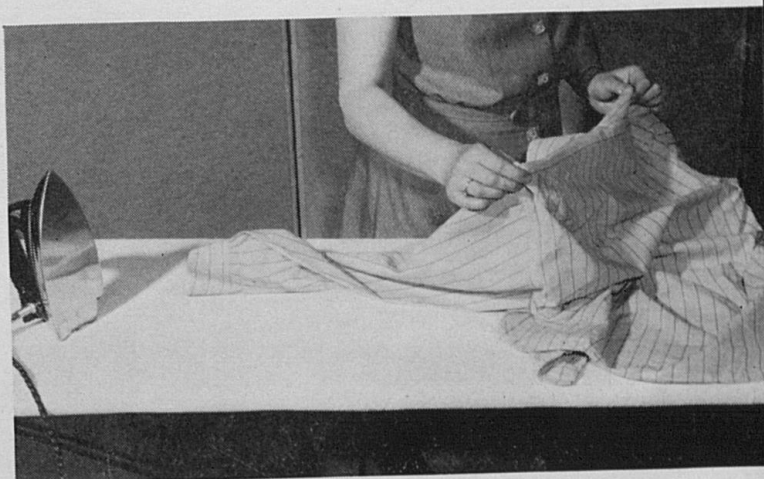
Fold the yoke back upon shirt. Iron yoke.



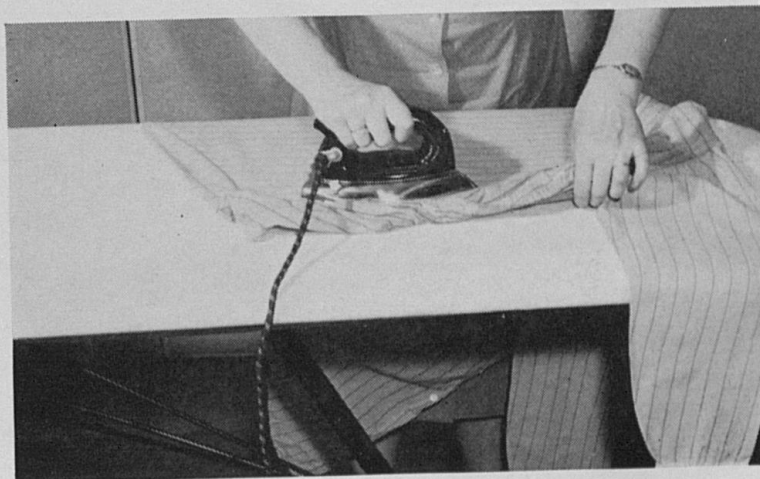
To put shirt in position to iron other sleeve, cross arms, grasp shirt at top of sleeves, lift shirt and place unironed sleeve with placket side up and ironed sleeve hanging off ironing surface. Iron sleeve in the same manner as first sleeve was ironed. Iron the other side of collar and band.



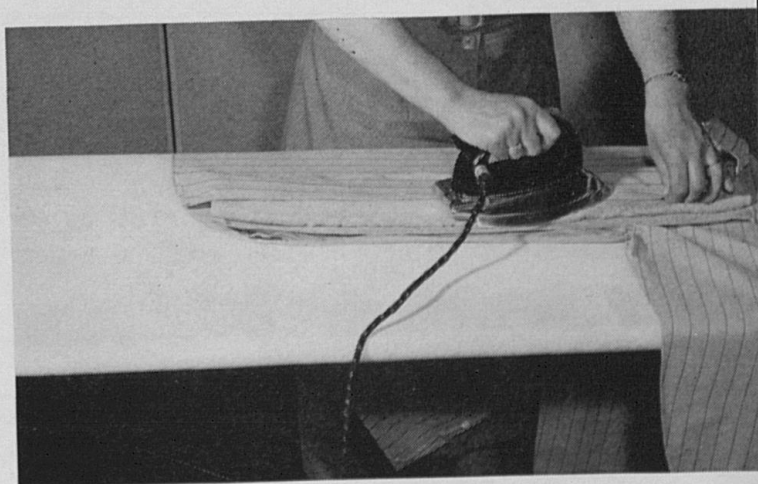
**Grasp the shirt at shoulders and give it a one-fourth turn to right so that it is lengthwise on board with fronts up and collar to left end of ironing surface.**

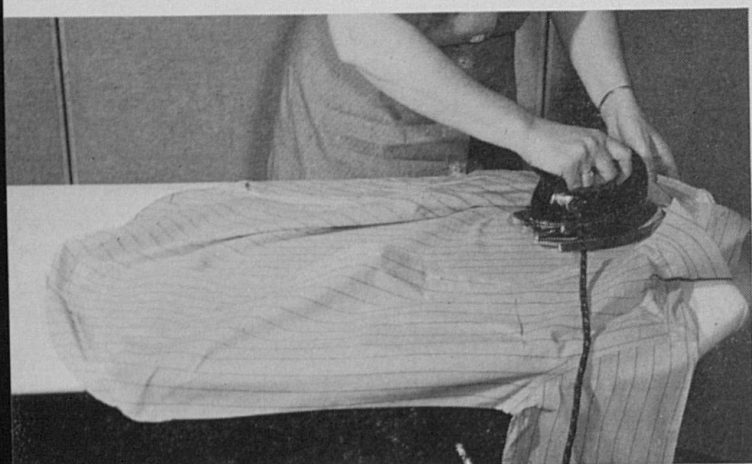


**Iron inside left half of back and yoke of shirt. Iron seams dry.**

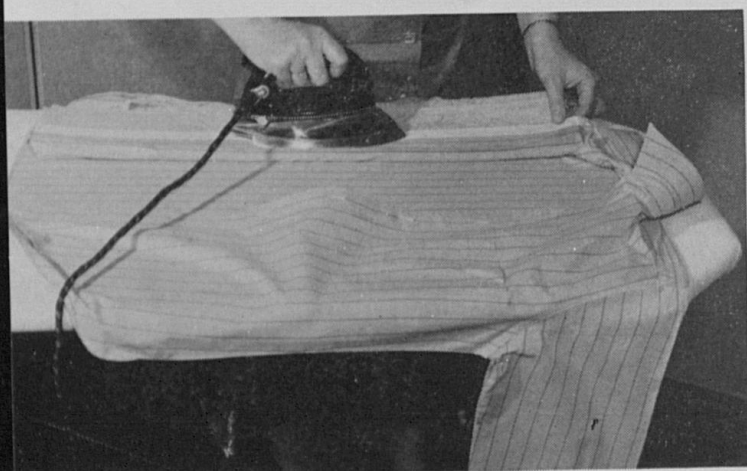


**Lay unironed left shirt front over ironed back. Iron buttonhole band. Lay folded turkish towel on shirt. Fold band over it. Iron band on wrong side. Turn band back in place. Remove towel. Finish ironing left front.**

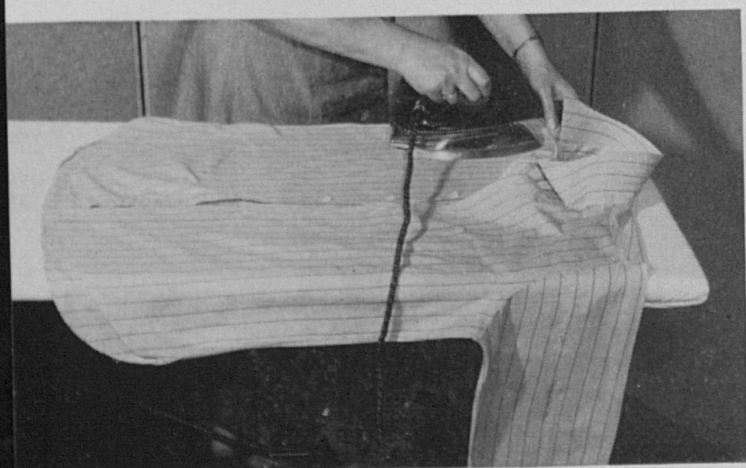




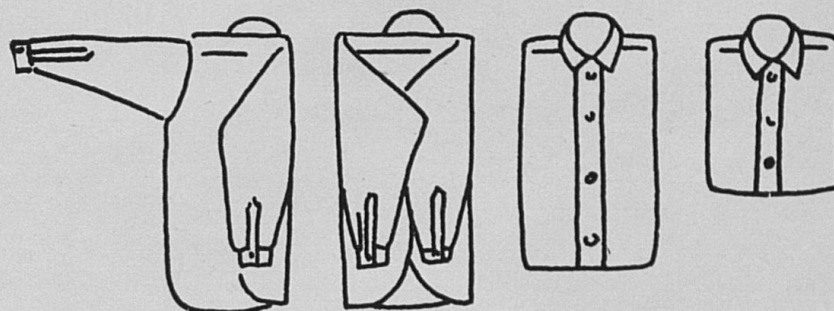
**Iron unfinished shirt back.**



**Lay unironed right shirt front over the ironed back. Lay turkish towel on right shirt front. Turn button band back on the towel. Stretch and iron dry.**



**Lay the shirt front flat. Remove towel. Iron the right front.**



#### STEPS IN FOLDING A SHIRT

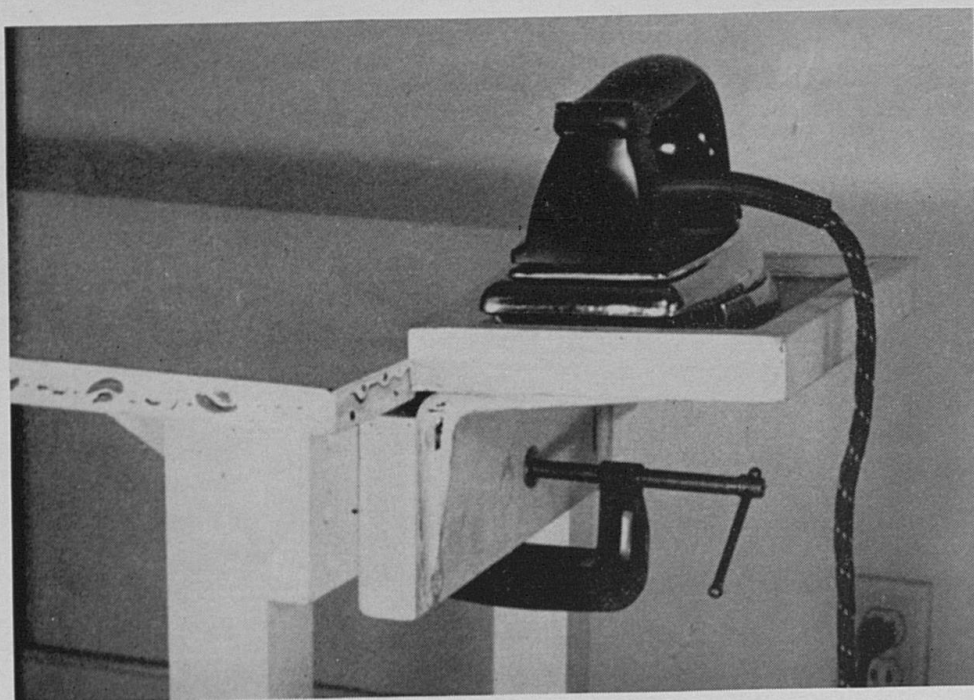
- a. Shirt front up.
- b. Grasp yoke with left hand, and tail of shirt with right hand.
- c. Fold right side about **half-way down** between collar and arm-hole.
- d. Bring the fold the full length of shirt.
- e. Bring the top edge of sleeve along this fold.
- f. Turn the fold and the sleeve back under the body of the shirt.
- g. Repeat process on the right side.
- h. Put left hand under the shirt, lift the shirt, with right hand bring the tail of shirt under the top.
- i. Leave about **six inches** of the shirt to tuck under the yoke, to hold the folded shirt in place.

#### CAN YOU IMPROVE YOUR EQUIPMENT?

##### The Lap Table

**A Lap Table** makes it possible to iron at a comfortable working height while seated. All flat work, shirts, tailored blouses, and many other articles can be satisfactorily ironed on the table. The table top that is finished with heavy duty floor sealer is not injured by heat and moisture. Cement asbestos sheeting, cut to the size of the table, protects the linoleum-covered surface and those finished with enamel, varnish, or shellac.

**Padding**—Mattress pad material, several thickness of old blanket, or similar material make a good pad. Cut the pad the size of the table and bind edges with bias tape. Elastic tape attached



A table that can be pulled over the lap is useful when ironing and for many other purposes. The iron stand clamped to the end of the table makes it easy to slide the iron out of the way when not needed, and saves much energy required to raise and lower it.

across corners makes it easy to slip the pad on and off. **New material should be pre-shrunk.** Two pads the weight of mattress pads are needed to give the desired thickness and are easier to launder than one heavy pad.

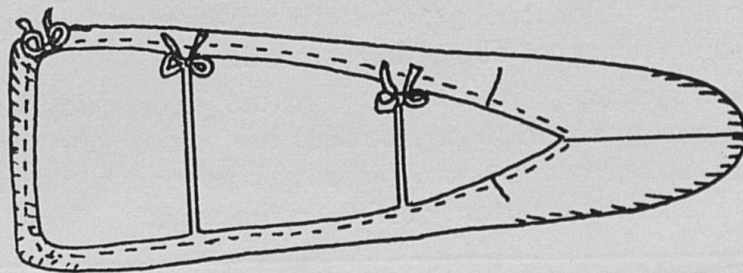
**Cover.**—Make the cover of firmly woven, lint free, pre-shrunk material shaped to fit the table. Finish with a half-inch hem or bind with bias tape. Enclose a four-inch length of elastic tape in the casing at the corners, draw up the corner fullness to fit over table edges, and sew ends of elastic firmly in place. Or, attach strips of woven tape at each corner of the cover so that they can be wrapped around the legs and tied.

### The Ironing Board

**An ironing board** with a narrow end is useful for ironing certain articles. The board should be steady and of comfortable height and width. One can be bought that is adjustable for comfortable standing and sitting heights. A sleeve board is handy for ironing sleeves without creases or wrinkles, and for hard-to-get-at blouses and children's clothing.

**Padding** of enough thickness to give spring is desirable. Too much padding makes the board cushiony. Padding should be smooth, free from ridges and seams. The pads may be bought or home-made. Several layers of old blankets or similar material may be used for the purpose. To make the pad, cut the cover to fit the top and thickness of the board. Make a cap of muslin to fit over the end of the board. Bind the edges. Fasten the wide end of the pad to the board with thumb tacks.

**Covers.**—Have at least two covers, of firmly woven, lint-free material. If you make the cover, cut it 4" wider than the shaped pad. Shape the end by darting the extra material beneath the narrow end of board. Finish the broad end with a shaped facing and a draw string. Hem the sides and at the same time place two or three pairs of tapes along the sides. Illustration shows under side of covered board.



Underside of covered ironing board

Wash cover frequently. A scorched cover will yellow articles ironed on it. Bleach a stained cover with chlorine solution.

### Irons

**Most electric hand irons** have cords attached. If your iron has a removable cord, connect and disconnect it at the wall socket and not at the iron. Avoid kinks and sharp bends in cord when you put it away. If the iron has automatic control, set the control correctly. Keep the upper part of the iron bright and shining with a polish cloth or with occasional cleaning with silver polish.

The sole-plate of the iron, while it is still warm, should be rubbed occasionally with paraffin. Burned-in starch should be removed after the iron has cooled by washing with a dampened soapy cloth or with very fine steel wool.

**An automatic ironer** saves much energy after you have learned to use it.

**Steam irons** are useful for pressing woolens, silks, and man-made fibers, but they do not replace the dry electric iron for ironing cottons and linens. Some are constructed for use as a dry iron or steam iron. The manufacturers' directions for use and care of the steam iron should be carefully followed.

### Seating Equipment

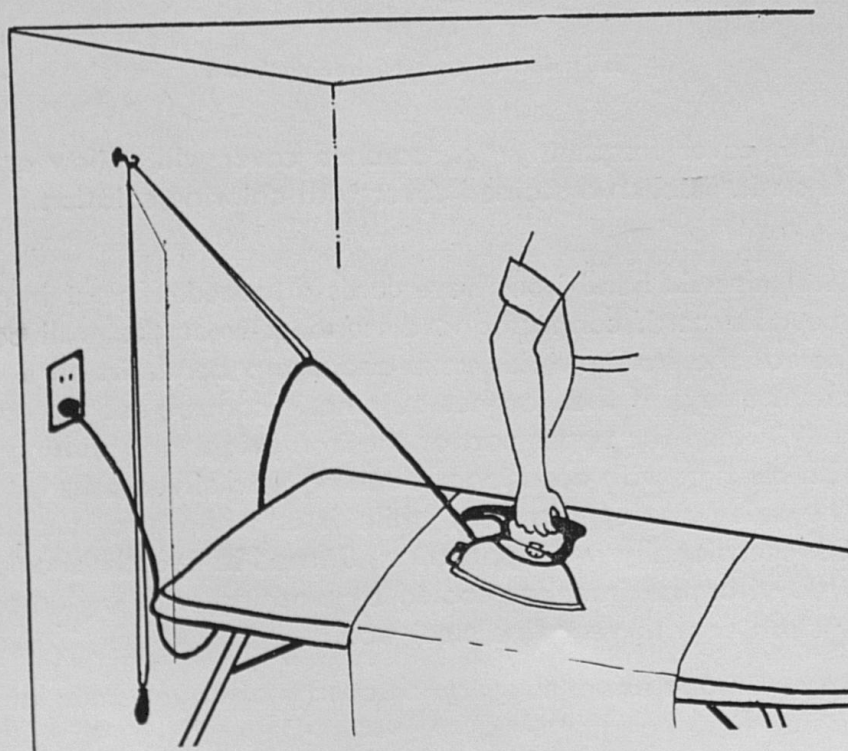
**Stool.**—When ironing at a board that cannot be adjusted to correct height, use a stool of comfortable height with back and footrest to lessen fatigue. When ironing at a low ironing board or lap table, use a chair that fits the body when you sit well back in the chair with your feet on the floor. If you must stand, use a rubber pad or rug to ease the strain.

### Other Accessories

Drying rack, hangers, and a table are useful for airing ironed articles until they are ready to be stored. It saves time later if things to be stored at the same place are grouped together.

A bowl of water, sponge, or cloth are needed for dampening parts of an article that do not iron smooth.

**A device** to keep the electric cord out of the way is a great time and energy saver. Many devices are sold on the market for this purpose, but a cup-hook, piece of cord and a plumb-weight will also keep the cord from getting in the way.



### **CAN YOU GROUP EQUIPMENT TO SAVE MOTIONS?**

Put the ironing board, or ironer where there is good light, air, and space. Place equipment to save steps and stretching, the basket of dampened clothes near-by, raised to prevent stooping, and a table and rack within convenient reach so that you do not have to get up to hang or lay articles.

Store ironing supplies and equipment near the place where ironing is done.



**Having equipment conveniently arranged saves much time and effort in ironing.**

### **CAN YOU PLAN A GOOD TIME FOR IRONING?**

Choose a time that interferes least with household activities. Some women like to iron when they can be entertained by the family or by a good radio program.

Photographs on pages 7-10 by courtesy of Cornell University.

---

Lexington, Ky.

March 1956

Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics: College of Agriculture and Home Economics, University of Kentucky, and the United States Department of Agriculture, cooperating. Frank J. Welch, Director. Issued in furtherance of the Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914.

Issued as HE-920, 9-44; rev. 6-50; re-issued as HE-1306, 9-53; re-issued as Circ. 540, 3-56; 45M to 3-53; 3-56, 10M.