

## How to Iron a Shirt

A Bachelor's Primer

By Dennis Knight

The price of getting shirts professionally laundered and pressed is now pushing two dollars, and I have resolved that henceforth I shall do them myself. Two dollars indeed! I invite you to join my revolution, and I am happy to help by sharing all I know about the ironing of shirts.

You may have the equipment somewhere around your bachelor pad, but it is likely you will go buy it new. Pretty good steam irons are available for about \$40 but a really good one, and face it, the one you think you need, can cost up to a hundred. The ironing board will be about \$20, and I recommend a can of spray starch for a couple of bucks. You will recoup your \$120 in about three months if you iron five shirts a week.

You are now equipped, and you may begin by setting up the ironing board. Holding the apparatus laterally, reach across with your free hand and feel for a lever underneath. You may need to run your hand back and forth a couple of times to find it. You can check the near side as well, although it takes dexterity.

If you still can't find it, rotate the board to a vertical position with the legs facing away. If you are doing this in the dining room (as a bachelor naturally would,) be careful of the chandelier. Now, with better reach, you can find the lever. Activate it. I forgot to mention, when pulling the trigger on an ironing board in the vertical position, you should be at least four feet from anything else. If this advisement is too late, push the breakage aside for cleanup later – you're busy now.

The ironing board is finally open with four feet on the floor. If it is too high for comfort, you have already located the magic adjuster. Reach over and push it. If the board collapses, you shouldn't have been leaning on it. Keep trying, you'll get it eventually.

The next step is the cover. You can tell which way it goes by the shape. Better covers have a single draw cord, but the model you bought, you cheapskate, has strings along the length of the cover. These are to be tied together in pairs under the ironing surface, and you will do this by feel. Blind knot tying is a talent uncommon to the male species, so you may have to turn the board over, but for goodness sake, be careful this time. If you can't get at least one pair of strings tied, use paper clamps from the office.

Now comes the placement of the ironing board. It should stand between you and an electrical outlet. If the outlet is behind you, the cord will ensnare your ankle and you will be taken to the floor just as you execute the grand lunge. The hot iron will land on your chest, and the board will follow.

With the board set up and the iron plugged in, it is time to add distilled water. Did I not mention distilled water in the shopping instructions? My apologies. You may substitute tap water, but nothing else, even if it is distilled. Set the iron to "steam" and the heat to "max." You're ironing shirts, not delicate unmentionables, and anything less than maximum hot is not maximum macho.

The appliance will take time to heat, so now you can go to the couch and catch a few minutes of that game. When you finally awaken during the night, the safety timer will have worked, and your iron will be cold. Unplug it and go to bed.

I have exceeded my word count for this essay, so I will finish in a future episode. Then I'll describe the various parts of a dress shirt, and explain my special ironing techniques, including the previously referenced grand lunge. In the meantime, the ironing board will be a handy buffet, set up and ready in your dining room.