

## Lessons Learned by Participants in the Flats and Handwashing Challenge

"Two things that I discovered are:

- 1) Flats are the best to take with you outside of home / on a trip overnight, when you have a chance to wash diapers.
- 2) Flats are really easy to wash by hand!"

I learned to appreciate what I already have (washer, AIOs, pocket diapers), but became more sure than ever before that I would rather use cloth in any circumstance rather than disposables.

I felt much better using flats and knowing it is good for my child as well as the environment.

That I don't need to purchase a \$700 bulk of fitted cloth nappies. I will use squares and covers at home and fitted for going out and carers.

I truly believe every family can learn to love cloth for its many benefits, but specifically for low income families, this just makes sense. I love cloth but because of the expense of "modern" diapers & because I am conservative when it comes to how much I feel is okay to spend on a stash, I have lived with a total of 28 (16 modern + 12 gmd prefold) diapers for over a year with no problems. This challenge gave a reasonable way to beef up my stash for little money and pacify my curiosity in experimenting with flats.

"As I walk away from the Flats & Handwashing Challenge, I now know from personal experience what it takes to hand wash cloth diapers for my child. It is a fully attainable reality to provide diapers for my child that are clean and healthy- even if I didn't have a washing machine!

We are going on vacation this summer and for the first time, EVER, I do NOT need to buy disposables!!! I will bring the 24 flat cloth diapers I own, with us and hand wash. I am so excited about that. I wish I would have known about the flats sooner!"

Flats are awesome but I love my washer

That you don't need to spend 25+ dollars in a diaper to have something that works! I was very surprised that 2 flats pad folded got us through the night leak free!

I learned that I could have totally saved myself hundreds of dollars on expensive diapers. The flats did the job, they were easy to use and they washed and dried excellently and I enjoyed the entire process to boot! When I first started CD'ing I swore I would never fold diapers and use pins, I thought there were so many better options out there. While I still don't pin( I'm in love with the Snappi), I have changed my mind on where flats stand, and I enjoy the folds! While I still love my expensive diapers, if I ever had to build a stash again....I'd start with flats. It can totally be done, with..dare I say...flats alone?! Yes, I can! :)

"I learned that being green can be fun!

I became more bonded to my baby as we worked at this challenge together.

I am excited to discover new and fun ways to raise my daughter ""green""."

Even though it is possible to use flats and handwash them we really shouldn't expect low income families to do this. If they want to and have the time than so be it. But in reality most low income families have multiple children, and jobs to deal with, so to handwash would be an added chore to an already hectic lifestyle.

"I learned that it is possible to use flats and handwash. I also learned that my initial thoughts of ""Why doesn't everyone diaper this way?"" may be have been a little pious. While it's possible, there are some difficult aspects to it and I could understand why someone would not want to do this full time. If I was working full time, I doubt I would want to come home and wash diapers at night after being gone all day. That being said, I definitely think that for anyone who does have a washer, flats and covers are a completely affordable way to cloth diaper. With the proper education, they are just as easy to use as pockets or AIO's.

My biggest surprise during this challenge was how great flats were for my baby's butt. We have organic cotton prefolds and they always give him a rash when I don't use a liner. Even with a liner, we can only use prefolds for 3-4 changes before his bottom starts looking red. For that reason, I don't use prefolds often. But the flats were awesome. He never got a rash and never even once got red, even without fleece liners. Since flats are as absorbent as other diaper options, I will definitely be using these in the future. I'm also looking forward to traveling with flats. Our last trip had me running back and forth to laundry facilities to wash diapers. I would have much preferred to handwash flats and covers in the hotel room sink. "

"I really have to appreciate flats, their simplicity & practicality. I have had serious thoughts about selling some of my pocket dipes! I thought I'd be scared of the handwashing, but I figured it out & got over it. Now I feel a lot more confident about going camping with a few flats & a bucket washer.

One thing I wish: I want to learn a fold that keeps poop contained in the flat. I love using wool with the flats, but if he poops, It's guaranteed to get on the wool :("

"I really have to appreciate flats, their simplicity & practicality. I have had serious thoughts about selling some of my pocket dipes! I thought I'd be scared of the handwashing, but I figured it out & got over it. Now I feel a lot more confident about going camping with a few flats & a bucket washer.

"i was surprised! i did it, i can't believed i enjoyed it, and it was alot easier than expected. i almost changed my mind and didn't do it, but i am so glad that i did!

I averaged out the drying times. when they were hung outside during the day the flats only took

15-20 to dry and the cover 1-2 hours but inside sometimes they both took almost all night (8-10hrs)

I think that it was hard being limited to only 5 covers.

Drying outside was fast and easy but drying inside took longer that with my PUL/microfleece covers i CAN dry them quickly if i roll them up in a towel and step on them to squeeze out the excess water.

I feel more confident promoting cloth diapering to everyone, doing this helped me not only realize, but have first hand knowledge that anyone can cloth diaper"

I loved learning how to hand wash and dry the diapers and knowing that I could do it if I needed to, whether due to a broken washer or camping trip. I wasn't able to continue past day 4.5, however, because both my kids came down with the stomach flu accompanied with HORRIBLE diarrhea that required machine washing and lots of bleach. I continued using flats though (they're our primary diaper anyway) and machine washing and line drying. There was a significant time window required to wash the diapers when hand washing though, and I don't know that I would do this full time if I didn't have the resources I do now. Great challenge!!

People get very creative when their resources are limited, they think outside the box and try to work with what's on hand. I learned that it can be done and that flats are not scary. I think the most surprising was that flats themselves were not much harder to use than 'modern' cloth diapers. You just have to be brave and learn how to use them. In some ways they are easier than OS diapers with all those snaps and adjustments :-)

This was a catalyst for me. my smallest is 15 months old, and ever since having him, i've had a hard time getting back in to a routine. i struggle to keep up with regular laundry, housekeeping, etc. but this challenge, i was "forced" to keep up with the diapers, this in turn helped me start keeping up with other things, so on top of having clean diapers every morning, i also had a clean kitchen, a tidy/clean house, and i've managed to stay on top of my other regular laundry. i'm also a home school mama, and to say this last year has been overwhelming would be vastly minimizing a huge struggle-BUT this week with this challenge, they've gotten caught up, there's been less arguing, less stalling, less struggle all together, and i attribute this to my own state of mind, being caught up, having my life back in order, having a routine back. i am sticking with the flats and hand washing at least for a while, it's given me so much back. thanks kim for starting this challenge, and for all the help along the way! thanks for helping me put my life back in order!!

I loved the online cloth diapering community of support, I guest blogged about my experience.

One of my favorite things about cloth diapering in general, is the flexibility. I love AIOs, pockets, my prefolds and now flats. I love that I know I could still diaper inexpensively if our situation demanded we do so.

Handwashing diapers is a totally viable option. It works- my diapers are clean. I will definitely be using my new diaper-washing skills when we go on trips, especially camping.

"I learned that flats wash SO easily. I barely needed any detergent but I did need lots of water. I also learned I enjoy hanging them to dry because then they don't get crumply.

I also learned that five covers was really really hard for me and I learned how to use a cover over and over again and only rotate two for the day. ( I normally use a new cover every change)

I learned to REALLY appreciate my washer. The washing part wasn't so hard but the rinsing and the wringing were the hardest. And I learned that if I had to, I could diaper my child on nothing but flats with minimal covers and handwash MOST of the time. I would want to go to a laundromat probably once a week or every two weeks just to get them ""really clean"" for my peace of mind. :)"

I had taken flats camping last summer but my toddler pooped in the potty so I only had to clean pee. It ended up raining 2 out of the 4 days so i had to use disposable because nothing would dry! I have Kissaluv's in my baby's stash and I love them but they take so long to dry. I like that I can fold a flat similar to a fitted so it holds up better than a prefold. I wonder if my son was a heavy wetter if I would like them as much, but right now I am pleasantly surprised!

I think that I was shocked that I could master a flat fold (diaperbag style). I was FLOORED that the flats were actually absorbent, but I would never handwash again =)

This challenge really knocked the cloth diaper snob right out of me. Before this I didn't view Walmart flats and pull-on pants as "real diapers", but after using them for a week I was amazed at how well they worked. I won't be switching over to them any time soon, I still love my prefolds and wrap covers, but it's good to know that if I find someone in need of cheap diapers,

I can help them and show them how to cloth diaper their baby for under \$20.

The best part about participating in the challenge: just that, participating in the challenge. I did what could be done by thousands of low income families (did I ever mention we ARE a low income family and it's part of the reason we ever started with the cloth diapers?). Think of the positive ripples this could have if only there would be more folks out there willing to just give it a try. This has spurred a true interest in trying to get this word out to daycares. I think the majority of the families that need to know about this have their baby in a daycare. (I could be so wrong about that, not based on the slightest statistic, just my own guesstimates.) I think I need to do this. I'm determined to get the word out to those that need to hear it the most.

"I was surprised at how the weather affected my dry time. when it was rainy and icky outside, it took over 12 hours to dry. When it was sunny (which was only one day) the flats dried in less than 2 hours! My diapers got a lot cleaner washing them by hand, and it really wasn't as labor intensive as I thought/expected it to be. I really enjoyed hand washing! I thought I would hate it

and it would be a drag, but I really really enjoyed this challenge!

I was also really surprised at the lack of support I received from my real life friends. I don't know anyone who cloth diapers, and they all made comments about it being a waste of time, and didn't understand the "why" of it. They don't agree with my cloth diapering regularly, so I guess I should have expected it. "

I learned that there are ways to stretch your dollar if you're not afraid of a little work.

I have a better appreciation for those who did this a long time ago and who have to do it now. I love my washing machine and missed my beautiful fitted diapers. I am glad I did this and didn't give up, even though I wanted to by day 2. Haha! Very thankful it's over:)

I feel like I have more credibility now to talk about flats and cloth diapers for lower income families. I used to just 'think' it would work, now I've PROVEN it can!

"This challenge definitely made me appreciate what I have- a washer/dryer and the financial means to own "modern" cloth diapers. I totally felt like a pioneer woman and definitely can relate to my grandmothers! I also understand why children wore diapers for such a short time back then as compared to now. Handwashing is a lot of work, is time consuming AND pinning flats on a toddler who'd rather run away than lay on his back to have his diaper changed is definite motivation to me to get him on the potty!

All in all though, it was a great learning experience. I was pleasantly surprised at how well it worked out (and how awesome flats are at night -who knew!)and am considering taking them on vacation, something I've never tried before. Thanks!"

I feel much more confident knowing that I would be able to handwash my diapers if the power went out. I think everyone would benefit from this information for emergency preparedness.

While I think this system is totally doable for stay-at-home moms, I think washing at a Laundromat would be better for working moms. If you had 3 dozen flats you would only need to go twice a week, which if you have a little one you would probably need to go that often anyway.

"I learned that it is possible to cloth diaper full-time on a budget, without access to a dryer and washer. I also learned so much about how other families were using flats and covers and how to repurpose free/inexpensive items for flats/covers. In my own experience of using flats, I learned once again how versatile flats are (used one as a towel after an unplanned pool visit) and how much lighter and spacious they are in the diaper bag.

I always recommend pockets and prefolds/covers to those first venturing into CDs but I will now also recommend flats since they are so simple to use. I absolutely looooooove flats!"

"Cloth diapering full time with flats is so doable and very effective! You really can't mess up with

flats!

I really love handwashing and will continue to do so! I washed outside and realized that even my hose was a convenience. I didn't have to hand pump the water to wash with! I realized how many conveniences I have.

"Going into this, my biggest apprehension was that the birdseye flats would be stiff and crunchy from line drying, but that wasn't the case at all. We had a great week weather-wise in Minnesota, mostly sunny and breezy. A quick rumple/shake was enough to get the flats soft before folding. I also worried that it would be hard to get them completely rinsed, but that seemed to go well, too. My daughter had a persistent sore spot of rash before the Challenge started, and that totally healed with no other treatment from me. I will remember that and use flats again for that reason. Normally I will use a flat a couple times a week just to keep things interesting, so it was fun to discover that they're truly a reliable stand-alone diapering solution. I feel like (from all the other blog posts I read during the week) that I was in the minority enjoying the handwashing and finding it to be quite easy. I tossed wet diapers into the sink and ran a little water over them at each change. Then once or twice a day, did a quick rinse, wash with Tiny Bubbles, and rinse. I used probably 3-4 inches of water in my large sink, and didn't agitate them more than a few minutes each time. I checked ""wringing the diapers out"" as the most difficult part of handwashing, but even that wasn't actually difficult, although that was the step that had me running for the hand lotion.

My other kids all noticed that the diapering and washing/drying routine was a little different than usual, and were very interested.

I think that this Challenge has solidified my desire to advocate cloth diapering, and get involved with education more regularly. I loved the WIC suggestion and will look into that in my town/county.

"The flats challenge week went by REALLY fast - and i was never once frustrated with it! I stayed on top of things easily by washing first thing in the morning - I washed in a bucket as i was getting ready - my 3 & 5 year old helped some with the plunger while i fixed my hair or took a shower - some mornings i washed before they woke up with the baby watching on the floor - if i had time, i did a small load in the afternoon (2 days) to stay ahead. I dried diapers outside or on the railing of my stairs or on the back of kitchen chairs .. even with flannel flats they dried before i got tired of them hanging everywhere! by the end of the week wringing the diapers out got better - and GLOVES are a MUST!!

I use to think people who hand washed cloth diapers were CRAZY and that no one should ever expect that of anyone.. i thought some people just couldn't cloth diaper because i wouldn't want to use a laundromat why should i expect them to?! what about all the detergent build up in those machines?! even the dryers would have fabric softening build up on them. - my kids react to that stuff so if i were to do this full time i'd be washing full time! I've always thought before that cloth was not an option while traveling, but now i know it is - i just bought some gauze to make

gauze flats because they dry SO fast..10-15 mins outside on a sunny day!

I'm so glad i gathered what i had (receiving blankets, a few flour sack towels, some covers i had from previous children - and i ordered a few new covers - i thinned my pocket stash & am getting rid of all my MF inserts and will be using flats when i'm at home!

Do you know if giving diapers giving hope is accepting microfiber inserts? i'll still use my hemp but i don't think i'll ever go back to microfiber!

I learned that this is possible and I would do it if I had too. More importantly my Husband would do it too, and he was not to excited about it at all, but was very supportive and helpful. :)

Give a family a box of disposable diapers, and they can diaper their baby for a few days. Give them a box of cloth diapers and covers, and they can diaper their baby for its lifetime.

That I live in luxury with my full stash of pocket BG 4.0! I can afford to buy cute diapers all the time! I am not wasting anymore! I don't have to use spoises to travel! (i HATE them!) my flats are my travel diapers now! I am soo lucky and value everything and informing family and friends via facebook tha tthis can be done! and have even put cloth diapers on expecting and futures moms' minds! This has made me want to voice cloth diapers even more! This seriously eliminates any excuse NOT to use them! if anyone wants to spend money or kill the earth with spoises after this, well then they are just a little crazy :D

I now know that things could be a lot worse off than they are for us - I'm not one of those families who wonder if I can afford a package of diapers, but only through the kindness of others who allowed me to cloth diaper, and only because I have a washer/dryer. Prior to this challenge, I had little knowledge about flats. I occasionally used them, but I didn't realized they actually worked this well, and that they were so easy to handwash. However, when I was pregnant and looking into cloth diapers, I didn't realize flats were an option - I couldn't afford the "good diapers", but I was lucky enough to get enough free or free for shipping. Although we don't NEED this option right now, you never know what might happen down the road, and I am so grateful to have the security that we will never have to wonder where our kid's next diaper is coming from - even without access to a washing machine.

"Of course, you can use square nappies and save a lot of money. You probably, mothers think that modern existence, for what fold flat?

They think it it is difficult , a return to the past ... is what I thought when I started using cloth diapers.

Once this challenge, I have no choice but to recommend its use. It is not necessary so much investing money in cloth diapers as the baby is small ... even if an older baby a year, combining with other types of diaper is more complete, save money!.

I myself, when my baby was very small, and did not have enough diapers, wash hand the four had not to wait for the washer and thus able to use them quickly and not to use disposables. That is certain, if not indispensable, would not. Cloth diapers have evolved: it is possible to use squares because without hate washing by hand!

I enjoyed participating in this challenge!"

Handwashing was definitely the worst part but it got easier as the week went on and we found ways to do it faster and more efficiently. I don't think I could expect someone who was working two jobs for example to do this. Handwashing is physically exhausting. It is a good workout but when you are tired at the end of the day it is the last thing you want to do. Dunking and swishing in the toilet wasn't as bad as I thought it would be. This was a good experience for me because now I know I can go without a diaper sprayer. I also sprayed off all diapers in the shower then kept them in a wet pail. I think teaching people to use flats and covers as a low cost way to diaper your baby is totally reasonable. If they had access to a washer and dryer, or were able to use a laundromat they would probably be more likely to do it. We totally plan to use flats and handwash on a roadtrip we taking this summer. And would consider doing it while camping. We plan to bring our buckets, breathing mobile washer and drying rack though.

I had been using flats already about 90% of the time, and going into this I honestly didn't think my diapers would get as clean as when I used the washer. They actually came out CLEANER because I was using hotter water. I was stunned later when I took off the night diapers and \*sniff sniff\* NO ammonia smell.

I also learned that I have been using about double the amount of detergent that is really necessary. Once I cut down on the detergent and used the boiled water, a vinegar rinse was no longer necessary. So this challenge is going to save me money on vinegar and detergent when I go back to my washer, and keep my nose happy!"

I am more appreciative of my pocket diapers. It took me a few days and plenty of frustration to get something that actually worked and didn't leak (which was the receiving blankets)!

"That is was alot easier than I thought it was going to be. Although I sort of wonder if a single working mom (b/c this is the situation for most low income families) would have the time required. And if they work out side the home would their daycare be willing to accommodate them? Just some thoughts I had. I liked promoting this challenge and feel it was a great experience for me to be able to tell others about. Thank you for spearheading this!

"Flat diapers come in a variety of types... find one you like and that works fore you. If you're prepared, it's a super simple way to use cloth on baby. Less bulk, faster drying time, and environmentally friendly."

This is something that anyone can do! This was much easier than I thought it would be and you feel great about doing it. I loved talking about this experience and I know I will continue to talk



about this for a long time to come!

Our current financial situation sometimes leaves us with not enough money to use the coin operated washer and dryer in our apartment building. This challenge made me prove to myself that I, as well as others who feel they cannot afford to cloth diaper, can afford to cloth diaper their baby for the cost of a large package of disposables. Before this challenge I was spending \$15 a week just washing my sons diapers. Because of this challenge, I have decided to continue handwashing, and only using a washing machine once a week to give them a good thorough cleaning.

That it's possible! I'd definitely do it if I financially had to.

"I love the flats, but would like to get some ""real"" ones, maybe some terry ones.

"It really made me think about our ancestors and how hard they worked. I realize now how lazy society is and we find any excuse to not do something. I feel like if I could do this challenge with two kids in diapers, any one else can do it. I wouldn't expect them to devote every single night or morning to do it, but if push came to shove and they were in desperate need, they would know what to do! I am planing on contacting my local WIC office, women's shelters, or even diaper banks. I would love to see cloth in these facilities. Thank you for opening our eyes, Kim. We are so grateful.

I surprised myself that I actually enjoyed this challenge. I was super excited to get started and bummed when it ended. We learned that flats work great overnight! We only had 3 leaks the entire week! We will continue to rotate the flats in our night-time diapering. I love knowing that I CAN do this if I needed to. I hope that the information this makes available to low income families will help keep some bottoms out of re-used disposable diapers! NO baby should have to sit in a dirty diaper <3

"First, that flats are amazing and I will continue to use them after this. Second, that I would do everything in my power to keep my child in clean diapers no matter what the sacrifice to myself. And third, that I am a cheater.

I learned that any family of any income level could cloth diaper their baby. And that it's doable for families that can only afford a days worth of diapers, or for those that don't own washing machines or dryers.

"It was not as hard as I expected. I was glad to figure out that if I needed to, I could do this! I was surprised how well 2 flats worked overnight.

This is TOTALLY possible for full-time. While not ideal, it could work."

I felt a solidarity and connection to the others also doing the flats challenge. I guess I learned

that very few black people such as myself cloth diaper when it really should be the other way around. I truly want to find a way to enlighten those in public housing who are poor to use cloth in an effort to put that money to good use in other areas. I also learned that I love flats much more than I thought. I entertained the idea of selling off all my pocket diapers but it wouldn't be convenient for my sweetheart. Thanks for doing this.

"It was not a lesson for me, but for the high girls I teach colorguard to. I had 2 full days (8am - 3pm) of practice while doing this challenge and was able to share and have the help of 17 girls between the ages of 14 - 17. I got them involved by showing the the different folds I used and how easy it was to do with a toddler.

I also taught my 7 year old daughter how to do the origami fold so that she could prep the flat while I was changing her brother.

It was a great way to get started on this style of cloth diapering."

"Over all I was pleasantly surprised with how easy it was and how much I actually enjoyed it. It was rainy pretty much all week long so sunning was not an option for us and drying was tedious at times. I came up with some creative options to speed the process up though. I used the Gerber Flats and was surprised with how absorbent they were. I doubled them up in each diaper but they did their job and we had zero leaks all week, even with my super soaker! I did this challenge with a 12 month old, a 24 month old and a 34 month old all in diapers full time (alas, yes my 34 month old is still a FT diaper wearer!). I only had 18 flats, 4 receiving blankets and 4 hooded towels to cover all 3 tushies.

My advice to anyone doing this is to invest in 1 good fleece cover for over nights, or use fleece PJs at bedtime.

I learned that hand washing is possible not fun but doable. I would do it if I had to. I am so thankful that I don't have to. I would love to teach anyone who wanted to learn how to do this. Thanks for the inspiration:)

I learned that it was more difficult than I thought to handwash all those diapers everyday....yet it was WAY MORE satisfying than I EVER imagined. When I was finished washing and the diapers were on the drying rack, I felt very accomplished and had a great sense of pride everytime I looked at the rack loaded with diapers.

I learned that it is possible to cloth diaper my child, no matter what the circumstance or financial situation.

That I HATE hand washing diapers. I would definitely use flats (over sposies full time) as a way to diaper my child with little cash flow. That said, I would most likely take them to the laundry mat with my clothing once or twice a week and only hand wash in between laundry mat visits. I would try to accumulate enough flats to accommodate my wash schedule. I would also choose

better covers. I used mostly grovia covers (one flip and one wool) because I already owned them but WOW... they took FOREVER to dry. Anyhow, lesson learned is that it is completely feasible to inexpensively cloth diaper AND hand wash. I would not want to hand wash full time but I would do what I needed to do in order to keep my baby dry and diapered.

That I would always cloth diaper before going to disposables and that on a very low budget it is still very possible. The only thing that would possibly make me go with disposables would be if we had no running water.

That it is definitely possible. For the majority of the challenge we were camping in a very stormy climate so diaper drying took awhile on some days and on others dried quickly. Even inside the camper the air was moist, which is what made it more difficult. Driving in the car on a long trip was easy, although I did change the diaper more often and use a fleece liner I cut from an old baby blanket to keep him feeling dry.

I learned that handwashing diapers really is harder than I thought with twins- I probably wouldn't handwash if I had no washer machine, but I would DEFINITELY still cloth diaper with the flats and just bring them to the laundromat twice a week to wash. Washing covers at home was easy, so I could still do that aspect and keep with 5 or less covers. Flats (especially the target floursacks) are about a dollar a piece, so you could get more of them to build up an inexpensive stash that can make it so that you can wait longer before going to the laundromat. Flats are very easy to use and can take more abuse than other fancier diapers, so I think you could go longer between washes than with synthetic fibers (like in pocket diapers). Also, many low income families that live in cities would have easy access to a laundromat (usually within walking distance). Also, with the washer doing the wringing out, the flats would dry quicker than the hand-wringing at home and can be dried on the shower curtain rod to cut the cost of drying at the laundromat. I used hangers with three clothespins per hanger and hung a diaper on each pin (so three per hanger) and I was able to fit a few dozen diapers in the bathroom easily. If someone is in a situation where they would have to handwash their diapers like this, their time would be more valuable earning \$\$ than washing diapers. It was very time consuming and required more brain space than I would have wanted. If this was an only option than it is doable

"I was surprised at how easy and effective it was to use flats. I know some people hated the wringing, but I put almost no effort into wringing at all. I just gave them 2 good squeezes before hanging, and the diapers still dried just fine. There was one day that I washed in the afternoon, and it was a humid and overcast day, and they were not completely dry by sunset. I brought them in and hung them, and they were dry by morning. Overall, though, I was very pleased at how easy it was to use flats. Now that the challenge is over, I will use a fleece liner with the flats as well as a diaper sprayer, but I definitely intend to keep using them. I think I could have been very happy to use flats right from the start for a lot less money than I spent on my fancy diapers. I really feel (as does my cloth-diaper-hating husband) that the flats outperformed all the other diapers in our stash (which is quite diverse). Thanks for the great idea!

I learned about how using a wet pail really helped to get the diapers cleaner. We've always

used a dry pail, but during the Flats Challenge we used a wet pail and this is something we will be continuing to do.

I learned that while I could make do, knowing absolutely nothing about flats and folding or washing them, having knowledge prior to using them would have made things much easier. I'm really glad I made the decision not to research folds and such, and that I was able to learn this first hand. I'm more confident now that promoting cloth diaper education is key.

mm, still thinking about this. if i think of something later, i will try to email you. for me the constant question was: would i really do this long term if i didn't have a washer? not sure, honestly. i would definitely use disposables at nighttime. i think i would probably use flats during the day, but easier said than done. it was overall a great idea/challenge. really helped me to think more about lower-income families.

I think the thing I learned from this is that it is totally possible to have two babies in diapers and go on a 4 day camping trip with 6 diapers and 3 covers. I know it might not always be a great idea, but the flats (and covers) were washed as they were used and we never once ran out of diapers or covers. I hung them out to dry on a make shift clothes line and we never had issues. I did wash them using a breathable washer and a five gallon bucket, but I think it could just as easily be done with just the bucket and your hands. I had used flats a couple times before in emergency type situations, but never used them for long periods of time and had not hand washed. I think that anyone could use flats full time with as few as 6-8 diapers and 3-4 covers. I would recommend a snappi or two and perhaps some fleece liners, but it could be done without those if you had to. I dont think I will use flats full time again, by choice, but I will be using them off and on.

The biggest lesson was learned was the following: flats are probably my favorite diaper to use. They fold nicely, dry quickly, don't stain, wash quickly without the smell of urine, and they are so adorable on my little man. The hand washing was time consuming, but I learned that there are methods that make it easier and that I can do it!!

I helped my diapers dry at night by putting a fan blowing on them. The drying rack was inside the tub so diapers could drip in there. Fan was on the floor blowing toward them to simulate an outside breeze. It really helped cut down drying time.

That you can diaper a baby on any budget and any situation. And that sometimes the less expensive diapers can be just as good as the fancy ones.

While the handwashing wasn't a lot of fun it was much easier than I expected, particularly once I'd gotten a good system worked out... which included a lot of soaking time at each stage of washing. That helped the diapers to get much more clean with considerably less effort - it also allowed me to multitask while washing the diapers rather than having to spend one solid block of time tending to them. If I was faced with a difficult financial situation I would do this full time without even a second thought. I actually didn't mind using the flats/covers at all and the handwashing would be manageable if it was a necessity. I would be pinching my pennies

to save up for an extra wash bucket, more flats, a second drying rack and a diaper sprayer, though! :)

If I needed to handwash, I could! I also realized that flats are a lot more absorbent than they look and I LOVE flour sack flats!!

Handwashing gave me a new appreciation of the Ma Ingalls' of the past! I also learned that you don't NEED expensive fancy cloth diapers, plain old flats work just as well and aren't that much more work!

At first I didn't think we would be able to do it. My daughter had an awful rash and was using medicated cream. We did start a day late and finishing it up tonight. So we are a day behind, but I am finishing it. I really liked the flats. I already use a ton of fitteds because I can let my daughter go coverless. I can do that too with the flats.

That even in a pinch I can still use cloth... And that I love the look of flats.

I loved the challenge knowing that I can do this if rough times happen. I want to show that anyone can do this. There is no need to spend a couple dollars on a load of laundry when you can wash the diapers in the bathtub.

That I shouldn't take the things I have for granted...I have been in the handwashing situation before and completely forgot what I had been through.

The biggest lesson: that "traditional" cloth diapering was not as difficult as it sounds, and that it actually has some advantages over modern style cloth diapers (wash/dry quickly because material is thinner, less expensive than modern inserts).

I went into this challenge thinking it would be quite easy and not much of a variation from our normal way of diapering. I found that I needed many more covers for 2 babies (10 would have been fantastic) and that my diapers just didn't get as stain-free as I would have liked based on cleaning methods and cleaning schedule. I think it is doable for a low-income mom with no in-home w/d but I think it would need to be a mom with a fair bit of spare time as well as a decently sized starting stash. I did not complete the challenge -- I gave up about half way in due to the chaos in my home. It was just too much to add to my normal routine (5 children, two in diapers, breastfeeding two babies, etc).

I think that while handwashing diapers is a challenge, with the right tools it can be done.

I learned that I need to rinse, rinse, rinse when handwashing and it is easier to do less diapers when handwashing. I found I would get behind because I would start them when my little one was in bed at night and finish them in the morning, so I was doing a days worth of diapers. It would have been easier to wash a few at noon and then a few at the end of the day.

I think this was kind of a good reality check. I thought that handwashing would be really easy but I was surprised at how much time and effort it took, not to mention that now my bathtub is all scratched up from the bucket which my landlord won't like. It would honestly be asking a lot to tell someone to handwash cloth diapers. I don't profess to think that now every low income mom should do this. I think lots of moms have had to take a break from handwashing to tend to a crying child, and that's discouraging. It's more important to spend time with a baby than to wash diapers. So handwashing is possible but sadly not always practical. I love my flats though and will continue to use them!

I learned that flats can be very useful in many situations. I wish I had tried flats when we traveled instead of investing in disposables. I could certainly hand wash flats on a part-time or short-term basis but I don't think I'd do it full-time unless it was an absolute necessity. I learned to be more appreciative of what I have, and to remember that our diapering situation (nice modern diapers and our own washer & dryer) are luxuries. While I enjoyed using flats (and loved the simplicity of just one diaper in my "stash"), I was surprised how much I disliked handwashing, especially as the week went on. If I had to wash flat diapers by hand, I don't think I would be as passionate about cloth diapering as I am. It really is a commitment, and it was time consuming and even a little daunting at times. That said, it is definitely possible, and if you were to accept that that's how you were going to diaper your child, you could definitely opt out of wasting your money on disposables and put that money toward something more important.

Parents did it that way for a long time, but I think we're such generation of "I want this now" and need immediate gratification, so we thrive on convenience as a result.

I learned that the Internet is a life-sucker. We should be living our lives outside.

"I was really surprised to find out how well flats actually work! I have used them occasionally, but never really gave them a chance. While preparing for the challenge, I came up with a new fold, the Airplane Fold, to find a way to make flats work on my toddler. It worked really well and made flats fit so nice! I even decided to give them a try at night (my new Airplane fold with a pad folded flat as doubler) and then put a Dappi pull on cover over it all. It was bulky, but for the first time in months, I was able to use cloth at night! There was NO ammonia in the morning, and absolutely NO leaks! I was thrilled!

During the whole challenge, I never had to use anything other than the flats and covers except for training pants during the day. I did hand wash all the training pants and cloth wipes we used along with the flats and used the flats to clean up any accidents. I thought this made it more fair since we would have been using less flats than most.

I wanted to add that I only used 3 covers. I had a new pack of Dappi covers waiting in case I needed them, but I found that they dried SO fast, that I never needed more! I just washed the cover as soon as it got dirty and it was dry in less than an hour! I used these over the flats and training pants, so they got used a lot!

I chose to use the Dappis over any of the other covers I had because they are the least expensive cover I know of (\$2.50 a piece) and they are available at the local mainstream baby store. The flats I chose were just IKEA burp cloth flats for just \$3.99 for a 3 pack in cute prints. I also only used pins as those are available at the local store. I tried to only use things that would be easy for anyone to find and use.

As for the actual washing, I was surprised how easy and quick it was when the routine included rinsing each diaper as soon as it came off, wet pailing, and taking advantage of soaking. I managed to get diapers washed and hung out to dry, kids and myself bathed, everyone dressed and toddler nursed all in 1hr and 20 min!

I really enjoyed this challenge and even hand washed my son's nighttime diaper this morning (yep, still using flats!) It really is easy, and means no stinky diapers sitting around! I'm so glad I participated as I learned so much!

If you need or want any more info, feel free to email me at [cdkolesar@yahoo.com](mailto:cdkolesar@yahoo.com)

P.S. I was surprised to see my new Airplane fold as one of the fold options! :)

That "old school" cloth diapering is NOT hard!

"That while it is do-able it is time consuming. I dealt with a lot of poo leaks due to my lack of knowledge with flats. I found it difficult to get help with the folds or links to types of folds other than the origami fold.

I did find myself extremely impressed with how absorbent the flats were. My child who I consider a heavy wetter was able to go cover-less during daytime hours, without streaming through the diaper as he does with some fitteds."

I learned that it's possible to handwash flats...and get them fairly clean! I also learned that I need to rinse more. ;) Soaking diapers in a pail with baking soda really helps break up the urine and poop! Oh, and rubber gloves are definitely a must! They help get the covers so much cleaner than rubbing them together does!

I need to research detergents for handwashing better or just plain find the time to do it daily if I have to handwash.

"I really liked using flats. Normally I use prefolds or fitteds, so having to fold the diapers wasn't that strange for me. I was very disappointed that I hated washing by hand. Really hated it. I can't imagine being a single mama, working and taking care of my babies and having to put out that much effort at the end (or beginning) of a long, hard day. It was a pain for me, and I'm not a single mama, and I don't work outside the home in addition to parenting my four littles.

But. The flats traveled well. On Friday, we drove to a blog event two hours away from home, and then spent the remainder of the day at the Strong Museum of Play. I did get a few

interesting looks when I'd pull a receiving blanket out of my backpack, but whatever! When I explained what we were doing, the response was either a) you're NUTS! or b) that's cool.

I'm always up for trying something new, and I'm glad I participated. I really feel like I can accurately describe how using flats would work for someone who is in a bad financial situation." Being 35 weeks pregnant, I found this challenge exhausting, but would absolutely do this full time if I had to. I have been in a situation in the past where I was in dire need for cloth diapers, (severe diaper rash, nothing worked, except cloth) and not financially able to purchase more than a few. If only I had the knowledge that flats are great and so easy, and CHEAP! I love the flour sack towels, they were better than the small osocoy, they dried fast and I could buy a few dozen and 4 dap nylon pants for less than a month's worth of disposables, awesome!

I can do it if I have to, but after 5 days my interest in it wanes if it's not something that is necessary to our survival. Oh, and 5 covers is NOT ENOUGH if I want to wash every second day! They got a bit smelly because I had to reuse them longer than I should have. First of all, I loved the desperate scramble I had to make to find stuff that worked. For example, I didn't have dry covers so I used old plastic grocery bags as an emergency cover. When my flats weren't dry I rummaged through my receiving blanket stash and could use those. It made me see how cloth diapering is so accessible. Plus, I think I found a stink-free solution for my heavy wetter (diaper bag fold with a pad fold inside). I won't lie, this was tough. If it weren't for the wringing out and hang drying, I'd probably encourage this to everyone around me because the rest was SO easy.

It's possible but not easy, it takes commitment and effort. Best of luck to you all, this was definitely a learning experience.

I learned that I really like flats. It is such a simpler system. It is possible. I enjoyed being part of the cd community.

I regret I did not know how easy flats could be and 13 years ago when we had our first baby in a diaper how simple it could be to diaper him and get my diapers clean for less than what we spent a month on disposables. We didn't have a washer or dryer, we didn't have much of an income, but we sure did have the blowouts, the waste, the stress of running low on diapers before payday.

Silver and gold, make new friends but keep the old. The new fancy cloth diapers are cute and fun but we are on a super tight budget and have no w/d of our own and it's been 10 months of coin laundry, rashes b/c now as I look back, I don't think I was changing her often enough due to dreading laundry or fear of not making it to payday so I could get wash \$! It was easier and better for both of us and it didn't take much time so I was able to stay focused on our time playing together. I also loved that my 2, 4 & 5.5 yr old godchildren got in on the action, and were able to observe once again that it takes a little effort but our hands can produce great results and not everything is automatic/push a button/electronic/just add money! At the end of challenge I now am excited to order some "real flats" and learn some different folds



and a couple more covers, I hope to use flats and handwashing primarily and keep my AIOs and pockets as back up! At the very least as long as we have warm weather :-)) it would be interesting to re-challenge ourselves in the dead of winter lol. I'm super glad I participated and am proud of myself for actually making it through! Thanks for the idea, I also will be formulating a flyer to place at the local Wic offices to help inspire other low income families in similar positions as myself ;-))

Overall, I am happy with flats. I learned that you only need a few drops of laundry soap to get them clean and be able to rinse them free of detergent with fewer rinses. My daughter got a rash towards the end of Day 3, so I spent Day 4 rinsing all the flats, waiting for them to dry, and practicing EC. The remaining days I used very little detergent and the rashes didn't return. I also stopped using the pad fold with PUL covers, I used the origami fold to keep the PUL from touching her skin. I only used flats for one night, the diaper didn't leak but I didn't like how wet it was against her skin. I used prefolds for the rest of the nights. I also used fleece liners with the flats. The fleece liners required more washes to get clean. I love the trim fit that you get with flats!

Handwashing is actually really easy! It took a bit of time which was annoying, but it was easy and totally do-able!

This ended up being a very empowering experience. I knew it would be for the people I taught it to later, but didn't think it would be so much for me, since I've been using cloth for a while. I am amazed at how good I feel knowing that if the SHTF I will have one less thing to worry about.

"I took the Flats and Handwashing Challenge for all the reasons, I just didn't realize it! Initially, I wanted to prove to myself I could do it and that it was possible for low income families (I have a strong desire to work with these families).

I honestly thought that it would be fun too-for some reason, I love challenging myself with cloth diapers-they are so flexible!

What I didn't realize is that I NEEDED to do this challenge to be prepared for an emergency. Right before The Challenge began, the tornado hit Joplin and then the following night, in TX, we were under severe weather as well. This really made me think about if I were in an emergency and all I had was taken away, how would I diaper my children? I'm convinced that flats are the answer for emergency and low income families AND now the answer for simplicity on a daily basis. Thanks for ""making"" me do this!!

There really is no excuse to not knowing how or being able to do this- it's totally easy. that flats are actually very absorbent and worked really well in my hybrids. also that handwashing is possible!

"It's great to see other people doing is. I didn't do the challenge, per se. I hand wash flats all the time for my two boys. That's also why my numbers were a bit high, since I was doing it with

both. It started out of my desire to cloth diaper and has turned into something I really love that has saved us tons of money.

It's hard to pick just one thing! I learned so much that will be useful in my own cloth diapering routine, but I think the biggest thing for me is that this experience has verified that cloth diapering should be accessible to everyone and could be of enormous benefit to those in lower income situations. It has ignited my passion to find ways to make information and resources available to those who really need them. I will be contacting my church and local food bank to see if they have ways to get this information out there, and possibly donating some start up materials as well.

"Things that surprised me:

1. How inexpensive I could diaper TWO kids (under \$100.00)
2. That flats turned out to be my husbands favorite type of cloth diapers
3. that it's possible to do this!

Using flats and Handwashing isn't too much to ask people to do. Those individuals HAVE to be committed to using cloth though. As a single income family, I know what financial struggle feels like. That's one of the reasons we use cloth (the main one being health reasons). Yes, the challenge took time and physical effort but I want to provide my children with the VERY best that I can and if this was the only way that I could cloth diaper, I would! I would do anything for my kids!

Flats have actually become what we use most of the day now.

Thank you so much Kim for organizing this! I know it took a lot of time and effort and I am very thankful that I was able to be a part of it."

I really think that success doing this depends on your personal situation & your dedication. However, when my mom diapered my older siblings, this was the only option. When you have no alternative, you can do many things that you may otherwise choose to not do. Even today, there are many 3rd world countries where this is the only option (probably w/o the nice covers). This is totally possible, it's the convenience of sposies that can undermine the commitment to actually do it. I'm not sure that I would even do this full time, but I'd certainly do it part time!! That sometimes "modern" is not always better. Flats are great night-time diapers! Both my night diaper wearers are wearing one or two with a wool soaker at night. Working great! My wool soakers are homemade with wool interlock fabric...very similar to sustainababish. I learned that I honestly love cloth diapers. Who knew it could be fun to handwash dirty diapers? In fact, here we are...days after the challenge has ended, and I'm STILL handwashing. I can't seem to quit!

I learned that absolutely anyone can cloth diaper their baby on the cheap, no matter what their financial, washing and drying situation is!

That its possible to do this without much money, nor a washer/dryer!

"While handwashing flats is not really that feaseble for me since I have 3 kiddos 3 yrs old and under and another on the way I am glad to know that if we ever HAD to do it, I could. Right now with as young as my kids are the time commitment is huge. I tried to make sure they were in nap at the same time so that I could wash the diapers without interuptions but life doesn't always work that way. We were not able to do flats at night time as my littlest was flirting with a rash. In my experience him being in a cloth diaper at night only makes rashes worse. (synthetic or natural fibers)

I wanted to do this challenge so that I would know how to survive with cloth were we ever in a situation where we had no electricity. If we ever HAD to do this I would probably do a daytime cloth, night time disposable type of a situation. I would also get a breathing washer plunger thing to make the washing part go a bit quicker.

I am glad that I participated! I really like flats!"

I knew I COULD do it. I wasn't sure that I'd like it at all. oddly I rather enjoyed it- Maybe because my grandmother got mad at me for CHOOSING to do something as stupid as cloth diapering let alone handwashing them?? Acting like I was poor!! (BTW I don't have 'extra \$\$' ) In her mind, if you have disposables you have enough money. it was rather funny to have this conversation with her.... I enjoy cloth diapering, I don't mind using flats at all and will choose to use them in my every day rotation especially when we are at home. during our time (10 days) I travelled, stayed in a hotel, was at home, out and about, etc. Travelling was harder. home was easy. neither one were so hard that it is impossible! And if I can do it..... anyone can!!

After having horrible issues with hard water, microfiber/prefolds, and ammonia burn, rashes, sores, and bleeding...I've learned that sometimes back to the basics is the best way. I wish I would have discovered that in the beginning. We have tried every style of modern cloth diapers and have found ourselves back to the basics, flats. This challenge only solidified that for me. Looking forward to our future with 2+ in flats, hand washing while traveling, and hang drying to save on utilities. Our "modern" cloth diaper stash will be sold off and socked away into the savings account. Go flats!

"Note: Poop situation - Because I had two in diapers, one was mostly solid, one was newborn/breastfed. Couldn't select both :)

I really loved doing this challenge. It was a very stretching experience, but it helped me realize how much I have to be thankful for, and also that there are options out there. Is handwashing how I want to wash my diapers every day? No. Could I do it if it was that or re-use disposables, or not be able to put food on the table? Yes.

My sister-in-law and I both participated in the challenge, and we are planning on contacting some of the organizations in the area that work with lower income moms and try to do some ""emergency diapering"" classes to help get what we've learned to the people who need it most.

"Although handwashing was not the most fun way to spend my time, I really did enjoy the challenge as a whole. I felt that there was a lot of value to it, beyond just proving that it could be done. Well, obviously it 'can' be done, but that it was actually feasible.

Using flats wasn't really much different for me than my normal diapering routine. We have always been primarily a prefolds and covers household, and since we are past the explosive EBF poop stage, I just pad folded my flats and laid them inside the cover just like I normally do with my prefolds. Also, I've never had a diaper sprayer and have always rinsed out my diapers by hand in the toilet, so that wasn't too different for me either.

The handwashing was the part that was totally new for me. I handwashed in the sink the first day, and after that decided to make myself a camp washer. Using the camp washer wasn't as hard as I expected it to be and my diapers got surprisingly clean. However, it took me around 1/2 hour (at least!) each day to wash, wring out, and hang my diapers, during which time I'm not sure what I would have done with my daughter if my husband wasn't around to watch her.

I came out of this challenge with a whole new appreciation for how blessed my family is. We are blessed to have a washer and dryer, blessed to be able to afford the cloth diaper stash of our choice, and blessed to be a two-parent home. All things that a few weeks ago, I had somehow forgotten how lucky I was to have.

You see, 11 years ago I was a single mommy struggling to get by. I moved back in with my parents and bought almost all of my son's clothes and toys second hand. With the help of my parents, I cloth diapered my son out of necessity. I didn't have the luxury of pocket diapers, AIOs, or even PUL lined covers - I'm not sure if they even existed back then, but if they had I wouldn't have been able to afford them anyway. I had some old prefolds, diaper pins, and plastic pants. But I made it work because it was MUCH cheaper than going through thousands of disposables... and because I had the cloth diapering experience of my parents to draw on, as well as their tremendous help and support.

So many single mothers or families in financial need don't know anything about cloth diapering, or what they do know is very limited. Cloth diapering can be quite intimidating, especially if you don't know anyone personally who has done it. But this challenge has given so many people the opportunity to share their knowledge about how to build a cheap stash and how to overcome many of the other obstacles of cloth diapering on a very limited budget. And it has given me some great ideas of how to share my knowledge and personal experience with others who are in need... people like I was 11 years ago.

Thank you so much for the reminder of how lucky I am to be where I am today. And thank you for reminding me that I can make a difference. I truly look forward to doing so."

"I learned that the most important thing is keeping my son's bottom covered and dry (though the covered part is not all that important sometimes!). Being able to do so without spending money on a weekly basis while using resources already at home (shirts, receiving blankets, etc), is definitely worth talking about. I know what works for us and didn't have to spend money to find

out.

I also learned that handwashing is so much more convenient even though there is definitely some effort involved. Instead of having to wait 20+ minutes, I can handwash in five, get them hung up and ready to wear in under an hour. I love that. "

I think that I learned that with the right information and tools anyone could use flats. Also how spoiled I am to have a washer and dryer available whenever I need them. I do think that if I would do hand washing and flats full time I would need more than 5 covers. This is mostly because I would send the diapers already padfolded in the covers to daycare (at least 5 diapers, not including the one she is wearing).

One of my grandmothers cloth diapered 6 children and washed all their diapers by hand, daily--her 3 oldest were in diapers at the same time. The flats challenge was kind of a peek into that. The older I get, the more fascinated I am by what my grandmothers--and what their grandmothers before them--did to manage their families and survive, often on next to nothing. In talking to my grandma about the challenge, she said she'd cut the neck off of one of her husband's old t-shirts when it was worn out, and she'd repurpose it into a diaper. She giggled when I told her people do that now by choice. What's old isn't just new again, but many of us are finding the real value of work that convenience items have stolen from us, diapers included.

That it is completely possible to handwash flat diapers full time and that diapering a baby from birth to potty training can cost next to nothing! I am glad I was able to gain this "skill" and know that I would do this in a heartbeat again if I was ever in the situation where it was food or diapers for my child.

"I have told people before they buy one kind of cloth diapers, buy a few of each kind. Some may work wonderfully for one child, but for another, they may not work at all. You don't want to buy one type of cloth diaper only to find out the fit, absorbency, closure, etc. don't work for you.

The same goes with flats. Don't spend all your money on the same type of flats. Some flats would work better for smaller babies and may not make it to potty training (I would place OsoCozy in this category), but other flats would be better for bigger babies (it is my understanding Diaper rite unbleached flats-the 32inch X 32inch would be more in this category).

I also learned (not from personal experience) that flat diapers do not have to be ""boring"". Swaddlebees makes cute print flat diapers. You can also buy burp cloths at Ikea that can also be used as a flat diaper.

I also learned that for my next child I will plan on using flats more (right now I mainly use prefolds), but plan on putting them in pocket diapers because the absorbency was not different than a microfiber cloth."

This type of diapers are my favorite and if you rely want to save money and diaper this was you

can i wish i started with them 3 kids ago but that said i would wash at the laundrymat if i had to not at home

I have had to do this before the challenge out of necessity. While it wasn't fun or easy always, I did it because it made logical financial sense. I know anyone can do it. There are a ton of excuses but always a solution!

I learned that flats are great under smaller pants, that they're gentle on my baby's skin, and that there are ways to make them possible for even the most hesitant Daddy. Of course, I learned much more than that too, but this is what stands out.

"I had planned on blogging throughout the challenge. I have been handwashing my flats (no washer or dryer) since my baby was born (10 weeks ago), so this wasn't meant to be so much a challenge for me as it was a way to be a part of a community of handwashers, at least for a week! Anyway, my baby suddenly had explosive poo 8+ times a day starting two days before the challenge, sooooo it suddenly turned into a very big challenge for me to keep up with all the washings. She is also in a phase where she wants to be held constantly, so it was hard finding the time in between holding her, feeding her, changing her, etc.

That being said, I work from home and my schedule is incredibly flexible and because of this I was able to keep up. Sadly, I think that the majority of people who are reusing disposables probably work full-time jobs, maybe multiple jobs. They probably don't have the kind of time on their hands that I do. Would they save money if they handwashed flats? Absolutely. But do they have the time? I'm sure some do, but that seems to me like it would be the exception.

Maybe I'm wrong, and the challenge was certainly a good way to gather information about flats in general. But I think the big question I have is - how will the general public be educated about flats? How would low income families find out about them? It took me a TON of research before my baby was born to discover flats and decide to use them, then a ton more time to find the covers I wanted to use. As you can see, I've used the cheap Gerber flats that you can find at Walmart or Target, but to date these seem to be the only readily available flats in department stores and most people say they're not even good enough to use for diapers (I disagree). If there were more selection in the diaper aisle (amidst the disposables), along with ""fact cards"" on the packaging of the flats to really break things down for parents, then maybe, just maybe, flats would become more popular.

I really appreciate you putting all this together. It was fun to read the blogs and see the flats love!"

I hate to be the one "Debbie Downer" in all this, but I was really surprised by how much I didn't like it. I was so excited in the beginning, but I waited until Tuesday for my first wash, and I felt like I was dealing with 50 lbs. of laundry. Add to that the fact that I was 27 weeks pregnant with my 7th child and maybe I was being a little too idealistic about the whole thing. In all, I would do this if I had to, but I gained a whole new healthy appreciation for my washer/dryer and for my

awesome Ai2, AIO, and hybrid diapers!

i am blessed. i have the ability to share with others the knowledge on how to cloth diaper with very little up front costs.

I was surprised that I could do it with 2 kids full time (except for my night time diaper) and keep up with washing the diapers. I also learned that flats aren't that hard to take care of. I also learned that it wasn't that hard to hand wash my diapers and it seemed to get them cleaner than my normal wash routine. It definitely took less time to hand wash.

I already used flats on a regular basis but I always wondered what would happen if I did not have a washer because it broke or was on vacation with no washer. I loved hanging up all my diapers that I washed and seeing that I can actually do it.

If you want to do something badly enough, there is a way. Using the excuse of 'lack of resources' is not good enough, when it comes to putting a child in cloth diapers. I hope this challenge proves that, and that more families will make the switch!

When approaching this challenge I had already had experience hand washing my pockets and AIOs, I was very surprised to find that it was harder to get the flats cleaner than the AIOs and pockets but I think it was due to all the extra fabric. If I had to hand wash flats only I think I would probably try to do it in the bathtub next time instead of just a bucket. That would probably help get them cleaner. A wringer would have been of MUCH help. My hands would get almost raw after washing them. I did enjoy the challenge though. We even took a mini vacation with our challenge. We went out of town to visit with family including an all day zoo trip. I was also surprised by the cover that I liked the most with a flat. I enjoyed the challenge enough however that I am now including flats in my rotation. I wouldn't have tried flats otherwise and now I am glad I did. I did of course tie-dye them because I can't do anything plain. ;-)

While I prefer to be lazy and just use the washing machine I was impressed by how much easier this was than I thought it would be. The only time that was hard was when my daughter and I both had the stomach flu so the diapers were nasty and I felt crummy. The rest of the time the washing and drying quickly became part of our routine and was no big deal. The amazing thing is that for us it was actually faster to handwash and line dry flats than to run them through the washer and dryer. Even my husband commented on how doable the challenge was and after the challenge he was still grabbing the pad folded flat diapers in favor of the pockets for middle of the night changes.

"I would definitely need to experiment more to figure out the best method for both my bad back and the time commitment, which were my top 2 difficulties. My baby inevitably started crying and needed me halfway through, and that made it take longer. That, and my back was very sore for several hours after each washing. I would also figure out a way to employ my older children to help with it if we had to do this full time.

Thank you so much for this opportunity! I am passionate about CD'ing and also passionate

about helping the poor! LOL What a great combination of the two. :D"

We took this challenge because we started cloth diapering with our 3rd child at 12 months of age after using disposables for exactly this reason -- to save money!! I went as minimal as possible -- 6 flats, 5 Econobum seconds covers, and washed by hand every single day. It was grueling and the wringing was exhausting, but it worked and he stayed dry and healthy and clean AND it cost us less than \$50!! It truly is possible. If I were to do it full time, I probably would invest in 6 more flats so that I wasn't having to think of crazy newfangled ways to dry the flats, especially in the winter!! I had no crazy contraptions to wash with and my hands took the toll and were red, raw, and beat by the end of the week. I had days where I wanted to give up, but I didn't. I proved that you truly can save money cloth diapering and you can have a healthy happy baby with very minimal diapering supplies. I can say that it would take a very dedicated and determined mama to do exactly what I did for a long period of time but isn't that the stuff that the best mamas are made of?

The hardest part for me was actually getting the diapers rinsed out - which is also time consuming with the machine. We have very hard water AND an HE machine, and it takes at least 3 rinse cycles to get the soap out using the machine. So, it took a long time to rinse. But, the washing itself wasn't terrible. I would even try it if we were traveling for a few days to a hotel possibly.

It's not so hard... I learned that when you handwash, the difference detergent makes is very obvious. Next time I want to test a detergent I will probably handwash. :)

I did not know there was a way to hand wash diapers! This was very cool. Now I can use this method when I go camping or on trips. No more disposable diaper inserts! I love using cloth everyday and this is a great way to be able to use cloth without a washer! I don't think I would enjoy this everyday but I'm a very cloth committed mama and I would do anything to keep my son out of disposables and away from unnecessary chemicals, even if it means handwashing diapers everyday. Thank you for hosting this challenge. I really learned a lot.

The main lesson I learned is that washing machines are not perfect or even very efficient sometimes. I have a great washer, but I have seen what my rinse water looks like on the final rinse. The hand washing definitely worked better since I was able to see when I needed another rinse.

I honestly thought that it would be much harder to get the diapers clean. I thought that the microfiber towels that I used at night would have a horrible ammonia smell but they were no worse than normal. The flats did the job and were easy enough to use that my husband learned. He puts a flat on our daughter every night after her bath now.

"That my ancestors did not have it so easy but fun and inner peace can be found in the mundane. The hardest part was keeping the baby out of trouble while I washed and rang out the diapers.



If you are going to line dry outside, check the forecast, bring them inside BEFORE the rain starts! (it took 2 days for one batch to dry and I had to rewash most of them as they fell off the line.

Also pant hangers hung on the shower curtain work REALLY well! I put the corner of one flat in each clip so they hung from just one corner and I was able to hang a lot more flats on my shower rod than I would have otherwise."

Cloth diapering really is affordable for everyone. A lot of us get carried away with stylish diapers and covers we really could pull it off with minimal finances.

I decided very last minute to take the challenge, so I was assembling my stash during the challenge. The first morning, I collected 15 flats and that was my stash for the first few days. Without a clothes line, that was not enough to keep up with. By the end of the week, my stash had doubled and it became easier, though a clothes line would have still made the process faster and less frustrating.

It is possible for anyone to use cloth diapers in just about any situation. I heard about this challenge the day after my washing machine broke. I never would've thought it was possible to wash diapers any other way, but you challenged me to be more resourceful, and I thank you!

I had a stash of 30gerber flats and I loaned 18of them to a friend who did want to buy them just for the challenge but wanted to participate then I bought 12 osocozy unbleached. I flung that while the gerbers are smaller they're just as absorbent as the osocozy. My friend thought the gerbers did awesome even with her super heavy wetter

Heading into this challenge, I was a "diaper snob"; I did not understand why every mom does not use cloth diapers. Be it for health, cost savings, environment, etc., there is no reason NOT to use them. This really woke me up to the possibility that is IS hard work. I have one child in diapers, as opposed to two+, I have a very involved husband, as opposed to a single mom or an absent husband. Handwashing, or rather, finding the time to actually DO the handwashing properly, was the hardest part. I spend \$25ish on my 18 flats, and had two flip covers, two thirsties covers, and a weehugers cover (that I had purchased previously). I overall still feel that for \$50-\$80 you CAN cloth diaper, but yes, it is extra work than disposables. But it truly is doable, if you are willing to put forth the effort to do it for your child. I really liked the challenge and using flats and how trim they were. I was amazed at how absorbant they were as well! I plan to continue using flats part time, and I plan to use flats almost exclusively for our next children in the newborn stage.

If I had to hand wash cloth diapers all the time, I wouldn't, and I can no longer recommend it to others because of the resulting rashes. I bought flats for our hurricane closet - after this I'll be buying disposables. (Gulf coast area) I was lucky I had so many blankets, otherwise I

would have been out on day2 - LO went through them twice as fast, even doubled, and the high humidity meant the diapers took forever to dry, inside or out.

"When all was said and done and the last flat was washed and folded, I was able to look back over the week and feel so accomplished! I did it! I had been so intimidated by flats when I first heard about them. I learned that no matter how intimidating a task or challenge may seem, that I could learn something new, change my habits and enjoy the learning process. It was time consuming, but it wasn't nearly as difficult as I thought it would be.

My eyes were opened to the needs of others and the difficult financial situations that many find themselves in. I learned that you can make cloth diapering work even if you have limited financial resources and have no access to a washing machine. All you really need is the cloth diapering basics, your two hands, some water and time. That was really refreshing for me to learn. Yes, you can spend a great deal of money on cloth diapers, but that isn't necessary and flat diapers work just as well. I feel like this challenge helped me to learn some wonderful and very useful life skills that I can continue to use as I cloth diaper my son and our future children. It would especially come in handy in an emergency situation. Learning how to fold a flat diaper and wash diapers by hand is something that I hope I can pass along to my children and maybe I will even be able to help another family learn how to cloth diaper their children and save money and resources!"

I'm a glutton for punishment. I enjoyed washing and wringing, even though it was difficult, physical work. It was cathartic and, like choosing an unmedicated birth, breastfeeding, etc., it really made me feel like I was being a mother in the very fullest sense of the concept. "if needed this is a viable way to diaper. it will probably be a great option for camping!

I can also tell people i have done it and its doable.

"If needed this is a viable way to diaper. it will probably be a great option for camping!

"My husband said that all this handwashing was ruining our marriage. no joke. there were a couple days when I couldn't wash during nap time and it threw off my whole routine, leaving me stressed and bitter (about his attitude toward the challenge and his lack of support!). otherwise I didn't find handwashing too terribly bad. just not something I would want to do on a continual basis. but if I had to, I'd try to find a way to make it work.

Handwashing took so much less time than washing in my HE and they seemed clean, I just didn't love all the hands-on time. and wringing them out sucks! and I missed my diaper sprayer!!

I'm really glad I did the challenge, though. it was good to learn how to handwash my diapers as well as to see how practical this would be for people forced into this type of situation. let me tell you, I appreciate my washer/dryer so much more now (and my sprayer!). :)"

That the variety of the folds etc. helps keep things interesting and fun! (And is much cheaper than buying new diapers. ;-P)

I learned that a holed up plunger basically does exactly what the centrifuge of a HE washer does, which is force water through the fabric.

I learned that handwashing is a viable option, and now I feel confident to cloth diaper even on our camping vacation this year where we'll have no access to washer/dryer! I'm excited about that. And excited to have another option to present to prospective cloth diapering parents!

It was much easier to handwash than I would have thought. The only issue was not really having enough covers. I would have thought that 5 was more than enough, but that was coming from being able to use a dryer. When they need to hang to dry, it takes way too long to dry, and it would be better to have more covers.

Anything is possible if you just commit to stay the course. Especially for the benefit of your children and the earth.

I learned how easily you could diaper a child on a tight budget while still being Eco friendly. I had a lot of fun folding flats and finding new ways to get the best fit on my daughter. I also found the perfect nighttime solution for her- a flat with a doubler! So simple and far less smelly :)

"Cloth Diapering doesn't require all the bells and whistles. You can do it on a dime !  
If I were in a situation where I had very little to invest, I could totally make a flat diaper out of a t-shirt or a bed sheet.

Thank you for encouraging me to step out of my comfort zone and try something new.

I also enjoyed talking with my grandma about her experience with flats and her diaper washing routine :-)

"I am a cloth diaper junkie, I own a business that educates the community on cloth diapering, before I never really discussed too much about flats, mostly because I myself wasn't too sure about them. I was so excited to take part in the challenge. At first I bought the Target flour sacks, but thought they were too thin and returned them, bought a few second hand receiving blankets, and thought I'd give them a try, because I didn't want to invest in flats if I wouldn't like them or use them afterwards. I then decided to purchase some osocozy flats, prepped them before the challenge. I started out with the origami fold, then discovered the diaper bag fold, and that I could also fold a t-shirt to use as a diaper! I am all about being thrifty. I was so happy to discover that such inexpensive ways of diapering can be done. My flats cost me \$18.00 including shipping! the rec. blankets were nice, not absorbant NOR stretchy or big enough for us. I couldn't get the rise to be high enough for some reason with the origami fold. The tshirts were AWESOME! cheap, and fit really well! I was really impressed. I found it equally as cool

to offer my experience with this challenge to my customers and community, It CAN be done! A lot of time my I am confronted with ""I cant cloth diaper, its gross! It costs a arm and a leg, I could never do the laundry- touching poop, Its too hard.etc"" well I can say fist hand after you get past the poop part, gross factor, cloth diapering CAN be done! It can be done with very little finances, no washer, no dryer! I think its great that this challenge took place to prove that YES diapering can be done, all the particpants have done it. And in a emergency, everyday, low income families can do it too!

For me I was most amazed how the flats dried! I had Osocozy flats, unbleached. we had a lot of hot days, and they literally dried in 25 minutes! inside on a dreary day on a drying rack was a little longer but if I hung them out overnight till morning they were dry.

Thank you for the idea and organizing the challenge. I am interested in seeing what other peoples outcomes are.

"Just wanted to comment on the rash section - Intially was using tide and that caused major rashes soemthign we don't deal with often - So I switched to using a dash of dawn, glug of vinegar and a drop of TTO - worked great! and rash went away after that

I was surprised by how absorbent they were!"

We were using flats before and people kept asking why we bothered as they are hard work, we disagreed. After this challenge I am so glad that we have a washing machine because I wold use flats even if we didn't and washing by hand is so much more of a mindful thing. Having to think ahead and make the time as apposed to just flicking a washing machine switch.

"I have learned that we have became lazy and to dependent on luxuries. I find it extremely disappointing that human beings are recycling disposable diapers for reuse BEFORE they stop and think to use washcloths, kitchen towel, cut up bath towels, sheets or whatever. Its sad that people don't make do with what they have as my great grandmother did.. she made diapers from the above list so she could diaper her 13 children on a 45 acer farm with out any hot water. Yes, hand washing is a lot more work than my good old washing machine BUT its not hard work. I would hand wash our flats as often as needed before I would put my child into a disposable any day. I wouldn't even put it past myself to hand wash one here and there in a pinch on diaper washing day if the stash is low. And as always, I will be line drying my diapers. There is something so exciting and gratifying seeing all those clean diapers floating in the breeze!

~A Jackson"

I honestly thought I would complete this and that it wouldn't be difficult. I am sad to say that although I hand washed the diapers I used the dryer twice because they just took too long to dry outside. In the end I stopped after day 6. I just needed a break due to lots of other things going on in my life. I disappointed myself but I also learned that if I thought cloth diapering was flats, pins, and rubber pants I definitely would NOT do it. I makes me more committed to spreading

the news about modern cloth diapering.

I felt a little nostalgic, and it really gave me an appreciation for what some families do who are needy, or what some women did when our parents were babies. I was pleasantly surprised at how well the flats worked (even if I did have to use 2-4 at a time on my big boy and 2 at night for my baby girl.) I found that even with 2 children (a newborn and an 18 month old) in diapers, it was still very manageable. What was difficult was hand washing the poopy diapers. It took me a long time because as far as I was concerned, if there was a stain, it was still dirty (unless it was VERY light) so that made washing time for poopy diapers much longer. I think if I would have had a camp washer this challenge would have been even easier, and I still think that is a cheap, feasible, option for families that don't have much money. I also had my eyes opened to the different things that could easily be used as flats, for super cheap...t-shirts, flannel receiving blankets, or cut up old flannel sheet, knit receiving blankets, etc. I also used gerber flats because I wanted to use something inexpensive, that is a real option for families in need. I also only used inexpensive pul covers, fleece, or recycled wool, so that all the cover options were very affordable as well. It was a HUGE time suck having to wash and wring them all by hand, but I would STILL choose this way of diapering over disposables, even if I had the choice to use them. :)

"Although hand washing diapers for two babies is not my most favorite thing to do but is totally doable. I did find that my children needed to be changed more frequently in flats than in other diapers. Not necessarily a bad thing but definitely a more time consuming situation from both the actual changing stand point and the fact that it created more diaper laundry. That said, I would still rather wash diapers by hand for two babies than put them in disposables.

"I have found that I can fold the flats and use them in my gDiapers. I personally think that if I did not have a washer and dryer, that I would use them like that. You rarely have to wash the gDiapers, and oftentimes can get away with just washing the plastic liner. It also dries very quickly. I was amazed at how fast the flats dried! I am glad to now have flats in the house, because I have found several uses for them besides diapering.

I did this because I want to help as many people as possible cloth diaper. This way I can say with confidence that anyone, on any budget, with a tiny apartment, can do it!

I uses flats before but have a new appreciation for them. I took my diapers for granted before. I previously use flats, sometimes exclusively. This challenge just helped to show that I could wash them by hand if needed and was a good experience!

How to wash/dry/fold flat diapers should be taught in pre-natal class, so that there is no mystery or aversion and people will begin to see it as a real option, especially those who don't have a lot of money.

I have been using flats and prefolds ever since I have started cloth fulltime. I have no washer and dryer and wash them in the sink or tub when I have alot. I have always done it this way. I have had a few chances when visiting family to have a washer and dryer but I feel that they are cleaner and rid of all cleansers when I wash them myself. Its like a pride thing. I enjoyed this "challenge".

The hardest thing was the limited stash of flats (12), wash/ dry and the weather. The days that were sunny and beautiful were no problem but we had a little stretch of rain which made drying extremely difficult. I extended the challenge to our camping trip and it rained the entire time, making stung impossible. Thank goodness I brought all 12 flats! Now I only use flats (and hemp at night) to stuff pockets. That is my face use. Goodbye microfiber. My huge stack of inserts will be donated.

During the start of this challenge we were out of town as I had just graduated college and was visiting family...so we used flats and covers and handwashed and it worked alot better then disposables for a weekend or packing up all her cloth diapers and stuff before and waiting till we got home to wash! Then we were packing for moving in the middle of the week...so handwashing took time away from packing, and it was a big challenge for us to find the time. Then I moved and so my fiance had to do the handwashing without me! He did it great and learned some tricks I hadn't thought of! Now we are officially moved...and our new place has no washer/dryer! In the 2.5 years of cloth diapering never had this issue. We used the laundry mat and it was sooo expensive we can't afford it and the diapers didn't even come out clean! So we are religiously hand washing every day and loving how much money it saves! We still use our pocket diapers but stuff them with flats since they dry quicker than the bamboo or prefold inserts we used did. We are testing out different methods still and using multiple types of laundry detergents to see which works best! I look forward to sharing my results in a few months!