Bellingham Electric Appliances | 250 Pulaski Boulevard, Bellingham, MA 02019

Dryer Buyer's Guide

A comprehensive guide to buying the perfect dryer

Overview

What do you need to consider when choosing a new dryer for your home? If it's been a few years since you last bought a dryer or if this is your first time purchasing one, you might want a little more information before you head out to the store. In this guide, we cover:

- ⇒ Gas vs electric fuel
- ⇒ Choosing the right capacity and typical dimensions
- ⇒ Terms and features you should know
- ⇒ How to compare different models

We typically use MSRP/retail pricing since these don't vary as much as promotional prices, so keep in mind that what you may actually pay can be at least 20% lower than the retail price depending on a variety of factors.

Enjoy! We know you'll learn a lot.

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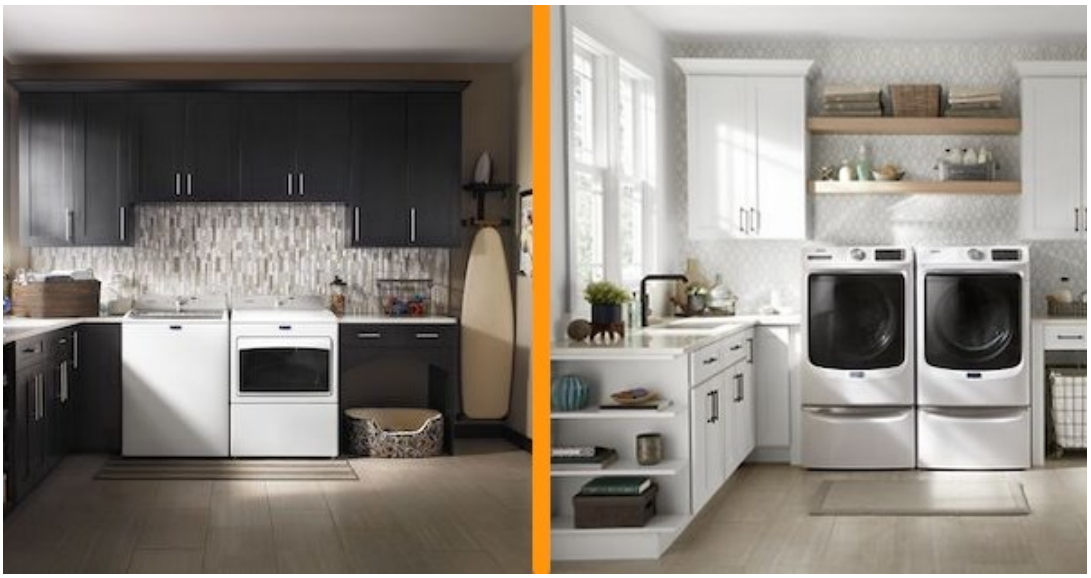
Dryer Styles

Although all dryers are "front load" dryers in that they have doors on the front of the machine, there are two different styles of dryers on the market: "front load style" dryers made to match with front load washers, and "top load style" dryers made to match with top load washers.

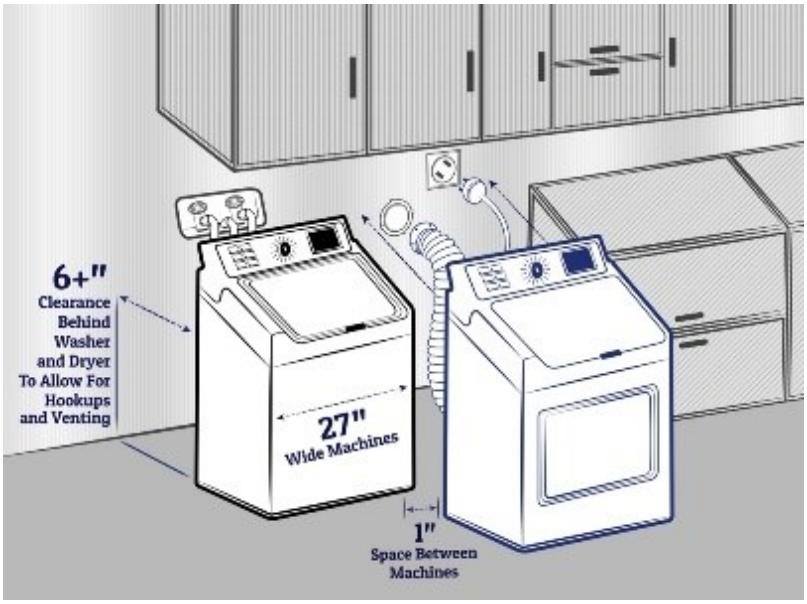
One benefit of choosing a front load washer and matching dryer is that select pairs from the same brand can be stacked to save space, or installed under a counter. They can also be placed on pedestals to make them easier to load and unload. Also, front load models are more likely to be ADA compliant to meet the needs of people with physical disabilities.

Traditional "top load style" dryers have backguard controls so they can't be stacked or placed under a counter. Pedestals are also not an option.

In general, choose the dryer style that matches your current washer—or, if you're planning to replace your washer soon, match it to the washer you're planning to purchase.



Dimensions



Today's dryers have more spacious interiors—but they can also have larger exterior dimensions. Most standard machines are 27 inches wide (compact models are 24" wide), but extra large machines can be 28 or even 29 inches wide. Depth and occasionally the height of the dryer can also be an issue. **Check and double check the dimensions of any new dryer you're considering,** and keep in mind that many models need "breathing room" (6" or more clearance behind the dryer for hookups, plus room on either side).

You'll also want to measure the **door openings** in your home. The dryer needs to be able to fit through doorways to the laundry area!

Venting is also a consideration with some installations. Some electric dryers allow for side venting rather than venting from the rear. Another factor is venting distance. Some dryers are designed to vent up to 60 feet, but some will only vent efficiently with 8-10 feet of ducting. Typically, the shorter and more direct your venting, the better.

Safety Tip:

Always use hard metal vent pipe if possible. If necessary, flexible metal vent hose may be an option. Vinyl or any other potentially flammable material should never be used.

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Gas vs Electric Dryers

If you're building a new home, you may be wondering which fuel to use for your dryer. Gas dryers are less popular than electric dryers, but can be a great option for some homes!

Gas dryers tend to get a little hotter so they can dry clothes more quickly (but heat isn't great for all fabrics). Most dryers use natural gas, but some can be converted to use liquid propane (LP) gas—make sure to let your salesperson know which type you have, since the dryer needs to be converted from NG to LP before delivery.

Gas dryers cost about $100-$150 more than electric. Whether they are cheaper to operate depends on fuel costs in your area. Most gas dryer specs include a BTU/hour rating—compare the amount of gas needed to reach that BTU number to the kilowatt hour cost (the national average is 13 or 14 cents per kWh).

Gas vs Electric Dryers… cont'd

Electric	Gas
Require a 220/240V outlet (3 or 4 prongs)	Require a 110/120V outlet plus a gas line
"Plug and play" installation	Require a licensed plumber to install
Run at lower temperatures, which can be gentler on clothes	Run at higher temperatures, so drying cycles are shorter
DIY repairs are possible	Need a qualified technician to handle repairs
Both types are equally safe and have similar repair rates. Keeping your vents and ducts clean goes a long way to keeping your dryer in the best condition	

Ventless Dryers

Ventless dryers are very common in Europe—far more common than the vented dryers we use in the US!

In cases where venting to the outside would be prohibitively expensive (or isn't an option), ventless dryers can save the day.

Fun Fact:
Vented dryers have been outlawed in Switzerland since 2012.

Compared to vented dryers, ventless dryers…

* Are more energy efficient
* Don't constantly pull air from the surrounding area and vent it outside (which can make your HVAC system work harder to heat/cool your home)
* Run at lower temperatures, so they're gentler on clothes (although cycles take longer)
* Have secondary lint traps that need to be cleaned every month or so
* Either drain into your plumbing system or into a tray that must be emptied after a cycle

Ventless Dryers ...cont'd

There are two types of ventless dryers: **condenser** and **heat pump**. A vented dryer is constantly sucking in air from the surrounding area, heating it, and then blowing it outside. Compare this to ventless models:

Condensation Dryers

These dryers pull in just a little bit of ambient air and then "recycle it" throughout the cycle. The air is heated by a heat exchanger, then blown through the drum to soak up moisture from your clothes. Then the moist air goes back into the heat exchanger, where it is cooled down to release the moisture (condensation). The collected water drains, and the heat is typically vented into the room. The cool, dry air is heated up again and sent back into the drum.

Heat Pump Dryers

Even more efficient than condenser dryers and using half as much energy as a vented model, heat pump dryers conserve the heat they produce and recycle it. This also reduces how much heat is released by the dryer during operation.

Ventless Dryers …cont'd

Ventless dryers may be the wave of the future, but for now your options in the US are somewhat limited. Some brands with ventless dryers are GE and Samsung. There are also all-in-one ventless machines. Consider a ventless dryer if…

* You don't mind paying a higher up-front cost
* You value energy efficiency and reducing wear and tear on fabrics
* Installing ventilation in your living space would be expensive (e.g. in a condo or apartment)

LG, Whirlpool, and Bosch are a few major brands offering condensation and heat pump dryers. Full size options and compact 24" wide models are available.

Choosing Dryer Capacity

The size of your washer usually determines the ideal capacity for your dryer. Buying a large enough dryer is important, as overloading the dryer can reduce its lifespan and cause mechanical issues.

As a rule of thumb, your dryer capacity should be about 2x your washer's capacity (and no less than 1.5X the capacity).

Most dryers fall in the 7.0-8.0 cubic foot range to match washers from 3.5-4.5 cubic feet, although some options can be 9.5 or even 10 cubic feet to match huge washing machines. If you're replacing your dryer now and are planning to upgrade your washer later, consider whether you'll want a larger washing machine in the future, factor that into the dryer size you choose.

Consider a Dryer with Sensor Drying

The clothes dryer is the second-biggest energy user in the house, second only to the refrigerator, which runs 24/7. Ouch! Old-fashioned dryers used basic timers to determine when a cycle was done, and this could result in clothes that were still damp, or fried fabrics. Over-drying wastes energy and is bad for your clothes!

Enter: sensor drying. Humidity sensors placed in the dryer drum (pictured) monitor the moisture remaining in your clothes, and end the cycle when the clothes are dry. You can find sensor drying in models starting at around $650 MSRP, and it's very common on front load style dryers. Our wardrobes can be an expensive investment—sensor drying helps them last longer!

To take it to the next level, consider Energy Star dryers, which use 20% less energy than non Energy Star dryers.

Terms & Features

Steam Cycle

Steam is a new trend in both washers and dryers. Steam in a dryer can reduce static and wrinkles. Some brands offer "steam refresh" cycles that can freshen up clothes that were worn once but could easily be worn again by releasing wrinkles and light odors. These often require a separate kit that runs from your existing water setup for the washer.

Wrinkle Prevent Option

If you can't get to a load right away, the wrinkle prevent setting will tumble the clothes intermittently to help prevent wrinkles from setting in.

Sanitize Cycle

This is a specialty cycle that can be useful in some cases, namely items that can't be machine washed, like plush toys and throw pillows. NSF-certified sanitize cycles are tested to kill 99% of common household bacteria. The high heat can damage some materials.

Terms & Features …cont'd

Other Specialty Cycles

Other useful cycles to consider include a Permanent Press cycle for synthetics and lightweight, easily wrinkled fabrics, and an Air Fluff/Air Dry cycle to slowly dry heat-sensitive fabrics.

Drum Light

Although drum lights are common, they're not always found on low-end models, so it's good to check.

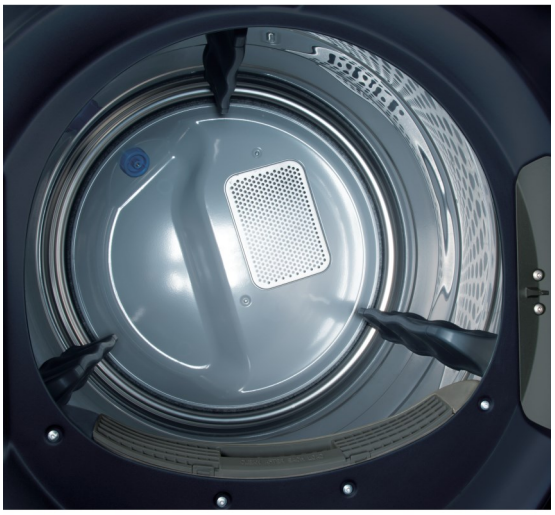
Digital Time Display

These displays can be helpful to give you a ballpark estimate of when your clothes will be dry on sensor dry models. These times aren't always accurate. If you want to know exactly when a load is done, consider a wifi connected dryer that can send you an alert through a smartphone app!

Terms & Features …cont'd

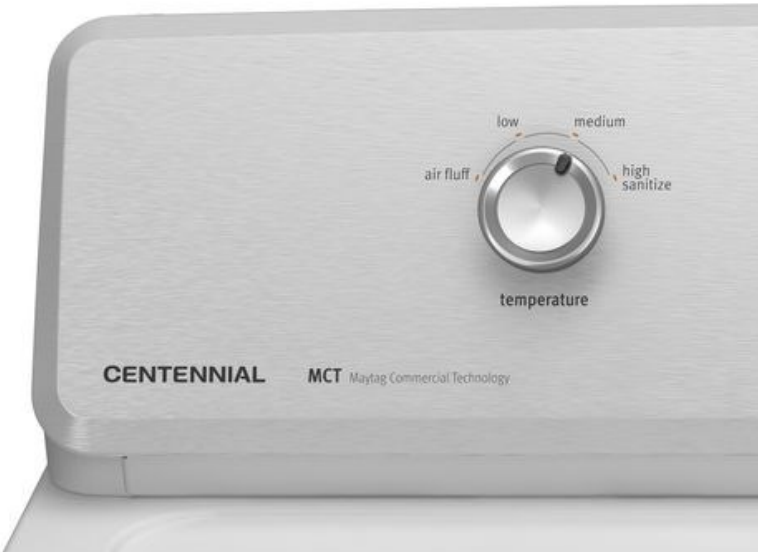
Drum Material

Ceramic-coated or painted steel drums can be nicked or scratched by metal zippers and buttons. Stainless steel drums are the most durable.



Temperature Settings

Drying on "low" offers the best energy efficiency (even if it increases drying times overall). Having multiple temperature settings offers the best care for a wide range of fabrics, from lightweight stretch shirts to denim.



What Can You Get for Your Budget?

Your budget will determine what features and styles you can afford. We're using MSRP here because it remains relatively stable, while promotional pricing can change quite a bit depending on the brand, model, and the time of year.

$450-$550	Basic top load style models from value brands like Hotpoint, Frigidaire, and Amana.
$600-$700	Slightly better models, including some sensor dry models.
$800-$1,000	Fully featured front load and top load style dryers with specialty cycles like steam. Most if not all models offer sensor drying. Operation is typically quieter as well.
$1,000+	Premium models with great cycles and options, including wifi connectivity and more.

Remember that holiday sales and package deals can shave 20% or more off of the retail price!

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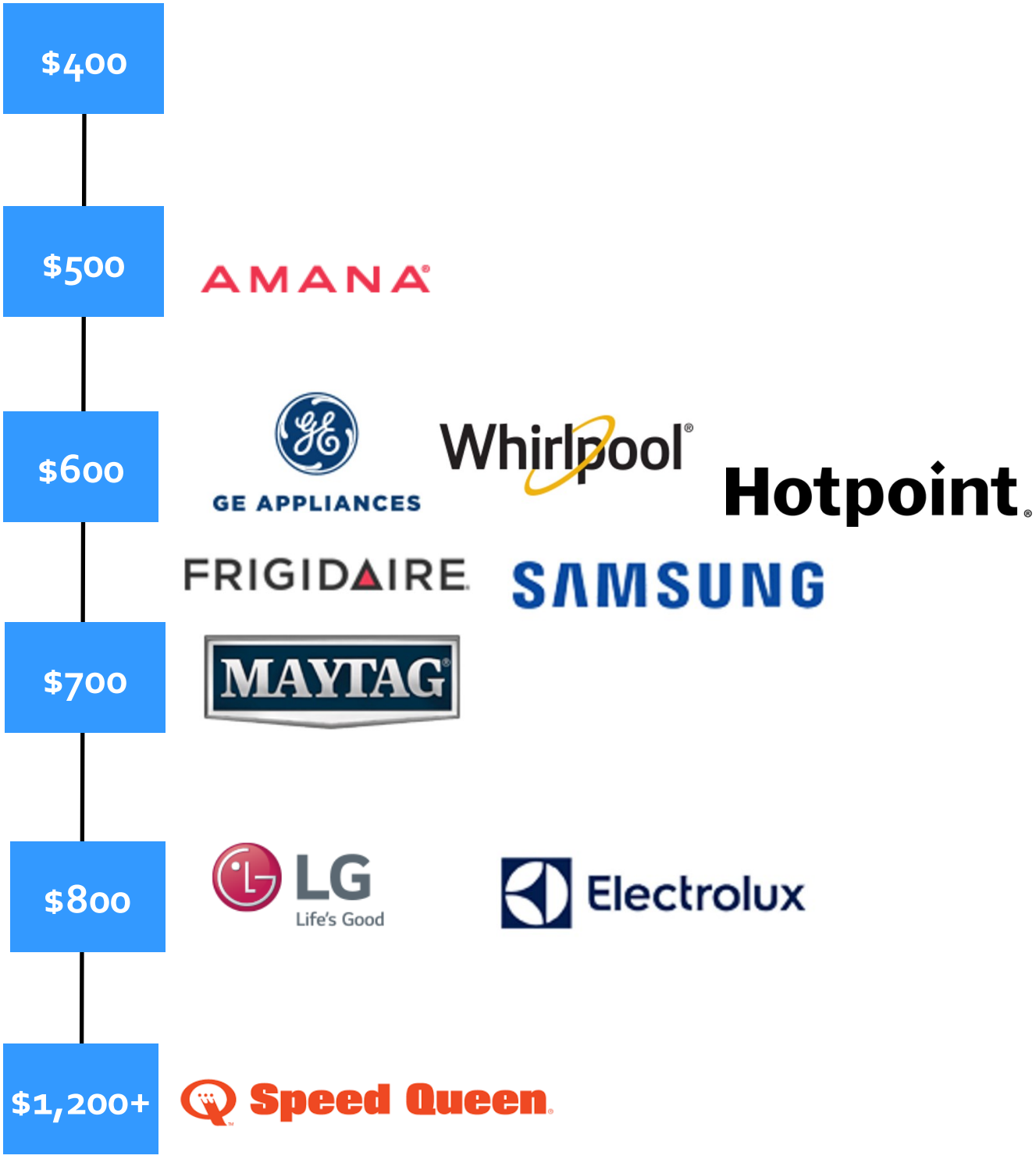
What Brands Can You Get for Your Budget?

Individual brand MSRP starts at… (approximate)



Before You Go Shopping…

Bring the following information with you into the store:

1. Measurements of the area where the dryer will go (height, width, depth), as well as the doorways that the dryer will have to fit through.
2. Your fuel type (gas or electric)—and don't forget to tell your salesperson whether it's natural or LP gas (and you'll need a licensed plumber for the installation).
3. Check the type, configuration, and length of your venting, and the condition of your existing venting materials.
4. Know how many loads you wash and dry in a week and the kinds of loads you do.
5. Have an idea of what specific features and cycles you think you'd like to have that you will use frequently.
6. Check the door swing of your dryer door—many dryer doors are reversible, but not all.
7. Know how much you want to spend.

How to Compare Different Models

Hopefully you now have an idea of what you want in your new dryer. But how do you compare different models that fall within your budget? Here are a few ideas...

Cycles & Options

Do you want a range of different cycles to choose from, or would you rather pick a temperature and a drying level? Do you want steam or sanitize options?

The Control Panel

Do the controls seem intuitive? Do you want a digital time remaining display or control over the end of cycle signal?

Extra Features

Some people like additional features like delay start (ideal if you want to avoid peak electricity pricing) or the ability to check on a cycle remotely via an app.

Ask an Expert!

A good appliance salesperson knows their products and the differences between them, so they can be a great resource.

Should You Buy a Laundry Pair?

Should you go for a washer and dryer pair rather than just replacing the dryer? A laundry pair can be a great way to take advantage of an appliance package or rebate deal. Plus, buying a washer and dryer at the same time allows you to get two great products that are compatible with each other in terms of capacity and features.

If you're replacing older models, you can guarantee that the new laundry pair will be more energy efficient—models bought before 2010 could easily be costing you close to double in water and electricity each year compared to new Energy Star models (and the savings are still significant even if you don't choose an Energy Star rated option).

In some ways, buying a laundry pair can be like replacing a car headlight—when one goes out, the other is likely close behind, so why not replace them both and save yourself some time and trouble?

If you're planning to replace just your dryer now but will be replacing your washer in the next year or two with a different capacity model, we recommend buying a dryer to match the capacity of your future washer to avoid issues with over– or under-loading.

In Conclusion...

Dryers will typically last around 7-10 years depending on the model and the way you take care of it. There are many full-featured models in the $700-$1,000 MSRP range. Most major brands are reliable and have service available should you need it.

Consider brands like Whirlpool, GE, Speed Queen, Electrolux, Maytag, and GE on your search for a new dryer.

A Little About Us

- **Bellingham Electric** has been in the same location for over 70 years and is family-owned and operated.
- Our average salesperson has been selling appliances for over 10 years and has a wealth of product knowledge.
- On top of that, we have an in-house service team.

Keep reading to find out why in-house warranty service is a huge benefit!

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Bellingham Electric Offers Easy Warranty Service

Forget about calling a 1-800 number and hoping a technician shows up in a week or two. Instead…

1. Give us a call
2. We'll come out and see you in the next 1-2 business days
3. We bill the manufacturer
4. That's it! You'll barely have to lift a finger!

On top of that, we can take care of multiple appliances with small nagging issues all in one call—No need to schedule individual appointments for each brand or type of appliance. Our in-house parts department makes repairs even easier.

Thanks for Reading!

For product recommendations, questions, or anything else, don't hesitate to get in touch!

Store Hours:	Contact Us
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