

## #116 - How to Lazy Genius Kids' Clothes

Hi, friends! You're listening to the Lazy Genius Podcast! I'm Kendra Adachi, and I'm here to help you be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. Today is episode 116 - How to Lazy Genius Kids' Clothes. I get a lot of episode recommendations, and this is one of the most common. How do we transition our kids' clothes with each season? And our kids are humans who keep growing, so how do we make sure our kids have clothes that actually fit them? What do we do with all the hand-me-downs? How can we not accidentally buy four winter coats for our toddler because we keep forgetting we already have one? Hopefully this episode will help you think more clearly about how to tackle your kids' clothes, but the most important thing to remember is that this is a challenge for a lot of parents. That's why I get asked to talk about it so often; it's hard. You're not missing some magical part of your brain that taught you how to do this. We're all just figuring it out, so just go ahead and pat yourself on the back for the fact that your kids are wearing something. Or they could be wearing absolutely nothing because it's summer and that's okay, too. That reminds actually that last winter when my daughter Annie was two, I couldn't find her in the house. We thought she was playing hide and seek or something until I saw her completely naked in the front yard. In the winter. It was probably less than 40 degrees outside. So even if your kids aren't clothed and outside and it's cold, we should bring them in so they don't get hypothermia, but I'm a good mom and stuff just happens, man. We're all doing our best. Today though we'll get a few more tools on how to handle all of those kids clothes.

Before we do that, I have a favor to ask. I need your feedback. You are the reason I make this podcast and talk on Instagram and write a newsletter and create cool things like The Meal Plan to help make your life easier. I do this 100% for you which is why I need to know who you are and what you'd like me to do in the future. I would love for you to go to [thelazygeniuscollective.com/feedback](https://thelazygeniuscollective.com/feedback) to fill out a quick survey. It's only a handful of questions and shouldn't take more than a couple of minutes. It'll help me and my team figure out how to make your life better in the best possible way moving forward. And as a thank you for filling out the survey, I've partnered with my favorite lunchbox company Planetbox to give away the lunchbox I've been using for my kids for the last six years. It's called the Rover lunchbox, it's stainless steel, super easy to use for kids and keeps teachers from having to open and unscrew every bit of your kid's lunch, they go in the dishwasher, and they're indestructible. My fourth grader has had his since preschool, and it's still as good as the day we got it. So one survey participant will be selected at random to get a free Planetbox lunchbox! So fun! And PS they're not just kid lunchboxes. Adults love them, too. You just don't have to put the unicorn magnets on the front unless you're an adult who happens to be super into unicorns. So head to [thelazygeniuscollective.com/feedback](https://thelazygeniuscollective.com/feedback) to fill out the quick survey. It'll be open until August 7th, but the sooner you get it done, the less I'll stress that you guys don't listen to me like my kids don't and then fall into a pit of despair. It's the end of July; we're all just hanging on by a thread over here. Again, that's [thelazygeniuscollective.com/feedback](https://thelazygeniuscollective.com/feedback).

Okay, let's Lazy Genius our kids' clothes. Here's what we're going to do. I'm going to give you the two big decisions you have to make regarding your kids' clothes just to simplify things, and then we'll end with my five best tips on storing and transitioning the clothes. So here are the two big decisions - where and when. You need to name where you keep clothes that your kids wear now, where you'll keep clothes they'll wear later, and where you'll keep clothes that you no longer need. Those are the three offshoots of the "where" question. Where are you going to keep those three kinds of clothes? The second big decision to make is when do you tend to those three wheres. When do you go through the clothes your kid currently wears, when do you pull out from storage when "later" is suddenly here, and when do you get rid of clothes your kid no longer needs. Transitioning kids clothes feels so overwhelming because the clothes are so tiny and there are so many pieces, and essentially each item of clothing is a decision. If you think about it on a micro level like that, it's no wonder we feel overwhelmed. So today think about it more macro, from a bigger perspective. You just need to decide now the where and the when.

Let's start with where. Remember there are three categories of clothes that need a home, that need a where: clothes they wear now, clothes they'll wear later, and clothes they can't wear anymore. The clothes they wear now? That one is probably easy; those clothes are in a dresser or closet. Good job, one down. In terms of the clothes they wear later, clothes for the next season or hand-me-downs from a cousin, you do need a place for those. Our kids each have a dresser where all their clothes go. I hate hanging up clothes with all that is in me, so everything goes in their drawers. The home for clothes they'll wear later is in their closet. Annie has a plastic storage tub in her closet. Ben's are literal in a pile on the floor of his closet and we just never open the door. And Sam is the oldest and we don't have friends who give him hand-me-downs, so we just have to remember to get him new stuff on occasion. But the point is I have a spot for clothes for later - their closets. You can pick another spot - a basement or garage or guest room closet. The trick is to pick one location and stick to it. If you store later clothes in a closet and also have a bag in the attic and a bag in the trunk of your car that you keep forgetting to bring in, it doesn't work as well. Pick one location where later clothes go. It doesn't matter where it is; just have a where.

The final where category is clothes that your kids don't wear anymore. Pick one landing spot for those clothes. You don't have to label or sort yet; just have a holding ground for those clothes until the time comes for you to go through it. I have a cardboard diaper box in Annie's closet next to the plastic tub of later clothes where I put all of her stuff that's too small. Ben has a box in his closet, too. Sam, my oldest, all of his clothes that are too small go directly into Ben's closet for later. So pick a literal space for those three categories - clothes for now, clothes for later, and clothes for never again.

Here's another thing to consider when you think about the clothes your kids are done with. You want a holding place for the clothes so you can just throw in one item when you notice it's too small rather than waiting for purge the entire dresser. It's nice to be able to throw a tank top into a box and be done. You also need to decide though where those unneeded clothes will go once

they leave your house. Here's one of my most prized tips about stuff that's leaving your house. Choose one path. Send all of those unwanted clothes to a single place. I'd rather miss out on a little cash from clothes sold on consignment than have to sort all the clothes into piles that go to three different locations - a consignment sale, a neighbor, and Goodwill. It's not worth it to me, so I pick one path. Maybe part of your overwhelm is all the different end locations for clothes you no longer need. It's too much. So consider picking one path.

Here's an example. Maybe you decide that all of your kids' clothes that you don't need will first go to a consignment store. They all leave your house at the same time and go to the same place. Maybe you get some cash from a few of the pieces, and then you take the rest to a thrift store. Technically that's two locations but it's one path out of your house. All the clothes leave the house, maybe get picked up by the store, and then after taken directly to your local donation box.

Here's what I do for my kids. Clothes that are too small for my oldest son go to my second kid. Done. Clothes that are too small for my second kid go to a friend who has a son a year younger than Ben. Done. Clothes that are too small for my daughter go to that same friend who has a daughter a year younger than Annie. Done. It's helpful that I have literally one final destination for all the clothes that are too small for my kids, but the point is to have a place in mind. Maybe it's a yard sale stash in your garage, maybe it all goes to a church clothing drive that happens once a year and you just keep everything until then. There are tons of options, but I think the best way to Lazy Genius those options is to limit them, kind of aggressively even. Too many paths out lead to way too much overwhelm.

So to summarize: the first big umbrella decision is "where," where do I keep clothes my kids wear now, clothes they'll wear later, and clothes they'll never wear again. Have a holding ground in your house for those clothes until you're ready to say goodbye and then a severely limited number of paths they can travel out of your house. I recommend just one.

Now to the when. You can decide now when you go through those three where locations, when you go through their current dresser or closet of clothes, when you look through what you already have for the upcoming winter season, and when you empty out that donation box. I do it twice a year - once about a month before school starts aka right now and once in the first few weeks of a new year. Remember, every item of clothing your kids own represents a single decision. You have to make a decision about every single thing, so by choosing now when you'll make those decisions? You take all the pressure off. You'll get to it because you already decided when you would. Put it in your calendar even. Schedule it. This is a clothes purge morning. And remember that you already have a holding place for later clothes and never again clothes. By using those holding places day in and day out when an item of clothing enters your life, half the work is already done. You're not going through one giant pile of clothes and deciding what to do with each thing. You've already categorized those clothes into now, later, and never again. You'll be surprised how that little bit of categorization enables you to make daily clothing decisions when you need to. So go ahead and choose when you go through your

holding places for those three categories of clothes, and you won't be overwhelmed by all the possible decisions throughout the year.

Now let's talk about the logistics of the when. How do you go through the process of sorting? When you go through your kids' clothes, you have three possible answers - wear now, wear later, and never wear again. And guess what? Since you already have wheres chosen for those three categories, they already have a home to go to. So as you sort, make three piles, now, later, and never again. I'm not sure if this sounds overly simplistic and kind of dismissive of how overwhelming kids' clothes can be, but I think it's because we just see a mountain of clothes and each item as one decision. You can Lazy Genius that mountain by breaking into smaller, more manageable mountains that are easy to access throughout the year.

Now let's talk about my five best tips that will put some context around these two big decisions of where and when.

Tip number one: limit your space for clothes. If the clothes don't fit, you have too many clothes. If I can't shut my son's dresser drawer where he keeps his t-shirts, he has too many t-shirts. If I have a giant plastic tub of later clothes for my daughter and can't fit another summer dress in it, I probably have too many later clothes for Annie. You've already chosen the "where" of all of your clothes. One of the best tips is seeing those places as finite. If you can't fit it, you don't need it.

Which leads me to tip number two: more isn't always better. I remember the first time I was given two big trashbags full of hand-me-downs, and I thought I'd hit the jackpot. In a way I had because I didn't have to buy a lot of new clothes, but I also had so much to store and wash and consider every day when I was helping my kid get dressed. It's the same idea we have in our own closets; the more options we have, the more overwhelmed we feel making a decision. So in the same way you limit the physical space where you store those three categories of clothes - now, later, and never again - see that as a good thing. It doesn't mean you have to work from a deficit or your kid will wear the same shirt every single day. I've lived both ways with drawers packed full and drawers with about a week and a half's worth of clothes, and the scenario with fewer clothes is always better. Every single time. So don't feel like you have to buy that dress because it's only three dollars or take that bag of hand-me-downs when your kid actually is pretty set right now. You don't have to add. The more you have, the more work is required to maintain it.

Tip number three: label your later clothes by year and season, not by size. When my kids were babies, I was shocked at the number of clothes that were the same size on the label but way different in practice. A six month onesie from one company was bigger than a 9-12 month from another. It drove me bonkers, so years ago, I stopped categorizing later clothes by size on the tag and instead by their actual size and labeled them something like "for summer of 2018." Especially when you're working with hand-me-downs that your kid might not wear for another year or two, it's helpful to go ahead and group clothes together that look like they'd fit the same

kid at the same moment in time. Then label by season and year, not by size. This definitely makes more sense once your kid hits his one year birthday because they all start to level out a bit, but I find the mental gymnastics way easier when the clothes fit into a time of year rather than an arbitrary size that might or might not be true.

An extra tip with this one. When I sort through the later clothes twice a year, if there are clothes for multiple seasons, like I have a pile of summer 4Tish clothes, a pile of cold weather 4Tish clothes, and some random 5Ts that are actually bigger than the 4Ts, I'll put those clothes into plastic grocery bags or something, label them with the year and season they're best for, and then put all of those bags into a big plastic tub. So all the later clothes are in one place, but you can categorize within that place, too. And if you're concerned that your seasonal math is wrong and that this pile of clothes for summer 2021 will actually fit your kid in 2020 instead, no sweat. You've still categorized in such a way that you know what bag of clothes is next up.

Okay, tip four: write down what you're missing when you go through clothes for later. When I sort through the later box and look at the pile for summer 2020, I might notice that I have two dozen t-shirts but only two pairs of shorts and one dress. Go ahead and write on a piece of paper tucked inside that bag or keep a note on your phone of what you'll need, something like "good on shirts, keep an eye out for shorts and dresses." Then you can search through the consignment racks with more intention and less desperation because it's suddenly October and your kid has no pants. When you think about when you'll go through the clothes to transition them, give yourself some wiggle room to have space to search for the next season's clothes you don't yet have. Like I said, I sort in July or August and again in January or February. There's still plenty of time for me to find fall clothes in July rather than waiting until it's actually cold and Sam needs a coat.

Final tip five: lean into your kids' styles. One of the big culprits of too many kids' clothes is that we keep all kinds of styles in the hopes that our kids will wear something we like better than what they like. When Annie was born three years ago, I was determined to have her always dressed essentially like me - neutrals and stripes and not a stitch of pink to be seen. Alas, she has her preferences, y'all. That girl is pink and purple and sparkly and unicorns as the summer days are long, so rather than continuing to buy denim jumpers and mustard yellow tank tops that just take up space in a drawer, I look for clothes she loves. I happen to have a toddler who's very sure of her style, so I take her to the consignment stores with me. I hold up stuff, she says yes or no, and doggone it she always wears what she chose. She knows what she likes, and I'm going to lean into it. Same with my boys; they'd rather have shirts with pictures than solid shirts any day. We have one or two solid shirts for things like picture day, but I'm not going to buy my kids what they call boring clothes because they don't wear them. If I want my kids to dress themselves in the morning which I very much do, I want to give them clothes they're excited to wear. Lean into their styles as much as you can, and even if it's not your preference, it'll lead to less anxiety for sure.

So to recap the tips: one, limit your space for clothes. If the clothes don't fit, you have too many clothes. Two, more isn't better. Three, label your clothes by season and year, not necessarily by size. Four, write down the clothes you're missing so you have margin to find them before you're desperate. And five, lean into your kids' styles. And remember the two big decisions you need to make when it comes to your kids' clothes is the where and the when: where do you keep clothes they wear now, clothes they'll wear later, and clothes they'll never wear again. Have one path out for clothes they'll never wear again if you can. And go ahead and decide when you'll go through those three areas to move things wherever they need to go. That was a lot of words about kids' clothes, but most of us have a lot of kids' clothes.

I hope this episode was helpful. If you have any questions about this episode and want to crowdsource some ideas for your personal kids' clothing situation, I'll be live on Instagram this Thursday a little before noon. Usually it's 12:15pm EST, but summer hours and babysitters and all the things have made that time a bit more flexible. Thanks for understanding, and I'll see you on Instagram @thelazygenius this Thursday a little before noon eastern time. And don't forget to fill out the survey so I can get your feedback on what you'd like to see happen on the podcast and the blog and all the things in the future. If you have a minute right now, click on the link in the info section of this episode or go to [thelazygeniuscollective.com/feedback](https://thelazygeniuscollective.com/feedback). The survey is open until August 7th, and remember that one lucky participant will receive a Rover lunchbox from Planetbox free as a thank you for sharing your feedback with me.

Thanks for being here with me. Until next time, be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. I'm Kendra, and I'll see you next week.