Do you have a blender? Do you use it often? If you have one, where is it stored?

We know that items stored within easy reach of sight and hand are used most often. A blender stuck away in a cupboard won't be useful no matter how attractive it is, how many speeds it has, or how helpful it could be.

The first blender was sold in the United States in 1948. Since that time, one out of every four households has one of these handy helpers. This does not mean, however, that every household uses the blender to its full capacity.

To better understand this appliance, take a minute to do a quick exercise about the use of a blender. Answer True or False to the following questions.

(Answers on the back page.)

**Questions**

1. Always operate a blender on a clean, dry surface to prevent air from carrying material or water into the motor.
2. If the motor seems to labor when using at one of the lower speeds, use the next higher speed to complete the processing.
3. Expect your blender to replace all of your kitchen appliances. It will make fluffy mashed potatoes, whip egg whites, knead or mix stiff doughs, and extract juices from fruits and vegetables.
4. Using the pouring spout, mixtures of liquid or semi-liquid consistency such as popovers, may be poured directly from the container into the pans.
5. It is better to overprocess mixtures than to underblend and end up with a product that is too chunky.
6. Do not pour cooked vegetables and broth at a boiling temperature into the container for processing.
7. Put liquid portions of recipes into the container first unless recipe instructions specify otherwise.
8. Put ice cubes into the container directly; they do not need water in the bottom for crushing.
9. Place cover firmly on the container before starting and stopping the motor. The impact and speed of the whirling blades often toss ingredients.
10. Firm fruits and vegetables, cheeses, cooked meats, fish and seafood do not need to be cut into one inch pieces before grinding or chopping in the blender.

As you read this fact sheet, some of the above answers will become evident to you.

Many people have the mistaken idea that a blender is a substitute for a mixer—that it will do anything a mixer will do, plus a host of other jobs. This is not true. Although some jobs can be done satisfactorily with either appliance, there are also chores at which each outshines the other.

**Remember:** A blender, with its small high-powered blades, does a mechanical job on the food placed in it changing its physical form. The primary function of the mixer beater is to incorporate air into a mixture.

Though blenders have various numbers of speeds, the following is what a blender can do: (Check the use and care manual with your model to determine which setting will accomplish these tasks.)
**What a blender can do**

Crumb bread, crackers, cookies. You can have coarse crumbs for stuffing, fine crumbs for graham cracker crusts, or cheese crumbs for au gratin dishes.

Chop vegetables as you like them for salad, or fruits, nuts, cooked meats, or seafoods for a variety of dishes. You can have uncooked apple sauce with a delightful fresh flavor.

Grate cabbage for slaw, or fresh coconut, raw potatoes, citrus peel, dry cheese or nuts for topping or nut bread.

Grind split peas, lentils, beans, either cracked or pulverized, for time-saving soup preparations. (Spices can be coarsely cracked or powdered.) You can make rice, wheat, or corn into flour, lump sugar into super-fine. With some makes of blenders, you can grind coffee; instructions for others give a flat NO or a cautious go-ahead. Check the use and care manual for your model.

Puree cooked vegetables or fruits, soft raw fruits, baby foods, and special diet foods. You can puree cooked vegetables and use them as the base for a wide variety of creamed soups.

Mix malts and shakes, thin batters, barbecue sauces, and marinades. You can mix pancakes, waffles, quick breads, and frostings with great ease. You can please your family and friends with a variety of flavors of fresh fruit drinks or milk shakes. Some multiple speed blenders have a special low speed for mixing thin batters and sauces.

Blend sauces, mayonnaise, nut butter, spreads, and dips. You can make salad dressings so perfectly that ingredients will not separate even though you add parsley, cheese, anchovies, or pickles. You need never have lumpy gravy or curdled hollandaise sauce.

Stir orange juices, reconstituted dry milk solids, dissolved gelatin, and instant puddings. Liquify fruits and vegetables in water or other liquids. This is a unique specialty of a blender. Fibrous parts of vegetables and fruit pieces are broken down so that all the flavor is released into the liquid. You can use the liquifying speed to make a sherbet or frappe from a mixture of fruit juice and crushed ice and serve it straight from the blender. If you plan to crush ice, cubes should be reduced in size to no larger than ½ inch and be placed in the container after adding liquid ingredients or water to cushion the blades.

Firm items to be placed in the blender container for processing should be cut into pieces no larger than ¼ to 1 inch. As you process foods, Remember: you can always blend more, as needed. It's difficult to make coleslaw from overblended "cabbage puree." It is better to underblend than to end up with a mushy product.

**Reminders About Blender Use and Care:**

Become acquainted with your particular blender, or one you may be considering for a purchase. Not all blenders are alike! Check to see if it dismantles for easy cleaning. Read the use and care manual to see what your model will and won't do. If you are considering a purchase, ask yourself: What do I want it to do? What will it be used for? This will help you decide before you invest in a 20-speed blender that you plan to use only to mix orange juice.

Experiment. Become familiar with all the speeds (whether 2 or 20). Learn what each speed will do and how much time it takes to do the job as you want it done. Experiment with less expensive food items—bread crumbs, carrots, celery, cabbage, individually rather than with costly combinations that you want to serve to company who will be arriving in just seconds. Success with a blender takes practice.

Develop the habit of washing your blender immediately after use. This way it is easy to clean and ready for the next job. Here is a quick way to clean the blades and container:

1. Fill the receptacle ¼ full with warm water. Add a drop of liquid detergent to the water, cover the container and run on low speed for a few seconds.
2. Remove the container from the base, rinse it and the cover thoroughly with warm water, and dry.
3. Store the blender with the lid slightly tilted, rather than tightly in place. If the lid is stored tightly, moisture closed inside may cause a mold.
4. If the blender dismantles, check the manual before washing it in the dishwasher. Many manufacturers do not recommend putting the blender container in a dishwasher. Never put blades, ring, or rubber gasket in the dishwasher. Hot temperatures will cause loss of lubrication around the blades, as well as loosening the natural oils in the ring and gasket, causing them to become brittle and crack and no longer giving a tight seal.

**Answers to True-False Questions**

1. False
2. True
3. False
4. True
5. False
6. True

Prepared by Janice M. Weber

Extension home management specialist

Oregon State University