

# Exploiting the inattentive, episode 2: The unlabeled line

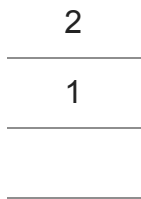
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Raymond Chen

In [Episode 1](#) we learned that “Snide” brand powdered laundry detergent comes with a scoop that holds  $5/8$  cup detergent, even though the directions call for only  $3/8$  cup. The intent here is to get people to use more detergent than necessary, thereby increasing sales. A box of detergent which should be sufficient for 30 loads ends up running out after only 18. Consider it “technically legal” mislabeling. I returned to Snide brand powdered laundry detergent this week and discovered that they have taken this little trick to a new level. The markings on the side of the scoop read like this:



The accompanying instructions give these instructions for how much detergent to use:

Fill to bottom line	( $3/8$ cup)	for normal loads.
Fill to line 1	( $1/2$ cup)	for large loads.
Fill to line 2	( $3/4$ cup)	for extra-soiled loads.

Notice that the amount of detergent you’re supposed to use on a regular basis is indicated by the **bottom unmarked line**, the one you will barely notice. Meanwhile, if you’re inattentive and use the entire scoop, you’ve used one cup of detergent, over twice as much as you were intending.

My prediction: The next time I buy Snide brand powdered laundry detergent, the scoop will be  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups, with an unlabeled line at  $1/2$  cup, another line at  $3/4$  cup labeled “1” and a third line at 1 cup labeled “2”. The instructions will go something like this:

Fill halfway to line 1 (3/8 cup) for normal loads.

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Fill to bottom line (1/2 cup) for large loads.

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Fill to line 1 (3/4 cup) for extra-soiled loads.

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