



Ware 4 Bins & Recycling

Bins, Trolleys, Recycling and Waste Containers

Textile Recycling

Recent research has shown that within the EU, 5-10% of our total environmental impact comes from the clothing and textiles industry.

Negative environmental impacts include:

- energy consumption and greenhouse gas production from the washing, drying and pressing of clothes
- resource depletion and emission production as a result of processing fossil fuels into synthetic fibres
- significant water use, fertiliser, pesticide and herbicide use in the production of cotton
- hazardous waste from products used during the dyeing process
- carbon emissions as a result of the transportation of large quantities of fabric and clothing worldwide

There are also a number of social and ethical impacts:

- poor working conditions, predominantly in developing countries, for those producing fabric and clothing
- limiting trade agreements and resource loss in countries producing the raw materials
- animal welfare

Textile waste is currently the fastest growing stream in household waste and is forecast to continue increasing as sales of new clothing continue to rise. The UK generated almost 2 million tonnes of clothing waste in 2006; of this, 63% (1.2 million tonnes) entered the household waste stream going to landfill. At least 50% of this could have been recycled.



The benefits of textile reuse and recovery include:

- reduced need for landfill space; textiles present particular problems in landfill as synthetic products do not decompose, while woollen garments do decompose and produce methane, contributing to global warming
- reduced pressure on virgin resources
- reduced pollution and energy savings

So how can we recycle textiles?

Although government legislation is working towards improved waste, pollution and resource management within textile production, there are many things we can do in our homes to prevent textile waste. The quantity and quality of fabric you have determines what you can do with it next.



Small pieces of fabric, including ribbons and zips, can be used in crafting. Card-making, patch-working and rag-rugging are creative ways of turning old scraps into pretty and ethical homeware and gifts. There are many crafty websites, including www.craftster.com, providing guides and ideas should you find yourself stuck!

Garments that you love but just don't fit any more can be altered – again, there are many 'how to' guides available online, and simple alterations can add a new lease of life to an old favourite.

If you're not feeling very creative, or have bags of old clothes, shoes and accessories you really just want rid of, charity shops and recycling banks (available at most supermarkets) will be very grateful for your contribution – you will be helping them to keep their services available whilst providing a cheap clothing source (and good bargain-hunting opportunities) for many. Most charity shops also provide a

fabric recycling service, whereby clothes are sold as raw materials to the textile recycling industry to be reused. Find your local clothing recycling bank at www.recycle-more.co.uk.

However, there is a new alternative to the above options which is gaining popularity; **clothes swapping** or **swishing**. Swapping clothes is an accessible step towards sustainable living; by sharing what we already have, we cut down our consumption. There are a number of new websites promoting clothes swapping and encouraging users to organise their own clothes swapping events to bring together ethical shopping, bargain hunting and social networking, giving consumers the opportunity to be 'beautiful on the outside, green on the inside'.

Clothes are swapped value for value, meaning no loss is made, and you can update your wardrobe for free! Two of the most popular are www.bigwardrobe.com, where you can swap clothes for clothes or cash, and www.covertcandy.co.uk, where you swap clothes for credits, which can then be spent on more clothes, moving towards [sustainable fashion](#).



With the increase in concern for the environment and ecologically sustainable shopping, combined with the desire to look good and save money, clothes swapping events and web sites are set to take the world by storm.

More information

www.covertcandy.co.uk is helping push forward [sustainable fashion](#) by improving distribution and decreasing the quantity of clothes that end up in landfill sites.

<http://www.bigwardrobe.com/About/12reasons.aspx> is the world's largest fashion recycling site. Here they give twelve reasons to swap your clothes.

www.whatsmineisyours.com is the original and first British fashion swap website rejecting the term 'throw away' fashion.

www.greenusesforwaste.co.uk/holding-clothes-swapping-party.html gives advice on how to organise your own clothes swapping party.

www.direct.gov.uk/en/Environmentandgreenerliving/Wasteandrecycling/DG_064365 is the government recycling advice website.