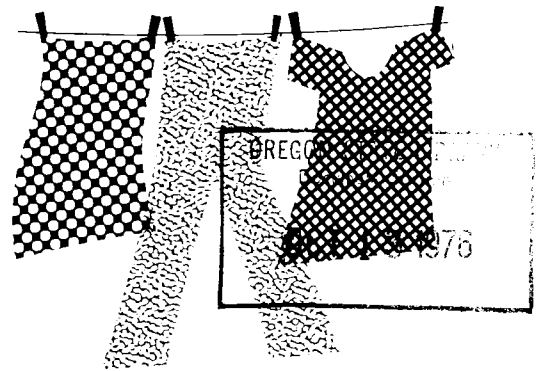


Decisions About Recycling Clothing



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Recycling clothing means to reuse and renew wearable clothing to lengthen its useful life.

The objective of recycling clothing is to get the most value from a manufactured resource, textile fabric. With the increasing cost of new clothing, the general economic situation, changing fashion trends, shortages of fibers, and costs of textile raw materials and processing, getting the most value from textile fabrics is important to everyone. Clothes are a suitable resource for recycling because they seldom wear out entirely.

Changing fashion trends, changes in body size, and durable man-made fibers and blended fabrics leave clothes in our closets that are not being worn. To get full value from clothing it should be worn or used and recycling is the best way of getting it back into use. The purposes of this publication are to help you to become aware of the alternatives when recycling clothing and to decide which methods of recycling you will use.

What's really hanging in your closet?



An item of clothing in your closet which has not been worn in the last year may be a candidate for recycling. If you have not worn an item of clothing in the past year, there must be a reason. Ask yourself why the item has not been worn. Is it because the item:

- needs mending
- is out of fashion
- isn't appropriate to current activities
- is one you've grown tired of
- doesn't fit
- has been outgrown
- has worn areas
- has faded, or
- has a combination of these problems?

Your answer to these questions will give you direction for getting the clothing item back into use. How you will recycle clothing depends on you and on your family's needs.

Sometimes a garment is not worn because of attitudes toward it rather than something specifically wrong with the garment. Are you tired of it? Do you consider it out-of-fashion or inappropriate for you? Was it a poor purchase that doesn't coordinate with other items in your wardrobe? Has

your lifestyle changed so that the garment isn't needed for current activities? If the answer to these questions is yes, the garment may have a great deal of wear left that someone else could use.

Could you give someone else a new garment?

If you are tired of owning and wearing an item of clothing, a way to get it back into use is to contribute it to someone who can use it. Children's clothing exchanges are an excellent way of getting the most value from outgrown but wearable clothing. Some stores that sell used clothing do so on a percentage basis, while others accept and sell used clothing as a service to both former owners and new owners. The value of clothes for which you receive a receipt from charitable organizations can be deducted on your income tax.

Clothing passed on from an older child who has outgrown it to a younger child is a frequent form of recycling within families. Careful attention needs to be paid to the attitudes and feelings of the child who receives the garment. The child should like the garment in order to feel good about himself or herself when wearing it. Children should have the choice of accepting or rejecting such garments. The younger child should have a share of new clothing and the older child some clothing from economy sources in order to prevent competition between children.

A child's outgrown garment passed down to a younger child should fit that child properly. Changing the appearance will not compensate for a hand-me-down that does not fit. If it does fit, perhaps the garment could be individualized by adding new trim, decorative machine stitching, hand embroidery, or by writing the child's name on the garment with liquid embroidery. These would give a feeling of newness to the garment and personalize it for the new owner.

Take a look at current fashion. What do you like?

Sometimes clothing is left hanging in the closet because it is out of fashion or isn't appropriate to your activities. To learn what is in current fashion, note what you see in better ready-to-wear stores, in newspaper articles and advertisements, in magazines, and in catalogs. Observe these design details that make up current fashion:

Color—name of color, lightness or darkness, brightness or grayness

Pattern—florals, geometrics, stripes, plaids

Texture—soft or stiff, smooth or rough, shiny or dull

Fabric—stable or stretchy wovens, stable or stretchy knits, nonwovens such as leather

Garment silhouette—shape of neckline, style and length of sleeves, flare of skirt and length of the hem

Garment fit—closeness or looseness to the body, location of seams, hang of the fabric

Garment detail—types of collars, sleeves, waistlines, types of seams, and trim such as topstitching, tucking, embroidery

Accessories—color, texture, style and line of jewelry, hose, shoes, handbags

The more frequently something is seen, the more likely it is part of the current fashion. If you observe design details over a period of time, you will be able to determine current fashion and note new details which are the beginning of a fashion.

There may be more than one way to wear that garment.

Since clothing of man-made fibers does not wear out rapidly, many usable clothes can be purchased reasonably at thrift shops, second hand clothing stores, clothesline sales, and rummage sales. Someone else may have become tired of the garment, but it still contains usable-wear life. Classic styles of garments might be discarded before they have worn out and lost their fashion appeal. Garments from your closet, from recycled clothing shops, and from family and friends who are willing to hand them down are all to be considered for recycling. Some of the ways to get clothing back into use include mending, accessorizing, re-coordinating separates, altering, restyling, and making over the fabrics from old garments into new garments. A difficult aspect of recycling is deciding which method of recycling you will use for each garment.

Has the garment not been worn because it needs some attention? Does it need mending or altering? If it needs mending, ask yourself these questions. After the garment is mended, would I wear it? What kind of mending does it need? Can I do it or must it be done professionally? If you need to learn techniques for mending, USDA Home and Garden Bulletin 107 gives extensive suggestions on methods. Request it from the Office of Communication, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.

One method of recycling is the addition of current fashion accessories to update outfits and keep them in use. Another method of recycling clothing is to recombine separates you already have with new separates. For example, getting a new print blouse may make a skirt and sweater combinable.

You may own garments that can't be put back into use by giving them to another member of the



family, mending them, or updating them by accessories or the addition of new separates. If you don't want to get rid of these wearable garments, you may decide to recycle them by construction methods. Three of these methods include altering, restyling, and using the fabric to make another garment.

Alter it?

Altering garments can improve their fit and appearance. For example, a skirt can be lengthened or shortened to make it more wearable and fashionable. Bands of fabric can be inserted in the side for additional width in sleeveless dresses. Cutting a shift into a princess style dress, with complementary fabric side panels, would be another example of added width. The most complicated forms of alterations involve necklines and sleeves.

Restyle it?

Restyling involves changing part of a garment—such as removing the sleeves, cutting deeper armholes, and finishing the armholes to make a dress into a jumper. Another example of restyling is shortening a coat into a jacket. You may change the neckline, add a collar, or remove the sleeves to give a new appearance. You may be able to use a commercial pattern to cut new parts. By adding design details such as a yoke, pockets, or new trim you can make the garment look newer, and perhaps better, than the original.

Make it over?

Makeovers are garments cut from the fabric of another item of clothing. Makeovers are the most time consuming form of recycling, since the original garment must be cleaned, taken apart at the seams, laid flat, recut with a pattern, then constructed. Generally, a smaller garment is cut from the original garment. For example, a man's vest may be cut from a sports coat, a child's dress from an adult's skirt, or a skirt from pants.

If you spend time, money, energy, and knowledge sewing on a garment, will it be worn enough to justify the expenditure of these also limited resources? Try to analyze the effort involved and the result before you begin extensive recycling that involves restyling and recutting existing fabric to make over a garment. If you have limited knowledge and skills in clothing construction, limit your clothing recycling projects to new combinations, new accessories, or perhaps just mending. If recycled clothing is not well constructed and skillfully handled, it may look worse than the original garment and not be used.

What will you save—and spend—when you recycle by sewing?

Recycling clothing through construction also requires creativity in seeing the potential within old garments. Because extensive construction recycling requires time in both taking the old garment apart and constructing the new garment, more time may be required than you have available. Your time may be spent more advantageously in employment, other household responsibilities, or participating in family activities. If money is limited and the other resources of time, energy, and knowledge are available, recycling can be a very economical way to stretch your family budget. Recycling can be very inexpensive with little cash outlay. However, the time and expense required to find suitable notions and fabric can reduce savings. If the notions and additional fabric are easily available, recycling by restyling or making over garments can be a creative and satisfying way to individualize and renew clothing for the family.

To help you decide whether to spend time recycling clothing by sewing, consider the economics. Using the sample form as a guide, begin by describing the garment to be recycled and the garment after recycling. Then give a value to the garment: the purchase price of a used garment or the value of your "old" garment if you sold it. Add the cost of materials bought for recycling such as patterns, notions, or additional fabric. You now have the total dollar cost of a new, recycled garment.

Time may or may not be of economic value if using your leisure time to recycle clothing is a means of creative expression. If time is of economic value, estimate the number of hours required to obtain notions and fabric and to do the sewing. Place a value on your time, either the minimum wage or your hourly wage if employed. Multiply the number of hours required by the value of your time to give the cost of the time needed to recycle the garment.

In the right hand column, determine your savings. Estimate what the recycled garment would cost if you purchased it new. From this amount, subtract your investments: the total dollar cost of the recycled garment, patterns, notions, and materials needed to do the recycling. If your time is of value, also subtract the cost of the time needed to do the recycling. The result is the amount saved by recycling. Will you truly be saving any money by recycling through sewing?

So, it depends on you. How will you recycle?

Before attempting a recycling project that involves sewing, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Do I have the skill to produce a garment the wearer will enjoy?
2. Do I have the time for this or is it better spent doing something else for the family, either more valuable economically or in human relationships?
3. Do I have the ideas, creativity, and imagination to transform old garments into new without having them look redone and homemade?
4. Do I enjoy doing this kind of work or will it ruin my day and perhaps my family's too? Even though I prefer to sew on new fabric, will I keep a positive attitude toward this project? Will I derive satisfaction from the project?
5. Is the fabric worthwhile and will the recycled garment be worn enough to justify the expense and time?

How to Figure the Value and Savings in Recycling by Sewing

Description of garments: <i>Teresa's pant suit to skirt and vest.</i>	
Present value of "old" garment, if any <i>1.00</i>	Probable cost of new, similar garment <i>20.00</i>
Add cost of materials for remaking (buttons, zipper, fabric) <i>2.75</i>	Less cost of your new (recycled) garment. (Use total dollar cost or total investment if you wish to count the labor cost) <i>18.75</i>
Total dollar cost of new (recycled) garment <i>\$ 3.75</i>	Amount you saved by recycling garment <i>\$ 1.25</i>
Labor value: <i>6</i> hours times \$ <i>2.50</i> per hour <i>15.00</i>	
Total investment in new garment (dollar cost plus labor cost) <i>\$ 18.75</i>	

What will you do with the money you save?

With this background on the various methods of recycling clothing, it is now up to you to decide which method you will use for garments that need recycling. There may be some garments that don't seem to fit any of the alternatives. Some garments may indeed only be suitable for patches, craft

projects, "dress-up" clothes for children, rag rugs, or dust cloths.

If you are ready to try doing some recycling and would like more ideas on how to make over or restyle garments, additional information is available from your local county Extension office.



FROM OLD FABRICS TO NEW IDEAS

<p><i>From these:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Man's shirt • Man's suit • Overalls or jeans • Man's pants • Man's ties • Woman's suit • Woman's skirt • Woman's dress (If design is not too large) • Coat • Bathrobes • Woman's slip 	<p><i>Make these:</i></p> <p>child's shirt, blouse, dress, slip, playclothes, rompers, or sunsuits</p> <p>child's suit, jumper, jacket; woman's tailored dress, jacket, pants</p> <p>child's overalls, jacket; accessories such as purses, hats</p> <p>child's pants, overalls, skirt</p> <p>pillows, quilts, skirts</p> <p>woman's dress, jumper, skirt; child's coat, suit</p> <p>child's coat, dress, jumper, skirt, pants, or jacket</p> <p>woman's jumper, blouse, skirt, jacket; child's dress, blouse, skirt, coat, or jacket</p> <p>jacket</p> <p>child's bathrobe</p> <p>woman's panties, half-slip; child's gown, robe</p>	<p><i>From these:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leather (or imitation) coat • Sweater • Sweatshirt • Knit dress • Trims, laces furs • Shower curtain • Blanket • Bedspread • Sheets • All kinds of old clothes 	<p><i>Make these:</i></p> <p>accessories such as vest, hat, purse, or slippers</p> <p>accessories such as mittens, weskit, cap; child's dress, sweater</p> <p>bibs</p> <p>child's coat</p> <p>trims for garments or craft projects</p> <p>poncho, raincoat, rain hat</p> <p>coat, jacket, cape, poncho, bathrobe, shawl</p> <p>bathrobe, vest, jacket, cape, shawl</p> <p>blouses, shirts, dresses, play clothes, or pajamas</p> <p>woven rag rugs, braided rugs, patchwork projects</p>
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