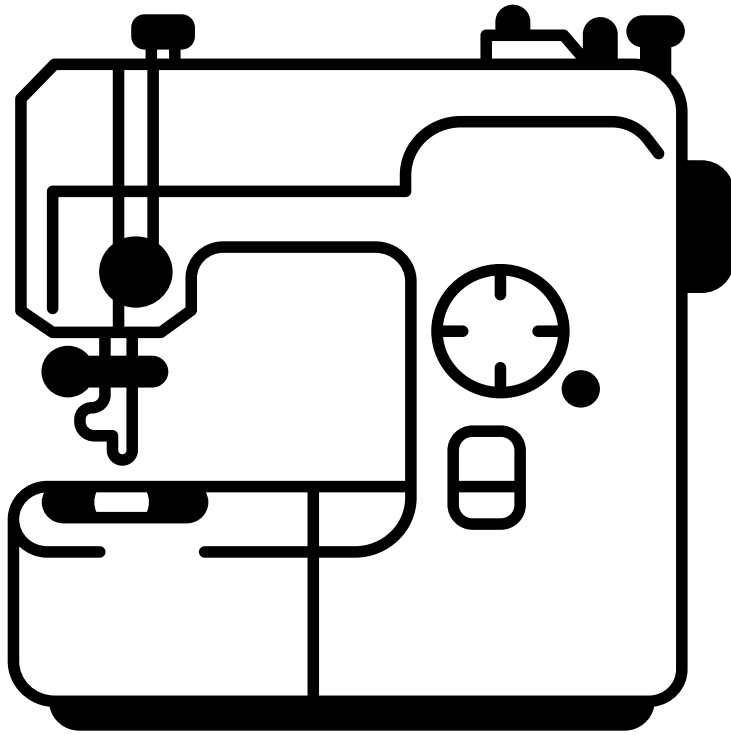


Refashion

A guide to wasting less and wearing more...
by Make Good Arts

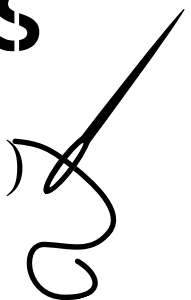


This Machine Saves Planets

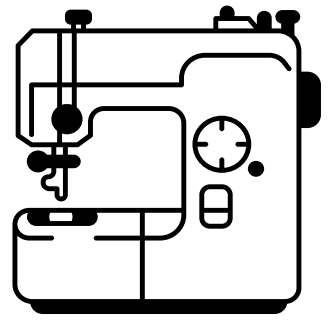
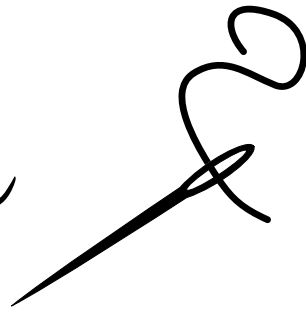
(and so does this little one...)

makegoodarts.wordpress.com

Project funded by Sandwell Council Vision 2030



Refashion



Fashion habits quiz

Starting Quiz - do this at the start of the workshop or guide

My fashion habits - right now, what are your fashion habits?

(Don't worry, we'll look at ways we want to change at the end of this workshop, just think about what you're doing now... and be honest, no judgement!)

Circle the number that matches your current habits...

1 = Whenever I can 2 = Often 3 = Sometimes 4 = Never

I buy from charity or second hand shops = 1 2 3 4

I donate my used clothes = 1 2 3 4

I throw my used clothes away = 1 2 3 4

I swap clothes with family and friends = 1 2 3 4

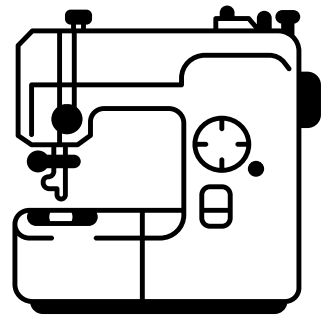
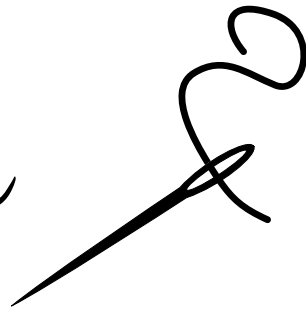
I repair my clothes = 1 2 3 4

I know how to sew - hand or machine = 1 2 3 4

I upcycle my used clothes = 1 2 3 4

I buy Fast Fashion = 1 2 3 4

Refashion



Waste Less, Wear More!

Welcome to Refashion Sandwell, a fun way to waste less and wear the clothes we love for longer. This guide is full of ideas, information and challenges to get you thinking differently about your clothes, making some simple changes and enjoying fashion again, without harming people or planet.

Fashion as we've known it, throwaway, cheap clothes that we change every few months, isn't good for people or the planet.

Change can be hard, but we hope it can also be fun, creative, inspiring, challenging and full of excitement! We also hope we can save you loads of money, by wasting less and spending less on things you don't really want or need.

Hopefully you can join us for a Refashion workshop soon too, because it's more fun together!

You can find upcoming workshops, watch video workshops and download the full version of this guide on our website at makegoodarts.wordpress.com

Happy Refashioning!

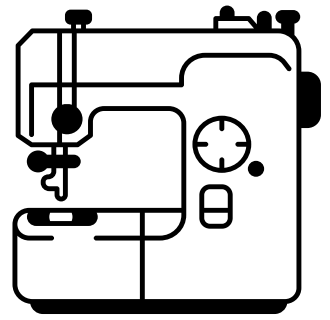
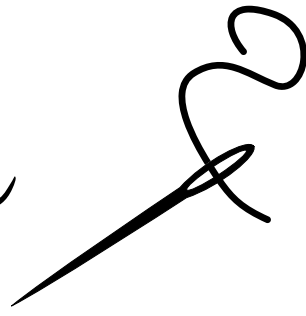
Alison, Julie & Jo

Make Good Arts



Refashion is funded by Sandwell Council Vision 2030

Refashion



The problem with fashion

Here at Make Good, we love fashion. We love new things, dressing up, the fun and excitement of colour, style and pattern. And we love a bargain, so it's easy to be tempted by the lovely, colourful, cheap things we see online and in the high street. Oh so easy... Hey, you with the credit card, stop right there!

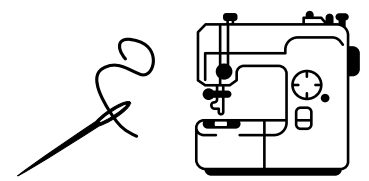
But what we don't love is thinking about the toxic chemicals used to make that ten quid dress, the underpaid workers who put it together, and the fact that it will probably fall apart after a few wears. And then never, ever biodegrade, because it's basically made of plastic.

This is fast fashion, and it's bad news for people and for the planet. Clothes made quick and cheap at the risk of people's lives and the environment.

So what can we do? We all need clothes... and some of us really like them too! Refashion has some ideas, and I promise it's going to be fun!



Refashion



What is Fast Fashion?

You might have heard the term Fast Fashion, but aren't sure exactly what it means.

Fast fashion brands include online shops like Shein and BooHoo and High street retailers like Zara, H&M and Primark. Their aim is to sell as many cheaply made clothes as possible, as quickly as they can.

Quality is poor, and clothes are usually made with artificial fibres and dyes that use huge amounts of chemicals. Wages for garment makers are very low and conditions can be dangerous.

Hundreds of new designs are added every week, encouraging people to buy more and more and creating panic buying

Online photos are misleading, and designs are often copied directly from other brands or independent designers to speed up the process of getting new designs on sale.

But don't cheap clothes mean everyone gets to enjoy fashion equally?

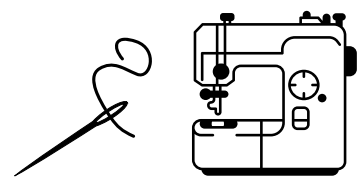
There's nothing wrong with fashion that is fun, accessible and affordable, and lets you try different styles and enjoy dressing up.

With Fast Fashion, we can see a £10,000 dress on a celeb, and get the same dress ourselves for only £10. Everyone can afford a little bit of that glamour, and that makes the world fairer, doesn't it?

Because, the dress we've just bought from our fast fashion ap is definitely going to be the same as our £10k celebs dress, right?

Not exactly

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Fast fashion....continued

When it arrives we realise, the design is printed on the fabric rather than embroidered or beaded. It's shaped like a sack with a hole for your head. The fabric is transparent, stiff and sort of crunchy. It's about five sizes smaller than we expected and barely fits around one of our legs, never mind our body. It is definitely not the dress that we saw on the app.

It's horrible. Are we going to wear it? Heck no. Will we send it back and complain? For £10? Not worth the postage. Give it to a charity shop? If we do, it almost certainly won't end up on the sales floor, it will go with the 90% of donated textiles that are sold to countries in the global South for "reprocessing". And 90% of that 90% will end up in a clothes trash mountain with a 200 year life expectancy.

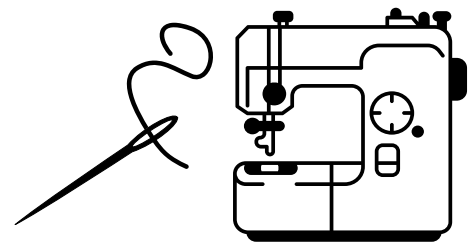
So in some ways, your celeb knock off dress will have a very, very long life. Only its life will be spent polluting a beach or leaching microplastics into the ocean.

Doesn't sound so great, does it? And we still don't have an outfit for Saturday night...

Fast fashion is an extreme example, but many fashion manufacturers use the same techniques. Even more expensive brands use underpaid workers, toxic chemicals and wasteful overproduction, and clothes are often thrown away before they have even been worn.



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Make little changes, every day

We all want to make better choices, but sometimes it's hard. We don't have the time, money, energy, information, support or health that we need to change a habit or do something differently.

So we do what we can, and that's OK.

And yes, sometimes I still shop in Primark or H&M, or from a cheap online seller, because I need something for me or the kids that I just can't get second hand. Or I don't have the time or energy to search for. And that's OK.

Sometimes I throw worn out clothes away, when I've run out of space, time and energy to upcycle or repair them. And that's OK.

Remember, this isn't a sprint to the finish line, it's about making real changes that will stick with us forever.

This is about changing habits, and we know to change our habits...

We have to be kind to ourselves

We have to work with what we've got and who we are

We can take three steps forward and two steps back, as long as we're moving forward in the end!

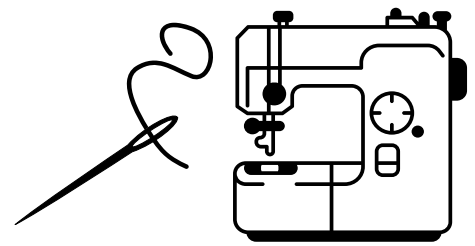
Most importantly... change has to be enjoyable, or we just won't stick to it!

So, here's our pledge...

Make better choices, for people and planet, when we can, as often as we can, forever.

And when we can't, don't worry about it; there's always another choice round the corner!

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Let's do something different!

Refashion is based on three really simple ideas:

Buy less

Wear longer

Don't bin it



We're going to look at each one in the sections that follow.

Part One - Buy less

This is really simple - it's just about buying fewer clothes and making sure the clothes we buy really work for us.

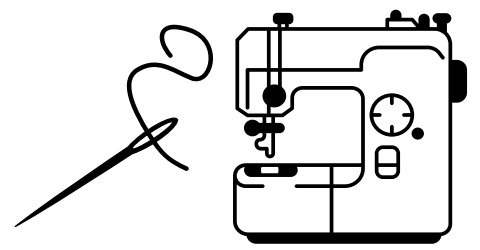
Let's be honest with ourselves. There's need, and there's actual need. The best way to reduce our impact on the planet is really simple - just buy less. Save money, save clutter at home, and save the planet.

OK, so we know there's times when you do need new clothes. Or just really want them.

What we want to avoid is spending our money on things that don't fit, don't suit us and aren't ever going to get worn. The things we buy because they're on sale, look good on someone else, or suit an imaginary lifestyle we don't actually have. You know what I'm talking about... yes, you with the overflowing wardrobe.

You can use the two activities below to make your own personal shopping rules, so you only buy things when you really, really need them. Or really, really want them. Because want is a need too, right?

Refashion



Fashion Vs Style

Fashion; a type of clothing that is popular at a particular time

Style; doing “us” in the best way possible!

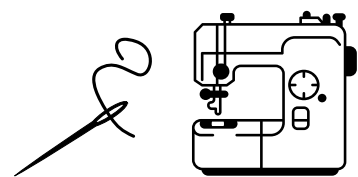
Fashion moves quicker than ever. In the past, fashion had four seasons, just like life. Clothes changed with the seasons, and investment pieces like suits, coats, shoes and bags came out year after year.

Now, we have micro seasons which last for a month, and high street and online stores change their stock every few weeks, to keep people buying the latest thing. It's impossible to keep up, and expensive too. Fast fashion may be cheap, but if we feel pressured into buying it every month it soon adds up.

But we don't have to follow fashion all the time; sometimes what's in fashion doesn't suit us, it doesn't work for our lifestyle or fit our bodies. When we figure out our own personal style, we can pick and choose the bits of fashion we like, build a wardrobe we love, express our individuality, and keep wearing the things we love, whether they're "in fashion" this month or not.

Get to know your own personal style

Your personal style is built of four things; body shape and size, colour tone, lifestyle and look. Once you're confident with these four things, you don't need to follow fashion, you can have style instead!



Your body shape and size

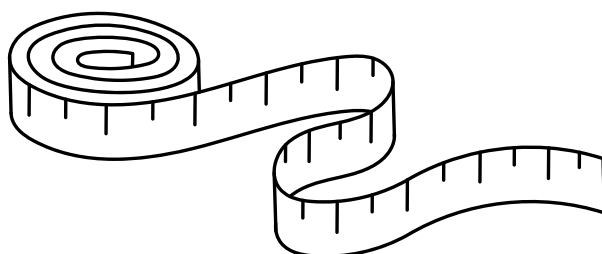
And no, we are definitely not talking about any "rules" which tell us what we should and shouldn't wear for different shapes and sizes. We are talking about finding clothes that fit, feel comfortable and give you pleasure, and this will be different depending on your shape and size.

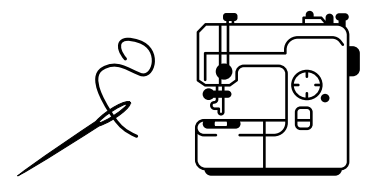
Mainstream fashion tends to be designed on a size 8 model and graded up for other sizes, so we don't often get a true fit, even across the same dress sizes. Our bodies are unique, and dress sizes are a very blunt instrument - we all know that online sizes bear no resemblance to anything in the real world!

Knowing how different cuts, shapes and fabrics feel on your body, as well as the size difference between brands, and also countries of manufacture, can help you make better choices for the clothes you are really going to enjoy wearing.

Have a look at your wardrobe right now, and you will probably instantly know the clothes that make you feel comfortable and confident all day compared to the ones that are being pulled down, pulled up, pinching or gaping. These feel good clothes are the ones to base your wardrobe around. The gappy, pully, pinchy ones can be swapped, donated or altered to fit!

We know it's not always possible to go and try things on in shops and online shopping is fantastic for anyone who can't access the high street. Don't forget online shops do allow returns, and yes it is worth it! Also check for size charts and measure your body, this is much more useful than just going on crazy size guesstimates like "Large" or "Small".





Your colour range

We all have a warm or cool undertone to our skin, apparently we can find out which we are by checking if we have green or blue veins and whether gold or silver looks good against our skin.

We also have a skin tone and a season. We could be dark, light, medium, depending on who's measuring. And we could be spring, summer, winter or autumn, all year round.

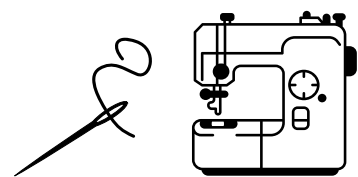
It all sounds very complicated, and could take a lifetime to figure out. So the simplest thing to do is just get a bunch of clothes in different colours and hold them up to your face. Do they make you look glowing, healthy and alive? Or drained and sad? I'm assuming you want to go for glowing and healthy. Unless you're a goth, in which case black was made for you, and life is simple.

When you know the colours that make you glow, steer toward these and away from the others.

Your lifestyle

The clothes we choose need to work for the life we have. OK, so we can have a few crazy party outfits to pull out on occasion, but if our wardrobe is heavy on the party outfits and light on clothes for the school run we might be making things hard for ourselves. Unless you are the sequins at the school gate parent, in which case we totally support you.

Make a list of all the roles and activities you have in your life, and what you need to wear to do them comfortably; this will give you an idea of the "how and when will I wear that?" question for your shopping checklist, coming up next.



Your style icons and "look"

You might have a particular iconic look that you enjoy, maybe a period of fashion history or a music or art movement. If you have something like this, you probably already have a good idea of what goes with this and what doesn't. Keep an eye out for vintage pieces that work with your look, or have a go at customising clothes you already have to fit your style; dyeing, patching, printing, altering fit or length, adding buttons, ribbon or other trimmings.

Your shopping checklist

Shopping checklists make it easier for us to decide if we really need/want something or if it's just an impulse buy we'll never wear. In the past, buying clothing was an investment; now we often see it as a disposable item.

Making your own checklist can help you to slow down and think about what you're really buying.

When you've decided your checklist, put it somewhere easy to find, like on your phone, in a diary, on a notice board or post it on your Instagram or other social media (#refashionsandwell).

We've suggested some checklist items on the template that follows, feel free to use these or make up your own. It depends what's most important to you. Some of the things we've taken into consideration are:

Value for money

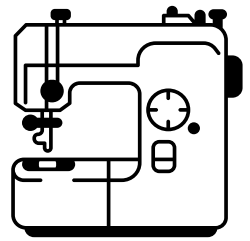
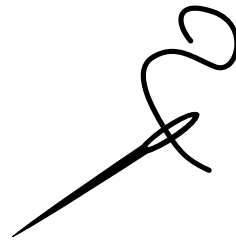
Keeping your home clutter free

How long clothes will last

Impact on the environment

Safe conditions for the clothing makers

Refashion

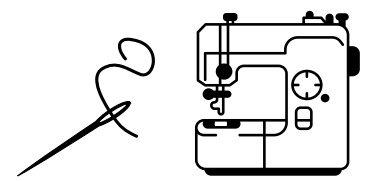


My Shopping Checklist

Stop before you shop, and think about whether the things you're going to buy can tick these boxes... add your own questions to the end of the checklist to personalise it for you.

- Does it fit my personal style? See above!
- Do I know when and how will I wear it?
- I'm sure I don't already have something like this
- Is it well made, will it last? Is it repairable?
- Do I know what it is made from, where it was made?
- Was it made safely and in good working conditions?
- Do I need to buy it now? Can I think about it?
-
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Part Two - Wear Longer

This is about making the clothes we have last as long as we can, keeping them in use and out of landfill as long as they are wearable.

New not new

It takes a huge amount of resources to make brand new clothes; chemicals, land, water, energy and the hard work of lots of people.

If we buy used, we're not using new resources, because the clothes are already made.

When we talk about "new clothes" in this section we mean "new to us". Buying brand new things isn't usually the best option for the planet, so we are happy to count pre-owned clothing as new, because to us it is!

Swap shops

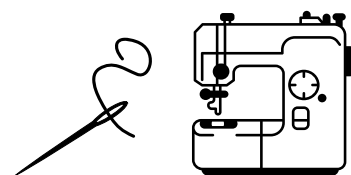
Swapping clothes with family and friends is the easiest way to keep things in circulation.

Some of the things that are great for swapping or donating to friends are...

- Children's clothes
- Maternity wear
- School uniforms
- "Mistake" buys
- Things that are too big or too small



You could organise a clothes swap party or an online group, or have a regular clothes swap evening with your neighbourhood.



Renting clothes

For big occasions like weddings, parties, graduations and premiers (well you never know!), renting designer clothes is now really popular. If you like the designer look for everyday, you can get subscription packages where you'll be sent new outfits every month.

These options aren't cheap, but if you're into your designer clothes it's way cheaper than buying new, and you get to keep up with fashion without wasting anything. Search online for rental websites or shops in local high streets.

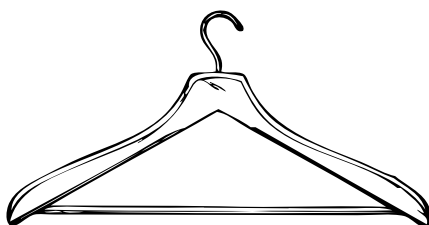
It's worth mentioning that renting has been criticised for the amount of dry cleaning involved, so bear this in mind and know that we always have a compromise to make!

Buying used

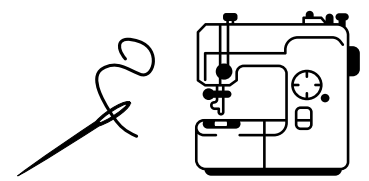
Buying used, or vintage, clothing is a huge trend right now. On apps like Vinted and Depop you can buy used or upcycled clothing, from designers or high street brands, at a fraction of cost of new. You'll also find more and more vintage clothes shops in the high street, where you can see clothes in real life and get a better idea of fit and fabrics.

There are charity shops on every High Street, where you can support a good cause while you shop. Although prices here have gone up, along with everything else, you can still get great bargains and high quality. If its hard to get to a high street, many charities now do online clothes shops, just bear in mind size differences and return policies to make sure nothing is wasted.

You'll find some tips for buying second hand on the next page...



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Some of the things to look out for when buying used clothing:

It's much easier to buy used clothes in real life than online, as you can be sure there are no hidden flaws and you can feel fabrics, check sizes etc. If you're shopping used online, look out for measurements, lengths and information about the type of fabric, weight etc. Ask the seller for more information if you need it.

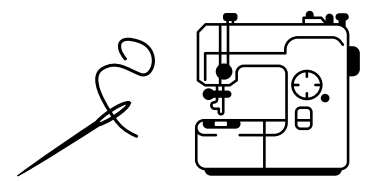
If you're just looking for fabric for an upcycle or remake project, don't worry about the size or cut, focus on the colour, feel and quality of the material. Also ask if the shop has a bargain bin or clothes they can't sell.

Look at points of high wear, like under arms, where lots of seams come together, between the legs of trousers or on knees. If the fabric is thin you may be able to patch it or repair it, but think about if you've got the time and skills to do this.

Remember it's easier to make things smaller than bigger, if something is too small you would need to add extra material from somewhere else or re style it entirely to fit.

Check for rips, stains or bobbles in the fabric, you can patch, dye or embroider these but again be honest about whether you're likely to get round to it!

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Buying new

If you want to buy new, there are lots of brands now offering clothes that have less impact on the environment and better conditions for garment makers. These are sometimes called ethical or sustainable brands.

The trouble is, they tend to be expensive, sometimes hard to find, and not always in the sizes or styles you need.

Yes, we know that clothing shouldn't be cheap and disposable. We know workers should be paid properly and the environment needs protecting.

But let's be realistic; we are in really difficult times, no one has any money to spare and everyone is looking for a bargain.

We know we're not going to buy our whole wardrobe from ethical brands.

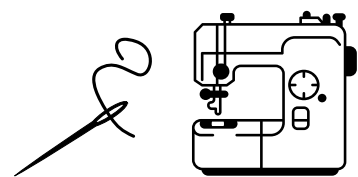
But, if you can afford to, perhaps you could add a few key pieces from ethical brands, alongside your vintage, upcycled, repaired and high street clothes.

Have a look at some of the brands available and try and find one or two really well made pieces that will last a lifetime.

Some good things to invest in might be:

- A perfect pair of jeans
- A dress or suit for special occasions
- A winter coat
- Shoes or trainers that you'll wear every day





Buying new? Watch out for "greenwashing"

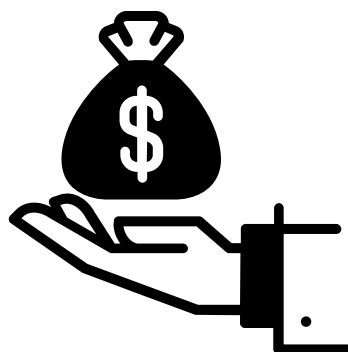
Fashion brands have caught onto the need to appear to be more sustainable and less harmful. Some are genuinely making changes, but others are using this as a marketing trick rather than a real commitment.

Most fashion retailers are now advertising things like recycled fibres and organic dyes, or buying back old clothing.

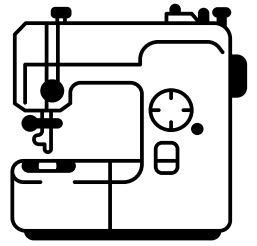
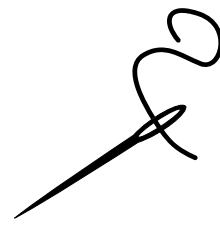
But sometimes these changes are not all they appear to be.

The term "greenwashing" means brands using words or phrases that make their product sound better, but don't really have anything behind them. For example, labels like "Made with kindness" or "Planet Friendly" don't really explain what changes the company has made to conditions for workers or their impact on the planet

- If a shop is collecting used clothing, see if you can find out what happens to the clothing - remember, many clothes can't be recycled and most UK used clothing ends up being dumped in other countries and polluting their environment
- If they are making claims like "Friendly" or "Kind" ask what that actually means, are workers paid a living wage? Do their factories have rules to protect the environment?
- Are clothes made to last, not following short term fads, well made and finished? Or will they wear out or be out of style within a few months?



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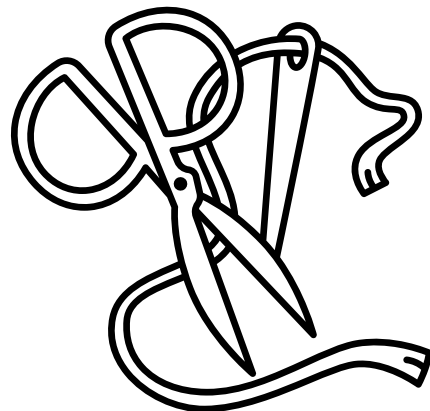
Making your own

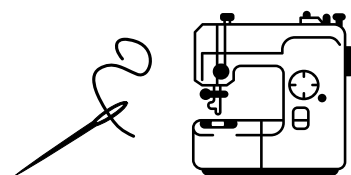
If you're a creative person, know how to sew or want to learn, then making your own clothes could be an option. There are lots of resources on YouTube, books, patterns, tutorials and ideas online, as well as sewing classes that we at Make Good Arts run!

Making your own is often a good option because:

You know nobody was exploited or put in danger to make it
You know it will fit you properly, and because you know how it's made it's easier to repair or alter

You can choose fabrics that have a lower impact on the environment, like recycled or organic fabrics, or use end of roll pieces, surplus or unwanted fabrics from charity shops, scrap stores or family and friends.





Part three - Don't bin it!

This section is all about what we can do to keep our precious clothes out landfill, saving all those resources and keeping our clothes wearable.

Repair and restyle

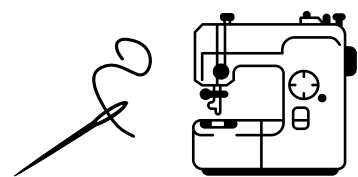
Sometimes we have clothes that we love, literally, to bits. The things that get worn so much they're full of holes, covered in paint or stained with bleach or hair dye.

You'll hear us say this a lot; learn to sew! Sewing is a life skill that will save you money and rescue those favourite garments from the bin! At the very least, learning to sew on a button, mend a hem or popped seam or cover a rip with a patch should see you through most basic repair emergencies. If you're interested in sewing for fun, things like embroidery, visible mending, applique and darning are all great creative ways to keep your clothes alive longer.

If you haven't got the sewing bug, don't worry; there are shops on most high streets that will repair or alter clothing. It will definitely cost more than doing it yourself, but probably a lot less than buying new. Don't forget you need to value your time too, and if you don't enjoy sewing, or find it hard work, then it's probably worth getting some help with the bigger mending jobs.

Of course, we hope you'll all absolutely love sewing and become amazing creative menders... but no pressure!

Other no-sew ways to restyle include decorating with paint, print or fabric markers, altering lengths and using iron-on mending tape to finish the hems, or just making a feature of those raw edges (this works well on stretchy fabrics like T-shirts).



Declutter without the bin!

We all love having a good clear out, don't we? Getting rid of things we just don't love anymore and making space for new things feels great.

And if we've got kids, the clearout happens on a regular basis.

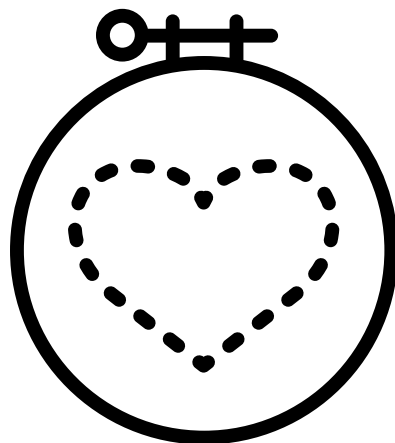
But what should we do with all the clothes we don't want? The answer depends on what state they're in...

Are they good enough to sell, share or donate?

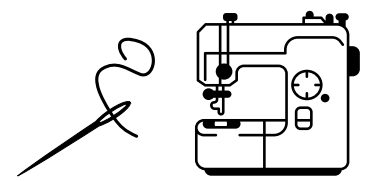
Be honest. When we bag up a bag for the charity shop, does it contain all our best and nicest things? Or are some of the things a bit stained, shabby, torn or worn?

If they aren't good enough for you to sell on an app like Vinted, then they aren't good enough to send to a charity shop. Only about 10% of donated clothes end up being sold on the shop floor, the other 90% take a long journey to the global south for reprocessing, and most of these end up dumped and polluting the local environment.

Bear this in mind when you donate - giving to charity shops is great, but make sure you only send things in saleable condition.



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And the rest?

OK, so now we're down to the rest. The stained, torn, bobbly, misshapen and scratchy things. The things that no one honestly wants to wear. Is landfill the final resting place for these unwanted clothes? Not on our watch!

Have a look at what you've got and ask...

Can it be patched, dyed, embroidered, printed, painted or cut up?

Visible mending, like big patches, embroidery or crochet, is a great way to cover stains and rips.

Can the damaged part be removed or replaced? For example, turning trousers into shorts or a dress into a skirt or top.

Is there enough to make children's clothes? Children are smaller than adults; fact. That means you need less fabric to make clothes for them. So that stained oversized t shirt could be cut down into a tiny top, skirt or dress, while cutting out the stained bit. You'll need some sewing skills, but mostly cutting and tying will do the job.

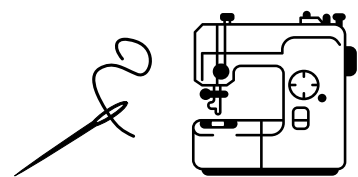
And if it really has no hope as clothing, we move on to Dress Soup

Dress Soup - what to do with the leftovers

This next section is about what we call Dress Soup. Not wasting one tiny little bit, using every last scrap to make something. Like making soup. But with clothes.

For these ideas you will need some sewing skills; why not come along to a Refashion workshop and learn how?

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Some of our favourite tiny scrappy makes...

Bags - from a simple shopper to a zip purse, we can never have enough bags, and they can be made from all sorts of fabrics.

Cushion covers - jumpers, t shirts and shirts all make great cushion covers, simple square shapes with an envelope fold over the top, or a zip if you're ambitious! Use old duvets and pillows or shredded scrap fabrics to make the cushion filling.

Patchwork - patchwork is a great traditional way to use up little bits, joining them together to make a quilt or throw, or even dress or jacket. They can be simple or a work of art!

Applique - little cut up pieces can be sewn onto other pieces - clothes, cushions, bags or artwork - to make something new and beautiful.

The tiny bits... socks, pants, tights and more

No, you can't really sell or donate these, you may be able to repair them, but sometimes you just have to let them go. Here's a few of our ideas for the tiny bits...

Tights and long socks can be cut into long strips and used as yarn to knit or crochet, great for making rugs, baskets and bags. You can also plait strips and stitch together to make circular rugs.

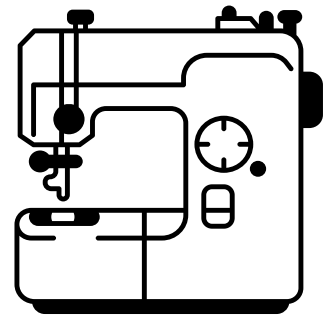
Socks and pants can be shredded up with scissors and used to make cushions - just use an old pillow case, fill it up with shredded bits and sew across the top. This is the cushion inner, to make a cover you can use patchwork pieces, crochet or re-used or salvaged fabrics to make a square cover with a folder top, like an envelope.

You can also make face wipes, makeup removers and general purpose cloths. Just hem the edges, use an overlocker, or sew two pieces together and turn right side out to make a neat cloth with no raw edges.

Our motto? Never leave a scrap behind!

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Making a change...



What might you do differently after this workshop?

Remember, do what you can, when you can, and don't worry about being perfect. Ticking these boxes means you're going to have a go at changing your habits, don't worry if it doesn't always go to plan!

- Tell my friends and family about Refashion ideas
- Learn to sew, or try new sewing ideas
- Try repairing my clothes
- Try altering my clothes
- Make something new from worn out clothes
- When I need to buy clothes, try used clothes first
- Buy less fast fashion
- Make a clothes shopping checklist and try to buy less
- Have a clothes swap
- Donate or sell my used clothes (but only the good stuff!)
- Find out more about the fashion industry...

You can find lots of videos on YouTube about better fashion choices; we'd recommend documentaries by ABC News, BBC and DW.

We have links to these at makegoodarts.wordpress.com