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How to Recycle Clothing and Other Textiles

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At Hearts, we're super passionate about [upcycling and recycling textiles](#) to create the most eco-friendly fashion we can. It's one of our central guiding sustainable fashion principles. We invite you to join the movement by learning how to recycle clothing and where to find textile recyclers in your area. Whether you've blown a hole in a sock or stained your favorite blouse, be sure to send it to a responsible recycler rather than the trashcan. We're sure you'll fall in love with recycled fashion just like we have.

Quick Guide: The Problem of Textile Waste and Why to Recycle Clothes

- **Textile waste per person:** Textiles make up a big portion of landfill waste – 5.2% of the US municipal solid waste stream consists of household textiles and consumer clothing.^[i]

- **Low recycling rate:** A very small 15% of all textiles are recycled annually by Americans.^[ii] Given that the Secondary Materials and Recycled Textiles Association (SMART) estimates that 95% of all textiles can be recycled or reused, this is a real environmental tragedy.^[iii]

- **Benefits of recycling textiles:** Textile recycling provides jobs, saves landfill space, lowers the energy required to make textiles, reduces the toxicity of landfills, and slashes the need to harvest new natural resources to make new textiles. Not only that, but recycled textiles require less dye to make, so they reduce the toxicity of the fashion industry, too.

- **Textile recycling fights climate change:** Since natural textiles like cotton release a greenhouse gas known as methane as they break down in conventional landfills because of the lack of oxygen, they contribute to climate change. So recycling textiles fights global warming.

Take Action! Where to Recycle Clothing and Other Textiles

1. **Donate secondhand clothes and other textiles:** When you've got used clothes, curtains, table linens, bedding, and other household or fashion textiles that are clean, unstained, untoned, and in otherwise good condition, donate them to your local charity. Doing so will benefit these organizations and those they are working to help. A few unique charities include [Dress for Success](#) and [Common Threads Initiative](#) (via Patagonia). Just ensure the organization will divert any textiles they cannot use to the proper textile recyclers (the case of Salvation Army, for instance, uses [Textile Waste Solutions](#)) to ensure they don't end up in landfills.
2. **Consign your used clothing:** If you need a little extra cash, take your secondhand clothes that are in excellent condition to local consignment shop where they'll be sold to give you a little income. Go through directories like [ResaleShopping.com](#) or [Yelp.com](#) to find local consignment shops. Or just go old school and look in the [YellowPages](#) under "consignment" or "secondhand".
3. **Search for textile recyclers:** When your old textiles are no longer saleable, they should be recycled rather than tossed. SMART maintains a list of [textiles that are suitable for recycling](#). There are several online resources that help you recycle just about everything, and should be able to point you in the direction of reputable textile recyclers in your area using your zip code. Look into [Recyclenow.com](#) or [Earth911.com](#) to see what they have for textile recycling in your area. These companies will either make your used textiles into rags or shred them to create new textiles like the recycled cotton or recycled polyester that we use in our Hearts recycled fashion.
4. **Advocate for a textile donation box in your community:** Talk to your local politicians and store owners to see if you can get a donation drop box positioned in your neighborhood to encourage people to put their secondhand textiles to good use. Check out [SMART](#) to get a [Donation Drop Box](#) installed in your neighborhood.
5. **Contact textile recyclers directly:** When all else fails, try directly contacting textile recyclers like the [Textile Waste Solutions](#) or [SMART](#) to see if they will either take your textile recycling or if they know of other organizations in your area that will do so. This may be especially necessary when you've got unusual [textiles that need to be properly recycled](#). (Canadians should contact the [Canadian Textile Recycling](#) company.)

Dig Deeper: How to Recycle Clothing and Other Textiles

- Follow the [lifecycle of rags](#) to see how textiles are recycled via SMART.
- Learn even more about [how politics impact the textile recycling industry](#).
- Watch this [video](#) on Dr. Hawley's research on textile recycling.

Image By [KellyK](#) and [ambernectar_13](#).

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