

ReUsing Old Clothes

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The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that textiles make up approximately five percent of landfills. However, the large majority of textiles are reuseable.

Reuse in-house – You might cut tattered or torn jeans to make a great pair of shorts, or patch them with colorful or patterned fabric. Disguise stains by embroidering or appliqueing a design over the top. If a task seems too daunting for the do-it-yourself approach, contact your local shoe repair or alteration shop. They may be able to resole that once-perfect pair of boots, fix a stubborn zipper, or otherwise salvage an article of clothing.

Sell – Clothes that are clean and in good condition but no longer fit or have been hanging untouched in your closet are prime candidates for consignment shops. Consignment shops display your old clothes and give you're a pre-determined fraction of the sale price (usually between 30 and 50 percent) once your item sells. It's an easy way to recycle and may even earn you a few dollars. When dealing with consignment stores, it's always a good deal to call ahead. Some only accept specific items, seasons, and sizes, or require an appointment. If the item is particularly valuable, you may be able to sell it on e-bay.com or shopgoodwill.com.

Donate useable clothing– Clothing may be donated to a charity that operates a resale shop(s). Goodwill is the best known, with roughly 2,000 resale shops. Clothing that does not have a market in the U.S. may be sold in poorer countries.

Many homeless shelters are happy to receive clothing donations, particularly during the winter months. Before heading over, call the shelter to find out if your old clothes would be helpful.

There are also clothing pantries, which allow the poor to take used clothing for free.

A willing recipient of business attire is Jobs for Youth, a Chicago-based organization that aims to help young women and men from low-income backgrounds integrate into the business world.

They appreciate donations of both men's and women's business clothing. Jobs for Youth, 50 E. Washington St., Ste. 400, Chicago IL 60602 (312) 499-4778

info@jfychicago.org www.jfychicago.org

One World Running, a Colorado non-profit, sends still-wearable running shoes and soccer gear, and also baseball equipment, to athletes in Central America, Haiti, and sub-Saharan Africa.

Requires shipment to Colorado. See: www.boulder-running.com/oneworldrunning/shoedrop.php

Too worn to wear - Athletic shoes that are no longer in wearable condition may be donated to Nike's Reuse-A-Shoe Program, a project that grinds up and recycles athletic shoe material to build playground mats, basketball courts, and running tracks. For a drop-off site near you go to:

<http://www.nike.com/nikebiz/nikebiz.jhtml?page=27&cat=reuseashoe&subcat=us-dropoff#>

Other unsalvageable items can be cut into rags for use around your house or church/house of worship.

Many large charities, like Goodwill, will sell unwearable clothing to textile recycling centers (which generally do not accept donations from individuals).

These highlights come from an article printed by Co-op America