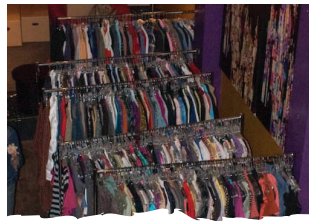




# Textile Recycling



**WASTE REDUCTION & RECYCLING**  

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**Project Guide**

# Waste Reduction & Recycling

## Generation Earth Program

Generation Earth is a Los Angeles County Department of Public Works environmental education program presented by TreePeople. Our goal is to educate and empower teens in Los Angeles County to be an active part of the solution to environmental concerns in their community. We offer do-it-yourself environmental projects that help youth make a positive difference at school, at home, and out in the world. Our programs are built to support the needs of teachers, students, schools and community youth groups.



## Generation Earth Project Guides

Generation Earth Project Guides are designed to assist students in the completion of an environmental project. These Guides provide the instructions, tools, and support materials needed to learn about the subject, and take the steps to completion of a project that positively impacts the community.

## Waste in Los Angeles

Waste is a vital issue in Los Angeles County. Every day, each person disposes of approximately 5.0 pounds of trash. Together, the 10 million residents, businesses and manufacturers in L.A. County send 9.36 million tons of trash to the landfill every year.<sup>1</sup> We generate enough trash to fill the Rose Bowl in just 4 days! These resources are generally transported to one of 10 solid waste landfills around Los Angeles County. What does that mean for you? It costs money to dispose of all this waste, valuable open space is used to create landfills to store the waste, and waste pollutes the environment.

## Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

The 3 R's of waste reduction are reduce, reuse, and recycle. The most impactful is to reduce the amount of materials used. The second is to reuse the materials we already have as they are, and lastly, recycle material back into the cycle of production and consumption. Recycling comes last because it takes resources to haul, clean and reproduce a product. Not only do the 3 R's reduce pollution and landfill waste, they also save energy used in the sourcing of virgin materials, transportation of materials, and production of materials to goods. When fewer virgin materials are used to produce new goods, more resources are available for a longer period of time. Often times, items that are no longer needed by one person, may still have a use by someone else. Instead of throwing items in the trash or leaving them on the curb to possibly pollute the neighborhood, donating to a second hand thrift store, listing items through online classifieds or exchange platforms, or sharing with the community, are viable solutions.

## Textile Recycling Event Project Guide

This Guide will help your group promote the reuse of items and reduce waste in the process. Proper disposal of textile waste includes keeping it out of landfills through sharing, swapping, donating, recycling, and repurposing. Your group can play a major part in creating awareness of proper disposal by hosting a textile recycling event.

## How A Textile Recycling Event Works

Textile waste consists of fabrics, clothing, bedding, linens, curtains, accessories, backpacks, shoes, rags, and other items made of leather, polyester, or fabric, etc. that have come to the end of their useful life. This might mean they are ripped, stained, don't fit, or are deemed no longer desirable because of changes in fashion or taste by the user. In a Textile Collection Event:

- A school team arranges a collection time period and storage location with a textile recycling collection company or organization at least 30 days before the event.
- Members of the local community and school are invited to bring textile waste to donate during the collection period.
- Volunteers or students receive and bring in donations, and make sure they are in bags and place in a storage area until the end of the collection event, or until the minimum requirement for pickup has been met.
- At the end of the event, the organization picks up the donations for responsible recycling.
- If enough donations are received, the organization often pays the school according to a predetermined pay-scale.

## The Steps

### 1. Did You Know?

This topic sheet provides information about consumerism. It can be used as an introduction to the topic to share with others and poses thoughtful questions for discussion.

### 2. Preparation Checklist & Timeline

A checklist is provided for planning and completing first steps. The timeline provides the tasks needed to complete and when.

### 3. Promotion Plan

Guidelines are provided to ensure promotion of the event in the community.

### 4. Evaluation

Complete the project by answering questions that serve to evaluate the process and offer next steps for potentially taking on additional waste reducing projects.

### 5. Resources

Resources are provided including curriculum ideas and event/promotion partners.



# DID YOU KNOW?

**Today, the average lifetime of a piece of clothing is 3 years from purchase date<sup>2</sup> averaging just 7 times it is worn before being discarded.<sup>3</sup>**

*Where might this “waste” end up?*

Prior to World War I, used clothing in a household was repaired, handed-down and repurposed for rags and quilts. Today, the U.S. generates 25 billion pounds of post-consumer textile waste per year, including clothing, footwear, linens, towels, and other fabrics. That is 82 pounds of clothing waste per person per year, with 70 pounds of that amount ending up in the landfill.<sup>4</sup>

**“Fast Fashion” is known in the fashion industry as moving clothing designs from the catwalk to the sales floor as quickly as possible to maximize profit.**

*How might this trend impact the waste and manufacturing industry?*

New styles are no longer brought to the market on a seasonal basis. Instead they appear in stores multiples times a week. With a constant inflow of new designs, consumers no longer feel satisfied with their clothing. This causes an increase in the purchase of new clothing and disposal of old clothing at an ever increasing rate.<sup>5</sup>

This demand has forced retailers to lower the cost to produce garments, lower the quality of items produced, and lower the wages for both the creation of fabrics and manufacturing of the items. More than 60% of the world’s garments are manufactured in developing countries, which often have low wages, unsafe working conditions, and unrestricted environmental regulations.<sup>6</sup>

**The creation of new textiles has an impact on natural resources.**

*What are some of the resources impacted to create clothing and other textiles?*

Cotton production accounts for 2.6% of annual global water usage. A single T-shirt made from conventional cotton requires 2,700 liters of water, and a third of a pound of chemicals to produce.<sup>7</sup> 17 – 20 % of the world’s industrial water pollution comes from the use of hazardous chemicals in textile manufacturing.<sup>8</sup> Pesticides and chemical treatments<sup>8</sup> are used in creating fibers such as wool from sheep<sup>9</sup> and silk from silkworms, and processing leather from cows.<sup>10</sup> These toxins are often carried by rain or irrigation water as runoff into streams and rivers and contaminate groundwater.<sup>11</sup>

Oil is used to make all polyester, acrylic, nylon, and elastane (spandex) clothing products. Petroleum based fabrics have become more popular than cotton, and are now the most common type of fabric in the world.<sup>12</sup>

**On average, each American donates 12 pounds of textiles annually.**

*What can be done to increase this and lessen the amount going to the landfill?*

Of the 12 pounds of donated textiles 10-20% are sold in thrift stores, 45% are recycled and repurposed primarily as second-hand clothing to foreign markets, 30% are used to make wiping rags, 20% are shredded for insulation, carpet padding and the automotive industry, and 5% is unfit for reuse and is sent to the landfill.<sup>13</sup>

All used shoes and clothing can be recycled. Donating textiles include giving to local charity and thrift shops, community swaps, outdoor clothing recycling bins, and direct donations to nonprofits that help children, domestic violence victims, homeless, and more.

# PREPARATION CHECKLIST & TIMELINE

There are many tasks to take to ensure a quality event. Use the resources provided to get organized, set a date, and plan the event!

## Preparation Checklist

- Use the Textile Recycling Preparation Checklist on pages 6 - 7 to plan and complete the first steps.
- Work as a team to assign who will be responsible for ensuring these initial tasks are completed.

## Timeline

- It takes 1 - 2 months to plan and produce a textile recycling event.
- Once a date is set, use the Timeline on pages 8 - 9 to complete the necessary tasks needed to ensure a successful event.

## Helpful Hints

Review the Preparation Checklist and Timeline ahead of time to understand what will be required.

# Textile Recycling Event Preparation Checklist



## Decide if you are raising funds or raising awareness

- Raising funds for school clubs or activities by means of a textile donation event can typically be achieved with a minimum donation of around 5,000 lbs. Shoes typically raise more funds than other textiles.
- Textiles can be donated in any quantity for different causes. Clothes in good condition, bedding, shoes, and accessories can be donated to local nonprofits or shelters to be used immediately by the people they assist.



## Identify a textile recycling company or nonprofit to partner with

- Go to page 13 for a list of reliable textile recycling collection organizations.
- Confirm that the selected organization can pick up from your school, or that a volunteer can deliver the donations.
- Ask if the textile recycling organization provides a crew to carry and handle all of the donations for loading their trucks.
- If fundraising, ask for the price breakdown of donations and payment. Typical pay rates vary by year, the organization you choose, and the type of textiles collected. Some organizations require a minimum weight of textiles collected before payment is available.
- If donating to a charity, check what types of clothing or linens are accepted by the organization, and see if there are any other types of items needed like toiletries or toys.
- Ask the organization if they assist in outreach efforts by providing banners and helping with press releases.



## Choose a location

- Identify a large storage area that is protected from the weather and won't be used for the time period the collection is happening. Unused classrooms, storage sheds or pods, or empty offices work well.
- If you're inviting the public to drop off donations, identify the drop off location and plan for taking donations to the storage area.



### **Choose a time frame**

- Collections can be for one day, week, or several months, depending on how quickly you can collect enough donations to reach the set goal.
- Any month during the school year will work but keep in mind weather concerns such as rainy days or extreme heat.
- Consider which time would be best to advertise based on team's availability.



### **Get permission**

- Choose a team to compile the information about the event and present to the Principal or other stakeholders.
- Ask for permission to use any school resources for advertising, like newsletters or social media pages.



### **Secure materials**

- Create posters, banners, and flyers to promote the event.
- Make signs to direct people with donations to the drop off point when they are nearby and on the campus.
- Find extra reusable bags to hold donations in in case original bags tear.
- Consider finding a scale to weigh donations and tally.

# Textile Recycling Event Timeline

It usually takes 1 to 2 months to plan and produce a textile collection. Once the time frame is set, work backwards and assign tasks and due dates.

## 1- 2 Months Before the Event

- Find and secure a suitable location.
- Identify an organization to collect, or accept donations.
- Present the event plan to key stakeholders to get permission.
- Create promotion plan (See pages 10 - 11).
- Create social media plan. Consider what websites or event pages you can post on.
- Create signs and secure banners.
- Create paper flyers for distribution.
- Write an advertisement or press release and get permission to send out.
- Launch promotion plan.
- Distribute and collect any necessary volunteer waivers and photo release forms.

## 1 - 2 Weeks Before the Event

- Coordinate ability to access the storage area.
- Secure all supplies and signage.
- Place instructional signage for donors at drop off area.
- Continue promotion.
- Reconfirm drop off or pick up details of donated textiles.
- Ensure all necessary volunteer forms are received.



## Collection Time

- Collect donations and place in storage area daily.
- Keep track of the quantity of donations received.
- Take photos and or video.



## After the Event

- Coordinate pick up or drop off of textiles with the organization.
- Take down any signs, banners and flyers after your event.
- Thank all organizations and stakeholders involved. Consider sending an email or note.
- If you were fundraising, within 2 - 4 weeks, the company should give you a report of the textiles collected in pounds and a check for items collected. Make sure to tell the company who the check should be addressed to so that you have access to the funds.
- Fill out the evaluation form on page 12. Assess what went well, and what you would change for the next time.
- Report diversion numbers to the school and selected community leaders. Share the results and photos with Generation Earth.
- Plan to celebrate your success with a party or fun activity!

# PROMOTION PLAN

A promotion plan will help you reach the largest audience possible for the textile collection. The success of your event is directly tied to how much advertising and outreach you do. Expect a 10% participation rate for all of your outreach efforts. In other words, if you tell 100 people about your event, you can expect 10 people to donate about 10 lbs of textiles each. Assign tasks and deadlines for the promotional campaign. Consider the following:

## Who is your promotion team?

- Designer for the flyer.
- Copy writer for the flyer.
- Advertisement/press release writer.
- Social media post and account manager.
- Flyer distributors.
- Phone/email outreach?

## Who do you want to reach in the community?

- Identify your audience. Who will turn in donations?
- Will materials need to be available in other languages?

## What do you want to communicate?

- The reasons for the textile collection.
- Date, time and location. Is a map needed?
- Free for all participants.
- Details for involvement.
- Items accepted. Phone number or email for more information.

## How do you want to communicate?

- Create and send advertisements. Places include:
  - School PTA newsletter
  - Local newspapers
  - Radio stations
  - Neighborhood/City Councils

## Flyers

- Create flyers that are appealing to your audience.
- Present information in a way that it is easily understandable.
- Information should be as concise as possible, and include the important details (why, when, where, what, who).
- Include appropriate graphics and/or photos.
- Try to avoid too much text or “busy” layouts.

- Churches/Places of Worship
- Organizations that help families in need
- Partners with the school or event space
- Community television channel to announce the event or to run a public service announcement
- Generation Earth
- Create and distribute flyers. Places include:
  - School community
  - Recreation and senior centers
  - Privately owned markets, coffee shops, and local businesses
  - Mall
  - Community centers
  - Neighbors
- Social media
  - Online blogs
  - Facebook Event
  - Neighborhood websites, such as Nextdoor.com
  - Craigslist
  - Tweets
  - Instagram
  - Community event calendars
- Face to Face
  - Ask school administration for help in getting the word out.
  - Make lunchtime or classroom announcements.
  - Attend a city council meeting and make an announcement about the event during public comments.
    - This is usually done at the very beginning or end of meetings. Sign up on the same day.
    - Some city council meetings are broadcast on local television or the internet.
- Signs and banners
  - Request banners or signs from the textile company and display them outside the school or on busy cross streets where a large majority of the community will see it.
  - Make signs and hang them on campus.

## Newsletter & Community Event Calendars

Find out:

- Who is in charge of the calendar listings for the newsletter.
- Length, format and deadline.
- Preferred way to receive the information.
- Who from your team will write the article.
- Who needs to approve the article.

# EVALUATION

Once the Textile Collection Event is complete, answer the following questions to evaluate the event and introduce some possible next steps.

## QUESTIONS

1. What were the most successful parts of the project?
2. What were the least successful?
3. What might we do differently next time?
4. Was the audience interested in possibly having another textile collection event in the future?
5. How much material was donated? How much was left over?

## What's Next?

### Another Project Toolkit

Are you interested in another related project? Consider:

- E-Waste Collection Event
- Composting
- Ink Cartridge Collection
- Food Rescue

### Battle of the Schools

Consider competing in the Generation Earth Battle of the Schools competition.

- Talk to Generation Earth for more information.

## Share!

Generation Earth would love photos and/or videos of the project!

- Send them to Generation Earth@treepeople.org.

# RESOURCES

## CURRICULUM IDEAS

- Invite a representative from Generation Earth or the textile company to speak to your group and/or faculty.
  - Make sure everyone knows what textile waste is, and how to reduce, reuse and recycle it.
  - You can discuss what happens when textiles are disposed of in landfills as well as how they are recycled.

## ORGANIZATIONS

- Textile Collection Event Fundraisers:
  - Clothes for the Cause: <http://clothesforthecausefundraising.com/>
  - USAgain: <http://www.usagain.com/collection-drives>
  - Soles4Souls: <https://soles4souls.org/get-involved/give-shoes/group/>
- Permanent Clothing Collection Bins:
  - Angel Bins: <http://angelbins.com/>
  - USAgain: <http://www.usagain.com/>
- Charities:
  - Los Angeles LGBT Center: [http://www.lalgbtcenter.org/donate\\_clothes](http://www.lalgbtcenter.org/donate_clothes)
  - Downtown Women's Center: <http://www.downtownwomenscenter.org/goods>

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