

Love Your Clothes

Simple ways to care for your clothes and make them last



Green-Schools
**LET'S FIX
FASHION**

Introduction

Why Our Clothes Matter

Clothes are more than fabric. They're how we show up in the world, our style, our comfort, our identity. But every single item in your wardrobe also has a hidden story: the water used to grow the cotton, the energy used to make the fabric, the miles it travelled to reach the shop, and eventually where it ends up when you're done with it.

Journey of a cotton t-shirt:



What is Fast Fashion?

Fast fashion is the business model built on speed: new styles designed, produced and shipped to shops in a matter of weeks, sold cheaply and often worn only a handful of times before being thrown away. It keeps trends moving fast, but it keeps clothes in our lives for a very short time.

- Some fast fashion retailers release new collections weekly, not seasonally.
- The average garment today is worn far fewer times before being discarded than clothes made a generation ago.
- Ireland generates tens of thousands of tonnes of textile waste every year, much of it still wearable.

Fast Fashion Facts

Why Keep Clothes in use Longer?

Every extra wear you get out of a garment reduces its environmental footprint per use. A jumper worn 50 times has a much smaller footprint per wear than the same jumper worn 5 times and binned.

Keeping clothes in use longer means:

- Less demand for new raw materials (cotton, water, dyes, energy)
- Less textile waste going to landfill or incineration
- Less money spent replacing things that could be mended
- More individual style: repaired and upcycled clothes are one-of-a-kind!

Did You Know?



Extending the life of a garment by just **9 extra months** can cut its carbon, water and waste footprint by around **20-30%**.

What is a Circular Economy?

Most of fashion today follows a linear path:

Take → Make → Use → Throw Away

A circular economy breaks that line into a loop. Instead of clothes ending in the bin, they're kept in use for as long as possible, through caring for them properly, repairing them when they break and upcycling them into something new when they're no longer wanted as they are.

Learn more in our [Circular Economy Resource](#).

How Care, Repair and Upcycling can help

This booklet is built around three simple actions and you're about to learn all of them!

Action	What it means	Why it matters
Care	Washing, drying and storing clothes properly	Makes clothes last longer with no extra materials needed
Repair	Fixing buttons, hems, holes and tears	Turns "broken" back into "wearable"
Upcycling	Transforming old or unwanted clothes into something new	Gives clothes a creative second life instead of a bin bag

Together, these three actions are some of the most powerful and accessible tools any of us have to fight fast fashion's impact. You don't need to be an expert, you just need to get started!

Did You Know?



If every person in Ireland kept just one existing garment in use for an extra year instead of buying new, the collective impact in water, carbon and waste saved would be enormous.

Section 1: Care

1. Why Caring for your Clothes Matters

How you wash, dry and store your clothes has a bigger impact than most people realise. Poor care is one of the biggest and most avoidable reasons clothes wear out early, lose their shape, fade, shrink or fall apart.

The good news: caring for clothes properly costs nothing extra. It just means doing what you're already doing a little smarter.

Did You Know?

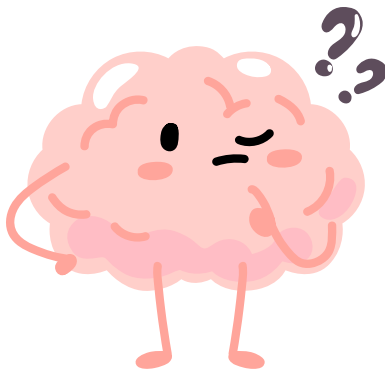


Washing is one of the most damaging stages in a garment's whole life more damaging to the fabric, in many cases, than actually wearing it.

2. Wash Less

Not everything needs washing! It's easy to assume clothes go straight in the laundry basket after one wear but many items don't need washing nearly that often.

Ask yourself before you wash something:



Can I actually see or smell anything on it?

Was it worn for a full day of activity, or just a couple of hours?

Is it an outer layer (jumper, jacket) that didn't touch skin directly?

Why not just air clothes instead? Airing means hanging a garment somewhere well-ventilated instead of washing it. This works well for:

- Jeans and denim jackets
- Jumpers and cardigans
- Coats and outerwear
- Clothes worn for a short time over other layers

Fact Box

A pair of jeans can often be worn 10+ times before it truly needs a wash. Airing between wears keeps them fresher for longer without any water or energy use at all.

Environmental Benefits of Washing less:

Every wash cycle uses water, energy and detergent and puts wear and tear on the fabric itself. Washing less often means:

- Lower water and energy use at home
- Slower fading, stretching and fabric breakdown
- Less microfibre pollution released into waterways
- Clothes that simply last longer

Section 1: Care

3. **Wash Smarter**

When clothes do need a wash, small changes make a big difference.

30°C Washing

Washing at 30°C instead of 40°C or higher uses significantly less energy per cycle and modern detergents are designed to work effectively at lower temperatures anyway.

Eco Settings

Most washing machines have an "eco" mode. It usually takes longer but uses less water and energy overall. It's a small trade-off worth making.

Line Drying

Skipping the tumble dryer and drying clothes on a line or airer:

- Uses zero extra electricity
- Is gentler on elastic, prints and fabric fibres
- Naturally reduces shrinkage

Washing full loads

Running a machine half-empty wastes water and energy for no extra benefit. Waiting for a full but not overstuffed load makes every cycle count.

Reducing Tumble Dryer use

Tumble dryers are one of the highest energy-use appliances in an average home. Reserve them for when line/rack drying really isn't possible (weather, time, space).

Reducing Microfibre Pollution

Synthetic fabrics (polyester, nylon, acrylic) shed tiny plastic microfibrils every time they're washed, which can end up in rivers and oceans. Ways to reduce this include:

- Wash synthetic items less often
- Use a shorter, cooler cycle
- Use a microfibre-catching laundry bag or filter if available
- Wash a full load, more water movement means more fibre shedding

Did You Know?



A single wash of synthetic clothing can release hundreds of thousands of microfibrils, most too small to be fully filtered out by washing machines or treatment plants.

Section 1: Care

Reducing Microplastics



Using eco-washing bags can reduce the release of microplastics from synthetic fibres and help prevent degradation of synthetic garments. Mesh washing bags prevent polyesters from mixing with the rest of the load, keeping agitation to a minimum and reducing stress on the fabric. Additionally they prevent any microplastics from entering the drain by trapping them.

The power of Vinegar

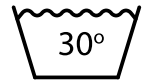
White Vinegar can remove stains and brighten clothes without altering the colour so it can be used on all colours. It helps soften clothes by removing detergent and mineral residues from fabric during the rinse cycle. Unlike conventional fabric softeners, it doesn't leave a coating of fragrance and conditioning chemicals on your clothes. Using a small amount can be a lower-impact alternative to fragranced fabric softeners — and it shows that clean and soft doesn't have to mean heavily perfumed. Use it in the fabric-softener compartment so it is released during the rinse cycle.

Did You Know?



Detergent dyes (fresh cotton/alpine air/spring blossom) exist for the sensory experience, not because it makes clothes cleaner or better for the fabric. In fact these can contain numerous synthetic or naturally derived chemicals contribute to aquatic pollution once washed down the drain!

Fabric Care Guide



Fabric	Washing	Drying	Ironing	Storage	Care tip
Cotton	30–40°C, tolerates regular washing	Line dry preferred; tumble dry low if needed	Medium–high heat, ok while slightly damp	Fold to avoid hanger stretch marks	Wash inside-out to protect colour and prints
Denim	Cold wash, wash inside-out, wash rarely	Line dry; avoid tumble drying to prevent shrinkage	Low heat, or skip entirely	Hang to keep shape	Freeze or air overnight to freshen instead of washing
Polyester	Cool wash, gentle cycle	Line dry - dries quickly, low heat if using dryer	Low heat, careful - can melt/shine under high heat	Fold; hanging can cause stretching	Wash in a microfibre-catching bag
Wool	Hand wash or wool cycle, cold water	Lay flat to dry - never hang (stretches)	Low heat, careful - can melt/shine under high heat	Fold; hanging can cause stretching	Wash in a microfibre-catching bag
Silk	Hand wash cold, or delicate cycle in a mesh bag	Lay flat or hang away from direct sun	Low heat, iron inside-out	Fold in breathable fabric, avoid plastic bags	Avoid direct deodorant/perfume contact - can stain
Linen	Cool–warm wash, gentle cycle	Line dry; can be tumble dried briefly for softness	Medium–high heat while damp	Fold loosely; wrinkles easily if packed tight	Embrace the natural wrinkled look - less ironing needed
Viscose	Hand wash or gentle cold cycle - weak when wet	Lay flat to dry, avoid wringing	Low heat, iron on reverse	Fold, avoid hanging when damp	Handle gently when wet - fibres are easily damaged
Sportswear	Cool wash, no fabric softener (blocks moisture-wicking)	Line dry - heat can damage elastic and coatings	Avoid ironing - heat can damage fibres/prints	Fold; avoid tight, prolonged compression	Wash after heavy sweat use, air-only after light use

20 Practical Steps to make your clothes last

1. Check care labels before the first wash, not after a mistake.
2. Turn clothes inside-out before washing to protect colour and prints.
3. Close zips and fasten buttons before washing to prevent snagging.
4. Wash dark and light colours separately, at least for the first few washes.
5. Use a mesh laundry bag for delicates, bras and anything with embellishments.
6. Don't overload the washing machine - clothes need room to move.
7. Use the correct amount of detergent - more isn't more effective.
8. Air clothes between wears instead of washing every time.
9. Spot-clean small marks instead of washing the whole item.
10. Wash in cooler water whenever possible.
11. Line dry instead of tumble drying when you can.
12. Reshape jumpers and knitwear while damp, laid flat to dry.
13. Store knitwear folded, never on hangers.
14. Use padded or wide hangers for structured items like coats and blazers.
15. Let sweat and moisture fully dry before putting clothes back in a wardrobe.
16. Empty pockets before washing - pens, tissues and coins cause damage.
17. Repair small issues (loose buttons, tiny holes) before they get bigger.
18. Rotate footwear and clothing rather than wearing the same items daily.
19. Use cedar blocks or lavender bags instead of harsh mothballs for storage.
20. Air out clothes after wearing before hanging them back in a packed wardrobe.

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