

INTRODUCTION TO TEXTILE RECYCLING

This lesson introduces students to the importance of textile recycling and how it works. It then encourages them to consider how they can do their part.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Understand what textile recycling is
- Understand why textile recycling is important
- Think about what they can do to contribute to textile recycling

SUMMARY OF TASKS

PART 1 – INTRODUCTION AND VIDEO

- Intro question for the class: Would you choose to buy second-hand clothes? Why?
- Give a brief introduction from the 'Introduction to Textile Recycling' fact sheet
- Ask students questions from the front, write answers on the board:
 - What do you currently do with old or unwanted clothing?
 - What do you think happens to clothes when you throw them away?
- Watch 'A World of Textile Recycling - UK' video¹ (10 mins) produced by the Boer group in Holland and ask students what they thought about the process

PART 2 – DISCUSSION

- Split students into groups to discuss and write down their ideas on the following questions:
 - What do you think 'fast fashion' is and what could be the dangers?
 - Why might exporting used clothes to developing countries be controversial? What might be some problems?
 - Besides reuse and recycling, what else could be done to reduce textile waste around the world?
 - What could you do to help reduce textile waste?
- During the discussion you may wish to go around the class and aid weaker learners by giving some prompts or ideas
- Come back together as a class and ask groups to share some of their answers with everyone

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT

- 'Introduction to Textile Recycling' fact sheet

HOMEWORK/ EXTRA ACTIVITIES

- Ask students to research and report on what 'sustainable fashion' is

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CKbxSRjldpw>

FACT SHEET: INTRODUCTION TO TEXTILE RECYCLING

FACT SHEETS HAVE BEEN DESIGNED FOR TEACHER USE TO AID CREATING OF TEACHING RESOURCES, OR THEY ARE FREE TO BE REPURPOSED FOR STUDENT USE.

Textile recycling is the process of turning old unwanted clothes and other textiles into useful products, such as new clothes or materials for alternative goods. It is important as disposing of old textiles into landfill can pollute the environment, and using new materials consumes natural resources. Natural fibres such as wool and cotton can take hundreds of years to decompose, and when they do, they produce methane and carbon dioxide, greenhouse gases which contribute to global warming. Synthetic fibres such as nylon and polyester are designed not to decompose at all and can release toxic substances into groundwater and soil.

The benefits of textile recycling are:

- Less textiles sent to landfills, less environmental pollution
- Reduced consumption of new materials, energy and water
- Reduced demand for chemical dyes

The process of recycling textiles involves a few stages. First, textile waste products are collected from consumers and factories. Next, they are sorted into categories depending on their condition and value. Some are selected for reuse as second-hand clothing, others for turning into rags and wipes, and the rest are shredded or pulled into fibres, or incinerated for energy generation. Second-hand clothing is often sent to developing countries to be sold, which has generated some degree of controversy. Those that can't be reused can be converted into rags for cleaning oil spills or into new products from their mechanically or chemically recycled fibres.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

- <https://www.thebalancesmb.com/the-basics-of-recycling-clothing-and-other-textiles-2877780>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Textile_recycling