



Textile/Fabric Waste Statewide Project Toolkit

Cheryl Stewart – State Service Project Coordinator

July 1, 2026 - June 30, 2030

Arkansas EHC announces reducing fabric waste as new focus of statewide service project

News Release on June 5, 2026

<https://www.uaex.uada.edu/.../2026/june/06-05-2026-ark-aehc-service-project.aspx>

No part of this toolkit is endorsing or promoting any media or items. All mentioned are for reference and ideas only. Resources that are free were desired.

1. Introduction to Fabric & Textile Waste

- **What is textile waste?**

Textile waste is any discarded material from clothing, fabrics, or fiber-based products, including both production scraps and used consumer textiles. Textile waste encompasses all materials that are no longer usable or wanted, ranging from worn-out garments and household textiles like bedding and towels to industrial scraps from manufacturing processes.

[What Is Textile Waste? Definition, Sources & Impact - ScienceInsights](#)

[Textiles: Material-Specific Data | US EPA](#)

- **Difference between pre-consumer and post-consumer textile waste**

It is broadly categorized into **pre-consumer waste**, generated during production (such as fabric offcuts, defective textiles, and unsold inventory), and **post-consumer waste**, which includes items discarded by consumers after use, like old clothing or stained tablecloths. Industrial and commercial textiles, including carpets, uniforms, and hospital linens, also contribute significantly to the waste stream.

[What Is Textile Waste? Definition, Sources & Impact - ScienceInsights](#)

- **What is fast fashion?**

Fast fashion is a business model that rapidly designs, produces, and sells low-cost clothing that imitates current trends, with brands like Zara, H&M, and Shein turning new styles into products in as little as 10–15 days.

[Explainer: What Is Fast Fashion? | Earth.Org](#)

- **Why textile waste matters to families and communities**

Textile waste — discarded clothing, household fabrics, and industrial textiles — is more than an environmental issue; it directly affects the well-being, economy, and sustainability of families and communities. When textiles are thrown into landfills, they can take decades or centuries to decompose, releasing greenhouse gases like methane and carbon dioxide that contribute to climate change. Synthetic fabrics such as polyester and nylon do not biodegrade, while natural fibers can still produce methane in oxygen-deprived conditions. Chemicals and dyes from textile production can leach into soil and groundwater, contaminating ecosystems and potentially entering the food chain. Incineration, another common disposal method, releases harmful air pollutants that degrade air quality and increase respiratory illness risks, especially in communities near waste sites

[Textile Waste: Federal Entities Should Collaborate on Reduction and Recycling Efforts | U.S. GAO](#)

Key Statistics

- EPA estimates the U.S. generated about **17 million tons of textiles in 2018**, with **11.3 million tons landfilled** and only about **14.7% recycled**.
- EPA and GAO report textile waste increased significantly over the past two decades, driven in part by fast fashion.

2. Understanding Fast Fashion

- **How fast fashion works**

Fast fashion works by rapidly designing, producing, and distributing ultra-cheap clothing—often in as little as 10–15 days—using low-cost materials, optimized supply chains, and small test batches that scale only if items sell well. This model is used by brands like Zara and Shein, which release thousands of new styles frequently and rely on high volume, low wages, and planned disposability to drive profit.

[Explainer: What Is Fast Fashion? | Earth.Org](#)

- **Environmental impacts**

McKinsey and Company reports that Fast Fashion is a high waste model. For every five garments produced, three end up in landfills or incinerators each year. This model also emits 1.2 billion tons of greenhouse gases annually from textile production. Chemical runoff and excessive water consumption are also widespread, from Encyclopedia Britannica.

[Fast Fashion and Its Environmental Impact in 2026 | Earth.Org](#)

- **Social impacts**

Less than 2% of garment workers earn a living wage. In Bangladesh, workers earn about \$133/month vs. a \$334–403 living wage. Sweatshop-like environments remain common.

[Fast Fashion's Footprint: Environmental and Social Impacts](#)

- **Consumer behavior and overconsumption**

Fast fashion thrives because it offers extremely low prices, constant novelty, fast delivery, and social-media-driven demand. This combination keeps consumers buying frequently, sustaining the model despite its costs.

Resources

- UNEP Sustainable Fashion
 - o <https://www.unep.org/sustainable-fashion>
- UNEP Environmental Costs of Fast Fashion
 - o <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/environmental-costs-fast-fashion>

Statistics

- Consumers buy more clothing and keep it for shorter periods than in previous decades.
- The equivalent of a truckload of textiles is landfilled or incinerated every second globally.

3. The Textile Life Cycle (more coming soon)

Show:

Fiber production

Fabric manufacturing

Garment construction

Retail

Consumer use

Disposal

Discuss:

Water use

Energy use

Transportation

Microfiber pollution

Resources:

Textile Exchange

<https://textileexchange.org>

WRAP (Waste & Resources Action Programme)

<https://www.wrap.ngo>

4. Remember the R's

Reduce:

- Buy less
- Buy quality
- Build capsule wardrobes

Reuse:

- Clothing swaps
- Hand-me-down programs
- Consignment

Repair/Revive: Mend clothing and textiles to extend their useful life.

- Basic mending: ripped seam
[How to Hand Sew an Invisible Stitch \(Tutorial\)](#)
- Button replacement
- [How to Sew a Button - for Absolute BEGINNERS](#)
- Visible mending
[Learn The Basics of Visible Mending | Made by Me | Better Homes & Gardens](#)
[7 Beautiful Ways to FIX ANY HOLE in Clothes | Visible Mending](#)
[7 VISIBLE MENDING IDEAS That Make Every Hole WORTH KEEPING](#)
- Basic alterations:

Hemming

[How to EASILY Hem Pants At Home | Beginner Sewing Tutorial | Good Housekeeping](#)

[Hem Your Jeans Perfectly Every Time Step by Step](#)

Darts

[How to add darts to dress or shirt in amazing way! - YouTube](#)

[Dart Sewing Secrets Every Beginner Should Learn \(COMPLETE GUIDE\)](#)

Downsize a neckline/dress

[Amazing tricks - how to downsize a wide neckline easily! Miarti !\[\]\(799877f5c2f906134441300079881630_img.jpg\) !\[\]\(2cdb4db9cae0d6ef949a960a952715f8_img.jpg\)](#)

[Amazing Sewing Tricks: How to neatly fit a wide neckline \(very easy\)](#)

[Sewing trick - how to downsize a dress to fit perfectly! Miarti !\[\]\(7bc43b319a082987e20f7bf78f4bab80_img.jpg\) !\[\]\(8126e67a625876df61ad4c4b63fecbc2_img.jpg\)](#)

Repurpose/Reimagine: Create new and innovative uses for old textiles.

- Upcycling projects
- Quilting
- Household items

Recycle: Direct unusable textiles to appropriate recycling programs

- Textile collection programs
- Fiber recycling

Recover: Salvage usable materials from discarded items

- Fabric
- Notions
- Buttons
- Zippers

Redistribute: Donate usable fabric and sewn items to appropriate individuals and organizations.

- Usable textiles/fabric
- Sewn items

Respect and Reach out:

- Encourage responsible use of resources and reduction of waste.
- Emphasize community service through handmade projects.

5. Upcycling & Sewing Projects

Beginner Projects

- Tote bags from t-shirts
- Aprons from men's shirts
- Grocery bags
- Fabric baskets
- Pillow covers
- Pet toys
- Reusable gift wrap
- Produce bags

Intermediate Projects

- Denim bags
- Rag quilts
- Patchwork pillows
- Fabric coasters
- Table runners

Advanced Projects

- Memory quilts
- Jacket transformations
- Patchwork garments
- Community quilt projects

Great Upcycling Websites

Inspiration

- <https://www.upcyclemystuff.com>
- <https://www.pillarboxblue.com>
- <https://www.heatherhandmade.com>
- <https://www.sadieseasongoods.com>

Free Patterns

- <https://www.allfreesewing.com>
- <https://www.moodfabrics.com/blog/category/free-sewing-patterns>
- <https://blog.spoonflower.com>
- <https://www.sewcanshe.com>

6. Community Service Projects

Family & Community Focus

Comfort and Care

- Quilts for children's hospitals
- Fidget quilts for dementia patients
- Walker bags
- Wheelchair lap quilts
- Prayer shawl bags
- Rice heating pads
- Tote bags for children's homes/foster kids

Food & Nutrition Programs

- Reusable produce bags
- Farmers market tote bags

Extension-Oriented Projects

- Fabric literacy demonstrations
- Repair cafes
- Clothing swap events
- Community mending days
- Basic sewing classes

Youth Projects

- 4-H sewing challenges
- Upcycled fashion shows
- Sew-a-thons

7. Circular Fashion & Sustainable Choices

- Buying secondhand
- Clothing rental
- Clothing swaps
- Repair culture
- Clothing care practices

Resources

- Ellen MacArthur Foundation
 - o <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/topics/fashion/overview>

The Foundation promotes a circular economy where textiles stay in use longer through repair, resale, remaking, and recycling.

8. Fabric Scrap Management

Large Pieces

- Children's clothing
- Patchwork
- Tote bags

Medium Pieces

- Mug rugs
- Pot holders
- Zipper pouches

Small Pieces

- Stuffing
- Fabric twine
- Scrap quilts

Tiny Pieces

- Pet bedding
- Fiber fill
- Art projects

9. Collection & Donation Resources

- **What can be donated?**
- **What should be repaired first?**
- **What can be recycled?**

Potential partners:

- Goodwill
- Salvation Army
- Local thrift stores
- School art programs
- Animal shelters
- Community theaters

10. Educational Activities

For clubs and county meetings:

Demonstrations

- Visible mending
- Darning socks
- Denim upcycling
- Quilt-as-you-go

Challenges

- No-new-clothes month
- 30-wear challenge
- Upcycled accessory contest
- Textile rescue challenge

Discussion Questions

- How many items of clothing do you own?
- How often do you buy clothing?
- What local resources exist for reuse?

11. Credible Sources for Research & Statistics

United States

EPA

<https://www.epa.gov/facts-and-figures-about-materials-waste-and-recycling>

EPA Textile Data

<https://www.epa.gov/facts-and-figures-about-materials-waste-and-recycling/textiles-material-specific-data>

U.S. Government Accountability Office Textile Waste Report

<https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-25-107165>

EPA data and GAO analyses provide some of the strongest U.S.-based statistics for textiles and waste management.

Global

United Nations Environment Program

<https://www.unep.org/sustainable-fashion>

Ellen MacArthur Foundation

<https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org>

Textile Exchange

<https://textileexchange.org>

WRAP Textiles

<https://www.wrap.ngo>

Fashion Revolution

<https://www.fashionrevolution.org>

12. Tutorial links

Easy tote bag tutorial

<https://www.heatherhandmade.com/tote-bag-sewing-pattern/#get-the-free-sewing-pattern-here>

Hand Sewing Basics

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B2mfJweh8a0>

Learn how to Sew, Easy Sewing Basics for Beginners:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rnTwT-ifLkU>

Learn to Sew for Beginners

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=18W00a_6BAQ

Learn to Sew Day 1 (There are multiple days for different topics covered on learning to sew)

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

How to Sew by Hand for BEGINNERS!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QhZTc1x1-pM>

20 Basic Hand Embroidery Stitches Sampler for Absolute Beginners

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hVw1WVAcVZo>

Beginner's Guide to Fabric types

<https://www.hawthornintl.com/fabric-guide>

Intro to fabrics:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MqG9Y-m5nl4>

Quilt as you go

Here is the condensed video link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_RpM4W78Awc

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

Different pattern, how to make the backing for a log cabin pattern, quilt as you go

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fu_dn-CEBzQ

Options pillow binding

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0mI0gA1NM3E>

Table runner

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GukExRAg7lU>

https://sewcanshe.com/100-free-fabric-scrap-sewing-patterns-youll-love-and-actually-use/?utm_source=convertkit&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Double+Feature%21+NEW+Beautiful+New+Day+Quilt+&+Twin+Star+3+yard+Quilt%21+-+22582526=

60 Sewing Techniques to Become a Sewing Master

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4gFaYArmOEg>

So Easy and Fast How to Sew Zipper Pouch Bag
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MHcVcwzAPI>

How to enlarge a skirt in 5 minutes
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hD7Le1gUPLU>

Easy DIY Clothing Alterations (No Sew!)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2naio77LvD8>

A tip many beginners don't know when sewing zippers
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s4NHPIYG8aU>

You can shorten PANTS like this!
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ie3KAMHv3as>

Don't Throw Away Baggy T-Shirts! Try these 3 Smart Fitting Hacks
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MRPYJdA7tio>

2 Ways to Shorten Sleeve Without Cutting - Sewing Tutorial
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ocJOXZAs-Ag>

Nine Ways to Patch Holes in Clothes. Amazing Embroidery Stitches For Beginners /Guide to Sewing.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1QnTMc4H8ig>

More than 20 ideas to alter, customize, and upcycle your clothes (instead of shopping)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=omMrVGcWa8Q&t=12s>

ABC Sewing YouTube Channel - Scrap Fabric Sewing ideas, Sewing tips & tricks, Fast and simple to finish in a few minutes
<https://www.youtube.com/@SewingABC>

Unique Items Created From Jean Pockets - Turning Waste Into Designer Bags
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H9zrqHezx4s>

Bag from old jeans in 30 minutes
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B1X8tLZfzPA>

Super Easy Neckline · Quick sewing hacks
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IvF5mjYggLU>

How to Fix Gaps Between Blouse Buttons | Easy Sewing Fix
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjGC2oa-9Wk>

(I like the elastic part near the end - adding narrow elastic without casing)
Many people do not know the secret of the safety pin
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4CCLDZpZ5tk>

How to reduce a wide collar without a sewing machine/reduce a big neckline
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OEWRCS61FqE>

How to downsize a wide neckline easily without sewing machine

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ASJ1ilV2Jw>

Shirt Too Long? 5 Easy Ways to Fix It (No Machine Needed)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sxea9Q1ZLo>

Quick T-Shirt Tricks to Tighten a Loose Neckline (no machine)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N0PWpmfqXS4>

Improve it YouTube Channel (Need it to look or fit different, hide a stain or make a repair....)

https://www.youtube.com/@improve_it_channel

Fix Tight Jeans in 2 minutes - GENIUS Waist Hack (no machine)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b58mzUdO-hY>

This Is No Longer Just a T-Shirt!

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

7 GENIUS Ways to Fix ANY Hole - Hand Stitching

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8hwqPPMaaQ>

7 Genius Neckline Alterations Tailors Won't Tell you (by hand)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DslO59qy9V0>

Sewing Trick: How to neatly fit a wide neckline (using a machine)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m13a50j11_U

How to Shorten a Sweater Without a Sewing Machine! 4 Easy Repair Tips

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RA2KhdvufE>

75+ Scrap Fabric Projects to Use up Your Leftover Fabric

<https://www.scatteredthoughtsofacraftymom.com/scrap-fabric-projects/>

Fabric Scraps - How to Use Every Last Piece

<https://www.arosetintedworld.co.uk/fabric-scraps-how-to-use-every-last-piece/>

How to remove baggy in the groin of the trousers/jeans to fit you perfectly!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eu3tsCAUD18>

6 Ways to Upcycle Fabric Scraps at Home

<https://talu.earth/6-ways-to-upcycle-fabric-scraps-at-home/>

TEXTILE WASTE CONNECTS TO FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES AREAS

Human Development/Family Studies/Personal Development/Mental Health

- Dignity Bibs
- Sensory Lap Quilt
- Bean Bag Toss for Kids
- Babby/Toddler hooded towel
- Wrap out of towels
- Jeans to make an apron
- Community Service – pillowcase dresses to send overseas
- Community, Member, and youth clothing workshops
- Community – busy blankets
- Nursing home bib made out of button ups
- Use fabric to stuff dog beds for humane society or animal shelter
- Quilts of Valor

Food & Nutrition

- Make a grocery bag from a pair of jeans or left over shirt
- Fabric scraps to decorate the top of canning jars
- Dish Towel Apron
- Potholders out of jeans
- Denim pants heat pads for countertop

Finance/Consumer Management

- Fundraiser – 2nd hand clothing sale
- Recycle
- Redesign
- Blue jeans into skirts
- Pockets into gift card holders
- Making bandanas from old shirts
- Old towels into dog beds
- Spinning wool or other fibers to make thread

Health & Wellness

- Neck Pillows
- Rice bags
- Socks to make heating pad with rice or beans

Home

- Donate blue jeans to make house insulation

AND MUCH
MORE TO
COME....

Contributions were made by the following:

Extension Service Employees:

Dr. Laura Hendrix, Anna Goff, Keith Stathem-Cleek, Hazelene McCray, Tori Fowler, Anna Goff, Allison Crane, Pamela Ray, Valerie Turner, Rebecca Simon, Devyn Britt, Alicia Boatwright, Brianna Austin, Tori Luker, Jane Hermerding, Kristen Ulsperger, Joy West, Trudy McManus, Amy Shepherd, Mary Ann Kizer Heather Reed, Alta Lockley, Susan Thompson

EHC Members from the following counties: