

Greener Fashion



Introduction:

Our clothes: from how they are made, to how far they have travelled, to the way they are cared for, to how we dispose of them: at each stage of the garment life cycle, there are energy and climate costs along the way. By understanding the processes behind our favourite clothes, we can identify where changes can be made to improve energy efficiency and carbon emissions in the clothing industry, and help make fashion greener.

Did you know?

- *Most of the clothes we buy in Ireland are produced overseas, and travel many 'fashion miles' before they reach our shops and wardrobes, contributing to climate change*
- *How we treat our clothes after we buy them e.g. how we wash, dry and iron them contributes 80% of the carbon footprint of a garment*
- *225,000 tonnes of textile waste are disposed of in Ireland each year. Recycling these textiles would reduce direct greenhouse gas emissions by over 300,000 tonnes per annum.*

Clothing Materials and Production

The materials and processes used in the production of our clothes involve large amounts of energy, carbon, water and toxic chemicals. For example

- Polyester is made from by-products of the oil industry which are non-renewable
- Cotton production involves agricultural processes that use energy, pesticides and chemicals for dyeing and it takes six pints of water to produce just one cotton bud!

All of these processes are harmful to the environment and are contributing to climate change. Leather production also causes a large amount of CO₂ emissions. According to the Brazilian government, cattle are responsible for about 80% of all deforestation in the Amazon region, with an average of one hectare being destroyed every 18 seconds. Deforestation is a primary cause of greenhouse gas emissions.

Fashion Miles

Most of the clothes we buy in Ireland are produced overseas, often in less developed countries with poor working conditions and environmental standards. While this might make economic sense and keep our clothes cheap, there are many social and environmental impacts associated with this. Transporting fabrics and clothes around the world by air and road creates 'fashion miles,' producing carbon emissions and contributing to climate change.



Fashion Energy

How we care for our clothes is the most important factor when it comes to the energy of fashion. Washing, drying and ironing accounts for the most significant use of energy in the garment lifecycle. Simple steps such as using chemical free detergent, washing at lower temperatures, and using a washing line rather than a tumble drier can help reduce carbon emissions.

Fashion Waste

As garments have become cheaper and more affordable, we are buying more clothes than ever. Traditional methods of using good quality materials, looking after and mending our clothes, have been replaced by cheap production using poor quality materials giving garments a shorter lifespan. This is making clothes more disposable, usually ending up in landfill.

So what can you do?

- Take care of your clothes. If you look after your clothes, the less you have to throw them out.
- Choose a chemical free detergent
- Wash at low temperatures to save energy and carbon emissions
- Do not tumble dry – use the washing line instead
- Hang your clothes to dry to minimise ironing and use less energy
- Organise a Swap Shop in your school. Remember someone else's trash can be your treasure!
- Recycle and up-cycle your wardrobe and organise a fashion show to demonstrate how everyone can be sustainably stylish!
- Recycle your old clothes by bringing them to your local charity shop, clothes bank or recycling centre.
- Contact your favourite shops or fashion designers to ask what steps they are taking to address the energy efficiency and climate change related problems in the garment industry and how they can promote greener more sustainable fashion.
- Choose more organic, fair trade and locally produced clothing or buy clothes made from other natural materials such as hemp.

So why not choose one or more of the suggestions above and create an awareness campaign to help your school and community understand the changes they can make to help make fashion greener.



Resources for Teachers and Students:

Websites

- <http://www.re-dress.ie/>
- <http://loveyourclothes.org.uk/>
- <http://www.ethicalfashionforum.com/the-issues/energy-and-waste>
- <http://www.treehugger.com/sustainable-fashion/>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/sustainable-fashion-blog>
- <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/news/Blogs/makin-gwaves/fast-fashion-drowning-world-fashion-revolution/blog/56222/>
- <http://fashionrevolution.org>
- <http://www.grown.ie/>
- <http://www.miniwiz.com/>
- <http://www.ecofashionworld.com/>
- <https://truecostmovie.com/learn-more/environmental-impact/>

Videos:

- Some sustainable fashion tips from one of the top designers Vivienne Westwood
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQaPlyLNNXg>
- See how leading brands such as H&M are playing their part
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=edP4Sa_F8eY
- Industry experts discuss fashion and climate change:
<https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/video/sustainable-fashion-sustainability-apparel-industry-video>

Teachers Resources:

Classroom Activities:

- Ask the pupils to bring in their favourite item of clothes, or look at their school uniforms or school clothing. Ask them to look at the label on the clothes. What materials are the clothes made from? Are they natural or man-made? Can they figure out where the clothes were made? How far they have travelled? Discuss ways in which they can reduce the distance travelled and greenhouse gas emissions of their clothes.
- Hold a moving debate in the class room. Divide the room up so that students can stand in three different corners named Agree, Disagree and Don't Know. Call out statements regarding the clothing industry, energy and climate change and have students move into the parts of the room which they agree with.
- Create a classroom swap shop! Ask the pupils to bring in their old clothes that they no longer want, and swap them with their other class mates.

