

Greener Fashion



Introduction

Think about our clothes: how they are made, how far they have travelled, the way they are cared for and how we dispose of them; at each stage, energy is used; Energy and water are used to produce materials and fabric that clothes are made from Most of our clothes are transported from other countries; washing, drying and ironing uses a lot of energy and we are throwing away more clothes.

By understanding more about our favourite clothes, we can help make fashion greener.

Did you know?

- Most of the clothes we buy in Ireland come from other countries and travel many 'fashion miles' by train, plane and boat before they reach our shops and wardrobes. This causes greenhouse gases and contributes to climate change. Does the label on your uniform jumper say where it was made?
- 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.

Materials and Production - The materials we use and the way we make our clothes can involve using large amounts of energy, water and toxic chemicals. This can harm the environment and cause climate change. For example: Growing Cotton uses energy, pesticides and chemicals for dyeing - it takes six pints of water to produce just one cotton bud! Polyester is made from by-products of the oil industry which are non-renewable.

Fashion Miles - Most of the clothes we buy in Ireland are made somewhere else, often in less developed, poorer countries. While this might keep our clothes cheap, it can mean poor working conditions for the people making the clothes and also cause environmental problems. Transporting fabrics and clothes around the world by air and road creates 'fashion miles,' producing carbon dioxide; this is contributing to climate change.



Fashion Energy - How we care for our clothes is the most important thing when it comes to the energy of fashion; washing, drying and ironing uses a lot of energy. 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 clothes have become cheaper, we are buying more than ever. Instead of using good quality materials, looking after and mending our clothes we are using poor quality materials so our clothes don't last as long. This means we are throwing away more clothes.

What can we do?

- Care for your clothes. Ask the person who washes your clothes to:
 - Wash at low temperatures
 - Choose a chemical free detergent
 - Do not tumble dry – use the washing line instead
 - Hang your clothes to dry to minimise ironing.
- 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 or recycling centre.
- Ask your favourite shops or fashion designers 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

- [Green fashion - 7 reasons why you should care about sustainable fashion](#)
- <http://www.upcyclemagazine.com/what-is-upcycling>
- <http://www.grown.ie/>

Videos

- [Eco Friendly Fashion Show](#)
- See how brands such as H&M are [playing their part](#)
- Sustainable fashion tips from [Vivienne Westwood](#)

Resources for Teachers only

Classroom activity

- Ask the pupils to bring in their favourite item or look at their school uniforms or 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.
- Ask the pupils to bring in an old piece of clothing such as a scarf or gloves. In art class, ask them to 'upcycle' the clothes by adding beads.
- 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.

