Recycling Textiles

A fun and easy way to increase recycling.
Top story in our customer newsletter.

How to recycle old clothes and other textiles

What do tote bags, oven mitts, their cushions, carpet padding, and rugs have in common? They can all be made from recycled clothes and other textiles. Many cities, including San Francisco, are making new efforts to collect old clothes and other textiles for recycling. Items that are in good condition can be sold to thrift stores and can be worn again. Post-consumer textiles that are stretchable or damaged can be made into other practical products, such as rugs for commercial and residential use and insulation for automobiles and homes.

Why is it important to donate and recycle clothes and other textiles? Just like recycling bottles, cans, and paper and composting food scraps and plant cuttings, recycling textiles keeps materials out of landfills and incinerators. The U.S. generates 25 billion pounds of textile waste per year, that’s about 82 pounds per resident. On average, each person donates or recycles 12 pounds of clothing discards. It is within our power to change that for the better.

Increasingly, environmentally minded fashion designers use recycled textiles to create handbags, place mats, drink coasters, and even purses. One company makes recycled old wool skirts into adorable dresses for little girls. Others invent stylish, baby shoes, and fun neckties. At least one designer has turned white T-shirts into a wedding dress.

How can San Francisco residents add to these efforts? Please fold old clothes and other textiles, put them in an open-top cardboard box, and schedule a special pickup with Recology. Send us an email through the “Contact Us” form on RecologySF.com or call (415) 330-1200.

These simple steps help San Francisco get closer to zero waste. An initiative set by our city to help protect the environment. In this way, recycling textiles — like reducing waste, practicing reuse, and participating in the blue and green bin program — is an opportunity to be part of the solution.

The first and second “R” words — reduce, reuse

WAYS TO REDUCE FOOD WASTE

Someone once said, “It’s better to bring too much food to a picnic than not enough.” That may be true, but it is also the case that we waste too much food. Here are three tips for handling food more responsibly:

1. Purchase less so less goes to waste. One method is to shop more frequently and buy only what you are going to use.

2. Organize food in the fridge by what needs to be eaten first. Move these items to the front of the top and middle shelves.

3. Place all food scrap in your green curbside compost collection bin. Composting coffee grounds and vegetable peelings is easy. Take the next step and compost bones, spoiled lunch meat, microgreens, expired yogurts, and too-old takeout.

Follow these steps and you will be amazed at the small amount of material to put in your bin. For more useful tips, go to sfbenviro.org/live-foods.

San Franciscans recycle and compost and are encouraged to continue placing discarded materials in their blue and green bins. It’s a good, green habit.

We are also encouraged to remember the first two words in the guiding phrase — reduce, reuse, recycle, and rot (compost). Reducing the amount of trash we generate and reusing things represent highly effective ways to help protect the environment.

How can we reduce the amount of trash we produce?

One of the best ways is to choose products when shopping that have little or no packaging. Doing so sends a powerful message to the marketplace because you are speaking with your consumer dollars.

Another way to reduce waste is to only buy what you need. Consider, briefly, what quantity you really need before purchasing. That step will reduce waste and save you money at the cash register.

Our options to reuse items, another powerful way to avoid making trash, are constantly increasing. New metal water bottles keep liquids warm or cool for many hours. Containers that snap together or fit inside each other allow us to pack a lunch without producing any waste.

Coffee shops and other stores sell stylish metal mugs for coffee and tea. It is satisfying to utilize a reusable mug instead of a paper cup and plastic lid when purchasing hot beverages. The mug not only keeps the beverage warm, it doesn’t end up in the trash.

Bringing one or more canvas tote bags to the grocery store is another great example of reuse. People who bring totes eliminate use of plastic and paper bags. Some grocers give small discounts to people who bring their own totes.

Taking steps to reduce waste and reuse things is practical and presents a strong example to others. It says we care about the environment and we are taking personal responsibility to make things better.
Curb holiday waste with green gifting

The holiday season is a festive time with parties and family gatherings. It is also a time to be sensitive to the environment.

The amount of trash generated in our households and in our businesses can increase significantly during the holidays. So when we make compost and send it to local farms, we help save water, tremendous amounts of water, a vital resource.

San Francisco has embraced composting more than any other city in North America, but we still can compost for more of our discord. Winery tours of the trash San Francisco sends to landfill show approximately 50 percent of that material could, and should, instead be composted.

The tools to compost are in place. The City reports 50 percent of the properties in San Francisco have green bins. We all simply need to put compostable material in the green bin, not the black bin.

Here are two great reasons to be more attentive to composting:

- San Francisco’s urban compost program keeps materials out of landfills and gives farmers an alternative to liquid or chemical fertilizers. So when we compost, we help farmers grow food that comes back to farmers’ markets and to our own tables.

- Good-quality compost is 50 percent humus by weight and humus is a natural sponge that both attracts and retains water. So when we make compost and send it to local farms, we help save water, tremendous amounts of water, a vital resource.

During the holidays, we are also encouraged to consider gifts that have little or no packaging or are presented in containers that can be reused.

People often find such gifts thoughtful and useful. Examples include theater tickets, a gift card to a nice restaurant, metal boxes for lunches and healthy snacks, and reusable jars, which serve as great containers for coffee beans, loose-leaf teas, and other grocery and specialty products.

If the gifts you give require packaging for transport, please opt for packing materials that can be recycled. Tissue paper and cardboard tubes are accepted in all recycling programs.

Try to avoid things that are made from several different materials, which makes them difficult to recycle, or that come in excessive packaging.

Residents can schedule junk pickups online

City residents can now schedule no additional-cost junk pickups online. The RecycledMyJunk.com service was created by Recology specifically for the collection of large or bulky items, such as broken furniture or mattresses. Program rules and guidelines are posted on the website.

On the home page look for “Residential On-Line Pickups.” Type in your address, then click the “Recycle My Junk” box and follow the prompts. Of course, you can still call us at (415) 300-1300 and a customer service representative will be happy to schedule your pickup.

Residential or commercial customers who need us to carry large items from inside a dwelling or business can request inside service for a fee.

Do not put materials on street corners or other public locations, without scheduling an RML collection. SF Department of Public Works can fine people who put items such as couches and mattresses on the street for illegal dumping.

On the day of your appointment make a paper or cardboard sign with the letters “RML” and tape it to your street.
Test #1 – increasing outreach
Did you know San Franciscans can reuse and recycle clothing through the RecycleMyJunk.com program?

Dear San Francisco resident,

Please use Recology's RecycleMyJunk Program to schedule special curbside pickups for bulky items at no additional cost.

The RMJ Program also picks up textiles such as clothes, shoes, linens, backpacks, and other textiles. Package textiles in a cardboard box with a lid or a clear bag labeled “TEXTILES” and place at your curb.

Textile collections do not count toward your RMJ pickup limit. Schedule a textile collection at RecycleMyJunk.com or by calling (415) 330-1300.

Dry materials only. No trash.

Estimado residente de San Francisco,

Utilice el programa de RecycleMyJunk para recoger sus elementos voluminosos, sin costo adicional.

El programa de RecycleMyJunk también acepta textiles como ropa, zapatos, sabanas, mochilas y otros textiles. Coloque los textiles en una caja de cartón con tapa, o en una bolsa transparente, marcada "TEXTILES" y ponga en la banqueta.

Las recoljas de los textiles no cuentan hacia su límite de recogida del programa RMJ. Programar una recolza de textiles en RecycleMyJunk.com o llamar al (415) 330-1300.

Solo aceptamos prendas secas. No aceptamos basura.
Need to clean out your closet after the holidays? RecycleMyJunk.com!

Dear San Francisco resident,

Please use Recology’s RecycleMyJunk Program to schedule special curbside pickups for bulky items at no additional cost.

The RMJ Program also picks up textiles such as clothes, shoes, linens, backpacks, and other textiles. Package textiles in a cardboard box with a lid or a clear bag labeled “TEXTILES” and place at your curb.

Textile collections do not count toward your RMJ pickup limit. Schedule a textile collection at RecycleMyJunk.com or by calling (415) 330-1300.

Dry materials only. No trash.

Estimado residente de San Francisco,

Utilice el programa RecycleMyJunk de Recology para recoger todos los objetos grandes de su casa, incluyendo ropa, zapatos, almohadas y otras telas. Los objetos deben ser colocados en una caja de cartón con tapa o en una bolsa transparente, marcada con el término “TEXTILES” y colocados en su camino.

Las colecciones de telas no cuentan para su límite de recogida RMJ. Para programar una recogida de telas, visite RecycleMyJunk.com o llame al (415) 330-1300.

Solo aceptamos prendas secas. No podemos aceptar basura.
Test #2
Clear Bag or Cardboard Box Next to Blue Bin

Residential test
October 19, 2015

Dear San Francisco resident,

Reduce your impact on the environment one step at a time.

Recology and the City are testing ways to collect clothes and other textiles for reuse and recycling. Your neighborhood will be part of this test.

Beginning the first week of November, Recology will collect unwanted textiles at your curbside at no extra cost. Here is how the test program will work:

Place textiles in a cardboard box with a lid or in a clear bag and place it next to your blue recycling bin on your regular collection day.

Clearly label your box or bag "TEXTILES" so our driver will know to keep these items separate from other disposal. Please tie or tuck in the end of the bag to keep it closed.

The Textile Collection Program will accept:
- New or second-hand clothing
- Stained or damaged clothing
- Repeated wear
- Mismatched sets
- Shoes
- Towels, sheets, and curtains
- Purses, backpacks, and bags

We accept dry materials only. No wash.

The goal of the test program is to help San Francisco reduce the 14,000 tons of textiles city residents and businesses send to landfills each year, and another step towards zero waste.

For more information or to see samples of products made from recycled textiles, visit our website at www.SaveOurTextiles.com or call (415) 330-1300.
Dear San Francisco resident,

Beginning the first week of November, Recology will collect unwanted textiles at no additional cost. Here is how the test program will work:

Place textiles in a clear bag or cardboard box labeled “TEXTILES” and place it next to your blue recycling bin at the curb on your weekly collection day. Please tie a knot in the top of the bag to keep it closed.

The Textile Collection Program will accept clothing, shoes, linens, purses, backpacks, and other textiles.

For more information visit TanForTextiles.com.

Dry materials only. No trash.

Estimado residente de San Francisco,

Empezando la primera semana de Noviembre, Recology recogerá textiles sin costo adicional. El programa de prueba funcionará de esta manera:

Pon en una bolsa transparente, o en una caja tapada, y marcada “TEXTILES” tus prendas, ponlas junto a tu carrito azul de reciclaje, o la banqueta, el dia de tu servicio semanal. Por favor amarra bien las bolsas.

El programa de Textiles acepta ropa, zapatos, sabanas, bolsas, mochilas y otros textiles.

Para más información visite TanForTextiles.com.

Sólo aceptamos prendas secas. No aceptamos basura.

Activity discontinued: Oct 2015

Printed on 100% post-consumer recycled content. 10/2015
Test #3
Clear Bag
Inside Blue Bin

Residential test
Dear San Francisco resident,

Beginning the first week of November, Recology will collect unwanted textiles at no additional cost. Here is how the test program will work:

Place textiles in a clear bag or cardboard box labeled “TEXTILES” and place it next to your blue recycling bin at the curb on your weekly collection day. Please tie a knot in the top of the bag to keep it closed.

The Textile Collection Program will accept clothing, shoes, linens, purses, backpacks, and other textiles.

For more information visit TanForTextiles.com.

Dry materials only. No trash.

Estimado residente de San Francisco,

Empezando la primera semana de Noviembre, Recology recogerá textiles sin costo adicional. El programa de prueba funcionará de esta manera:

Pon en una bolsa transparente, o en una caja tapada, y marcada “TEXTILES” tus prendas, ponlos junto a tu carrito azul de reciclaje, a la banqueta, el día de tu servicio semanal. Por favor amarra bien las bolsas.

El programa de Textiles acepta ropa, zapatos, sábanas, bolsas, mochilas y otros textiles.

Para mas información visite TanForTextiles.com.

Solo aceptamos prendas sacas. No aceptamos basura.

Printed on 100% post-consumer recycled content. 10/15
Recycle Central

Residential test
Residential test
Test #4
Collecting Textiles at Apartment Buildings
Tan is for textiles
Tan is for textiles

Recology is pleased to introduce our new Textile Recovery Program—a convenient way to recycle unwanted clothing, shoes, sheets and linens, backpacks, purses, and other related items.

Why Recycle Textiles?

San Francisco residents and businesses send approximately 18,000 tons of textiles to the landfill annually. Most of these textiles can be reused or recycled into different products. In January 2014, the Mayor of San Francisco and the Department of the Environment launched the Zero Waste Textiles Initiative to keep textiles out of the landfill. In support of this initiative, Recology has developed a Textile Recovery Program to create a convenient way for San Francisco's residents and businesses to recycle unwanted textiles and thereby reduce landfill disposal.

What textiles will Recology accept?

We accept all unwanted textiles. This may include but is not limited to lightly used clothing, stained or damaged t-shirts, ripped pants, mismatched socks, shoes, purses, backpacks, belts, and other household textiles like towels or sheets.
Apartment Building Test
Apartment Building Test
Provide a new recycling service for residents at no additional cost.

Request a tan bin to recycle textiles.

To help the city of San Francisco reduce landfill disposal, we are testing a program, at no additional cost, to collect textiles at apartment buildings for recycling. We accept all unworn textiles in any condition. This may include but is not limited to: highly used clothing, stained or damaged textiles, upholstery, mismatched socks, old shoes, worn out towels and sheets, purses and backpacks.

The goal of the test program is to help San Francisco reduce the 17,000 tons of textiles city residents and businesses send to landfill each year. Recology provides special bins designed for textile collection to owners and managers of apartment buildings participating in this program. "No bins are tan in color," and was created a flyer titled "Tan is for textiles" that you can email to your tenants.

To sign up see the "contact us" form on RecologySF.com/Textiles or call us at 415.936.1300.

Thank you very much for helping San Francisco keep materials out of landfills and make additional progress toward zero waste.
Apartment Building Test
TEXTILES
Dry materials only. No trash allowed.

Call us at (415) 330-1300 to empty the tan bin when it is full.

Apartment Building Test
Tan is for textiles

Recycle all unwanted clothing and other textiles in the tan bin.

Dry materials only. No trash allowed.

To help the San Francisco reduce landfill disposal, Recology is testing a program, at no additional cost, to collect textiles at apartment buildings for recycling. We accept all unwanted textiles in any condition. This may include but is not limited to lightly used clothing, stained or damaged t-shirts, ripped pants, mismatched socks, shoes, purses, backpacks, belts, and other household textiles like towels or sheets. We cannot accept anything wet or moldy.

Look for this tan bin in a common space such as your lobby or laundry room. When the bin is full, please contact us to empty it at (415) 330-1300. Visit RecologySF.com/Textiles to see examples of products made from recycled textiles.

Thank you very much for helping San Francisco keep materials out of landfills and make additional progress toward zero waste.

Para ayudar a la cuidad de San Francisco reducir la disposición del vertedero de basura, Recology va implementar un programa de prueba sin cobros adicionales, para recoger textiles en los edificios de apartamentos para reciclar. Aceptamos todos los textiles no deseados en cualquier condición. Esto puede incluir, pero no se limita a la ropa usada a la ligera, como camisas manchadas o dañadas, ropa rasgada, zapatos, calcetines de emparejamiento, bolsas, cierrutas de otros textiles como toallas y sábanas. No se acepta nada mojado o mohoso.

Buscan el cubo del color café en su edificio. En un espacio común, como el vestíbulo o la sala de lavandería. Cuando este el cubo lleno, por favor de llamarnos para vaciárdolo al (415) 330-1300. Visite RecologySF.com/Textiles para ver ejemplos de productos hechos de textiles reciclados.

Muchas gracias por ayudar a San Francisco mantener materiales fuera de los vertederos y hacer progreso hacia cero basura.
Apartment Building Test
Apartment Building Test
Local reuse market
Everyone who cooks needs these.