

Rethinking Fast Fashion



Ella Kim-Marriot doesn't buy new clothes. None. She quit four years ago, in Grade 10. Why no new clothes? At first, it was a one-year challenge she set for herself. Now it's a way of life.

"I did it for a full year," says the 20-year-old university student. "Then I realized there was no way I was going back."

"It was really easy," she says. "It really wasn't that big of a sacrifice."

Like many young people, she used to buy 'fast fashion.' That's clothing that's cheap and trendy. It's often sold in big chain stores. The trendy clothes get worn for a short while. Then they are discarded.

Ms Kim-Marriott saw a video about the industry. She saw what happens to all those unwanted clothes.

"That completely changed my perspective



Something done *sustainably* is done in a way that can be maintained for an indefinite period without damaging the environment.

on it," she says. "We... throw out billions of dollars worth of clothes each year."

This waste didn't fit with her goal. She wanted to reduce her environmental footprint. So now if she needs clothing, she shops at second-hand stores.

Shopping sustainably

We all wear clothes. So our buying habits in this area have a global impact!

How do we shop more **sustainably**? By not buying cheap things and then discarding them. By changing the way we think and act.

Most of us buy too much clothing. We buy more than we need. Then we have to clear out our closets.

By one estimate, 85 percent of unwanted textiles in North America end up in landfills. Some leak dyes into the environment. At least two Canadian cities have banned textiles from their landfills. They were receiving too much.

Some clothing ends up in recycling boxes instead. That sounds better. But very little is actually recycled. That's because it's costly and difficult to turn old clothes into new garments.

Instead, those clothes may be shipped to countries in Africa and Central and South America. There they are sold in second-hand clothing markets. Trouble is, much of the clothing isn't good enough to be sold. It ends up in their landfill instead.

"It's... an out-of-sight, out-of-mind kind of thing," says the 20-year-old. "We don't really see the effects of fast fashion."

Another reason she's not buying fast fashion? She learned that much of this cheap

clothing is made in factories in developing countries. Workers there don't get fair wages. They work in poor conditions.

What can you do with your unwanted clothing?

Experts suggest you should find a way to give your clothing a longer life.

Perhaps you can repair a garment instead of replacing it. Or pass on unwanted clothes to friends, family or others who might want them. What about having a clothing swap where you and your friends trade clothes? Or donate them to thrift and second-hand stores.

But the most important advice?

"Don't buy so much."

What do Ella's words, "it's an out-of-sight, out-of-mind kind of thing," mean to you? Explain.



Did you know?
The clothing industry is one of the most polluting in the world, producing greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change.

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Comprehension Check

Answer the questions below in complete sentences:

1. What is fast fashion?

2. How is fast fashion made?

3. How much unwanted clothing ends up in landfills?

4. Why is clothing rarely recycled?

5. List three ways you can help reduce the impact of fast fashion.

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Language Focus

Prefixes are added to the beginning of a word. They change a word's meaning.

Example: **un** + **done** = **undone**

Directions: Add a prefix from the tag to each of the words below. Then, write a sentence to show that you know the meaning of each new word.



1. _____ patient: _____

2. _____ certain: _____

3. _____ place: _____

4. _____ respectful: _____

5. _____ reversible: _____



Which words from the article contain prefixes?

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The Most Sustainable Action

Actions	Benefits (e.g., environmental, social/cultural, economic)	Ranking

My Conclusion:

The most sustainable action I can take to reduce my environmental footprint is to:

It is the most sustainable choice because...