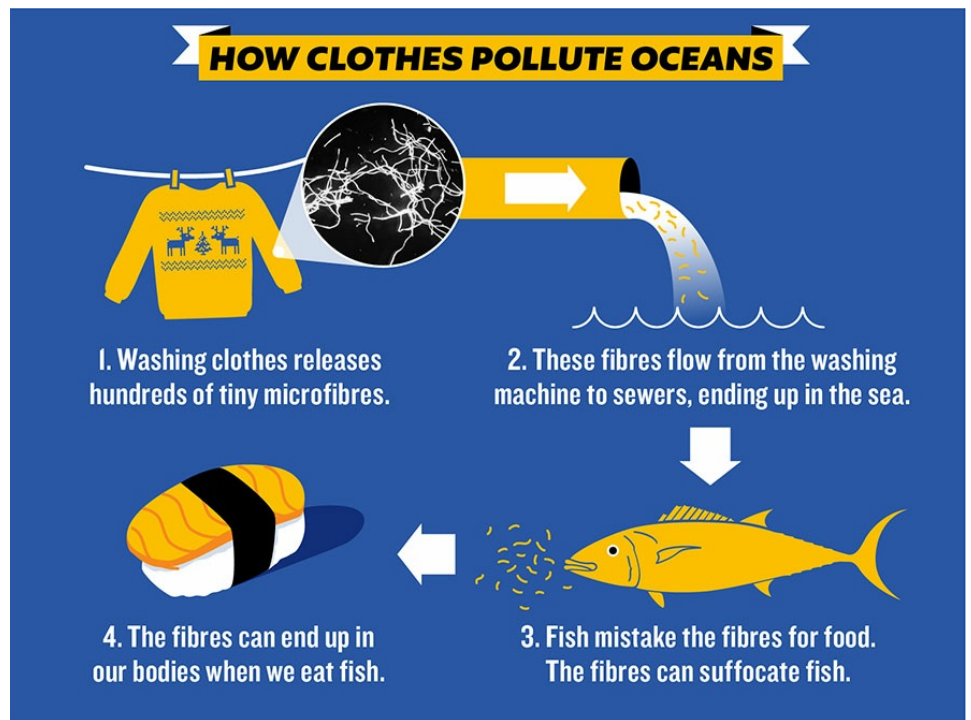


# What we wear: Saving the planet each time we dress

Fashion is the world's second-most polluting industry after oil, fuelled by our appetite for cheap, low-quality clothing. However, there are small changes you can make to take action.



**Out with the new:** Almost 60% of the clothes we buy are thrown away within a year.

The average person in the UK buys 26.7kg of new clothing each year. Around the world, a truckload of clothes is burnt or sent to landfill every second.

In the era of Instagram **hauls** and £2 Primark T-shirts, almost 60% of clothes are now made from cheap **synthetic** materials like polyester and nylon.

On average, a single **domestic** clothes wash releases 700,000 plastic **microfibres** which end up in the ocean. Some even get into our bottled water.

Even natural fibres, like cotton, can have a devastating impact.

The Aral Sea in Uzbekistan once covered an area half the size of England. That was before cotton manufacturers began pumping out water to **irrigate** their plants. It takes three years' worth of drinking water to produce just one cotton T-shirt.

Today, more than 90% of the Aral Sea is desert. Surrounding communities, which depended on fishing, have been left destitute and poisoned by **carcinogenic** dust.

In 2015, the fashion industry produced 1.2

billion tons of carbon emissions. This is around 10% of the world's total emissions, or more than all international flights combined.

So what should you wear to save the planet?

Natural materials, like linen and cashmere, don't contain microfibres — but they can be very expensive. Luckily, the high street is catching on to sustainable fashion.

This year, H&M launched its **Conscious** collection. Marks and Spencer has pledged to use 100% sustainable cotton by 2020.

Or even better, buy fewer items. Livia Firth, the founder of Eco Age, has launched the #30wears campaign. Her motto is: "If you don't think you'll wear a garment at least 30 times, then don't buy it."

Another carbon-free option is buying clothes from vintage shops or second-hand sites like eBay.

Every day, start-ups and community projects are coming up with innovative solutions to add to the pile.

Rent the Runway CEO Jennifer Hyman wants her clothing rental company to put H&M

and Zara out of business.

At repair cafés, you can learn to sew up holes and buttons for free to make clothes last longer. Extending the life of an item of clothing by just nine months reduces its environmental impact by 30%.

## The true cost

Will fashion ever be eco-friendly? Today, just 1% of the world's cotton is produced sustainably. Capitalism demands that businesses keep growing and that consumers buy more and more. Will the fashion industry truly commit entirely to sustainability if it hurts profits?

But more than anything else, fashion is about following trends and right now sustainability is dominating the agenda. If consumers like you make sustainable choices, the industry will be forced to follow.

**Tomorrow:** *The rubbish we make: Saving the planet by making less waste*

## Q & A

### Q: What do we know?

A: The fashion industry is one of the most polluting industries on Earth. In 2015, the fashion industry produced 1.2 billion tons of carbon emissions — which is the same as all

international flights and shipping put together. Clothing factories also release toxic bleach, pesticides and dyes into the environment, while wasting huge amounts of water.

### Q: What do we not know?

A: It's often unclear specifically what fashion brands are doing to minimise their

environmental impact. In a recent survey in the US by Changing Markets, 79% of respondents thought clothing brands should provide customers with more information on their commitments to protecting the planet and what measures they're taking to minimise pollution.

## YOU DECIDE

1. Do you care about being fashionable?
2. Should clothing that costs under £10 be banned?

## ACTIVITIES

1. Design a poster showing how the fashion industry impacts the environment. Use facts from this story and illustrate your poster with drawings.
2. Watch the interview with fashion blogger Kristabel Plummer in the top Become An Expert link. She says that it is important to bond with certain items of clothing. Write a few paragraphs about one item of clothing or accessory you own that has a special significance for you.

## SOME PEOPLE SAY...

*"There is no beauty in the finest cloth if it makes hunger and unhappiness."*  
Mahatma Gandhi

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

## WORD WATCH

**Hauls** – Popular on YouTube and Instagram, this is when bloggers unpack a big bag of shopping and talk about each piece.

**Synthetic** – Fibres made by humans from

chemicals, rather than grown naturally.

**Domestic** – In a home washing machine.

**Microfibres** – Microscopic pieces of plastic that are present in most synthetic fabrics.

**Irrigate** – When you supply an area of land

with water so that crops or plants will grow there.

**Carcinogenic** – Can cause cancer.

**Conscious** – Every piece is made from a sustainably-sourced material, such as 100% organic cotton, Tencel or recycled polyester.

## BECOME AN EXPERT

Read this article on [theday.co.uk](https://www.theday.co.uk) for links to recommended videos and further reading.

 Notes