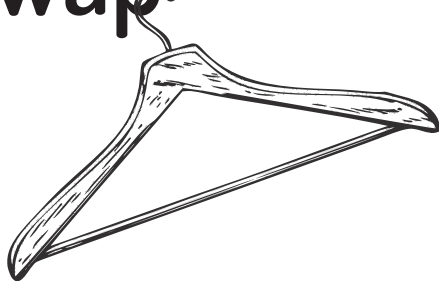


# How to Run a Clothes Swap



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## Intro



Clothes swaps are easy to run and are a great way to integrate sustainable fashion into a community, not to mention a great way to get some new clothes!

This guide is designed to give you all the information you will need to get your clothes swap up and running and to provide some different suggestions on how you might want to structure it. As with everything, there are many different ways of running a clothes swap and you will probably find your preferred way of doing it once you have run a few!

Running a swishing party (a clothes swap between friends) can be quite different to running a community clothes swap. This guide focuses on slightly more formal clothes swaps. If you want information on how to run a swishing party, you can find the guide made by Fashion Revolution on their website.

## Before the Day



### What will you do with the clothes after?

You can often be left with a lot of clothes at the end of a swap. It is a good idea to plan where you will take them.

*Some ideas:*

- Local charity shop
- Local direct action charity
- For anything that can't be worn you could pass the material on to a local sewing or upcycling group to use as rags or to turn into something new.

Most local charities are happy to take donations so if you have a look to see what is going on in your area you should find someone who is willing to take the clothes. If you anticipate having a lot of clothes left over, it might be a good idea to call ahead and see if they can pick up the clothes from where the swap happens. If you decide to incorporate anything else into the swap (electricals/ bric-a-brac) it is also a good idea to check what the charity can and can't take. This also applies to kids clothes as not all places take them.

### Do you want to have tokens?

When running a clothes swap you can decide to have a tokens system or not. A tokens system means that you 'value' the clothes people bring in according to a system (see below). The participant then has this many tokens to 'spend' in the swap.

### *Pros and Cons:*

- Setting up a tokens system takes a bit of time.
- You will need a clear and fair system and a way of tracking how many tokens each person has. (This can be done by giving them a card with the number of tokens they have to spend on it when they go into the swap).
- Using tokens is a fair way of ensuring that people are not taking more than they brought with them.

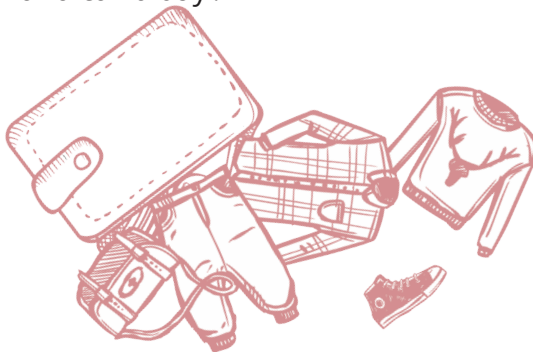
If you are using a tokens system, you might want to think about asking people to bring in donations in advance so that you have more time to 'value' them. Remember to keep the token's system simple (as much for your own sake).

### *Potential Tokens systems*

It is a good idea to keep the tokens system simple.

### *Some systems are:*

- 1 token per item
- A 3 tier system (3 tokens for a dress/ jacket/ coat, 2 tokens for a blouse/ shirt/ skirt/ trousers, 1 token for a t-shirt/ shorts/ accessories)
- You may also choose to say that people with no/ not many tokens can pay, for example, £1 per token if there are things they want.
- If you are using a tokens system, remember to let people know what it is on the day so that they can work out what they can and can't 'buy'.



## Storage

If you are asking people to bring clothes in advance, you will need to think about how you want to do this so that you know which clothes were brought by which participant. You might also need to set aside some space somewhere to store the clothes until the day.

This might also apply to having clothes left at the end of the swap. Often local charities can only pick up during regular working hours so if you are having your swap at the weekend you might need somewhere to store things for a couple of days.

## Set up

If possible, get hold of some hangers and rails to hang the clothes on. You might be able to ask a local charity shop to lend you these or you can ask people to bring hangers with them for the swap. If you can't get rails to hang clothes on, be CREATIVE!

*Some ideas could be:*

- Clothes horses/ coat stands
- Clothing line/ string and pegs
- Pinning the clothes into a wall

If you are struggling to find ways of hanging the clothes up, folding them on tables is always a good option.

*Mirrors!*

People usually want to see what clothes look like on them! If you can access some mirrors or ask people to bring them with them, that's fantastic!



If there are bathrooms where you are hosting the swap, these can be used too.

Sometimes it can be really nice to have some mirrors together and create a communal changing area, this can lead to a warm atmosphere of asking for other's opinions and complementing each other.

Equally, it is important to have at least one closed space for those who do not want to change in front of others.

Whether you choose to have more open or closed changing rooms will depend on who you are envisaging will come to the swap.

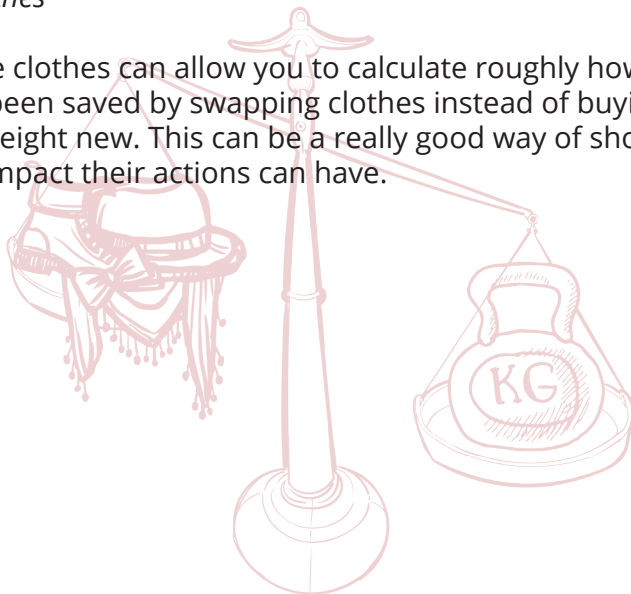
### **Including a sustainability element**

A clothes swap can be a great time to promote sustainable fashion and highlight the environmental and social impact of fast fashion. You may want to use statistics around this in your promotional material, or have some information available on the day.

A good website to use with lots of clear information and some really useful infographics is [www.fashionrevolution.org](http://www.fashionrevolution.org).

### *Weighing Clothes*

Weighing the clothes can allow you to calculate roughly how much carbon has been saved by swapping clothes instead of buying an equivalent weight new. This can be a really good way of showing people the impact their actions can have.



Depending on what you are doing with leftover clothes, you may want to use the total weight of clothes brought in, or just the weight of clothes taken home during the swap.

The weighing can be done with a set of bathroom scales or luggage scales.

The easiest way to calculate the total weight taken away during the swap is to weigh everything as it comes in and then, if you want to, taking off the weight of clothes left at the end.

According to Fashion Revolution, producing 1 kg of textiles requires around 20kg of Carbon. This can be used to work out the carbon savings of your clothes swap.

(For more statistics, again, the Fashion Revolution website has some really interesting information.)

## **Advertising**

*Don't forget to advertise the swap!*

A clothes swap is not the kind of thing you can pop into as you walk past, you need to have done some preparation and brought clothes with you. (Having said this, you may want to let other people in towards the end once the swapping has finished and offer the clothes on a donations basis to reduce the amount of clothes you have left at the end).



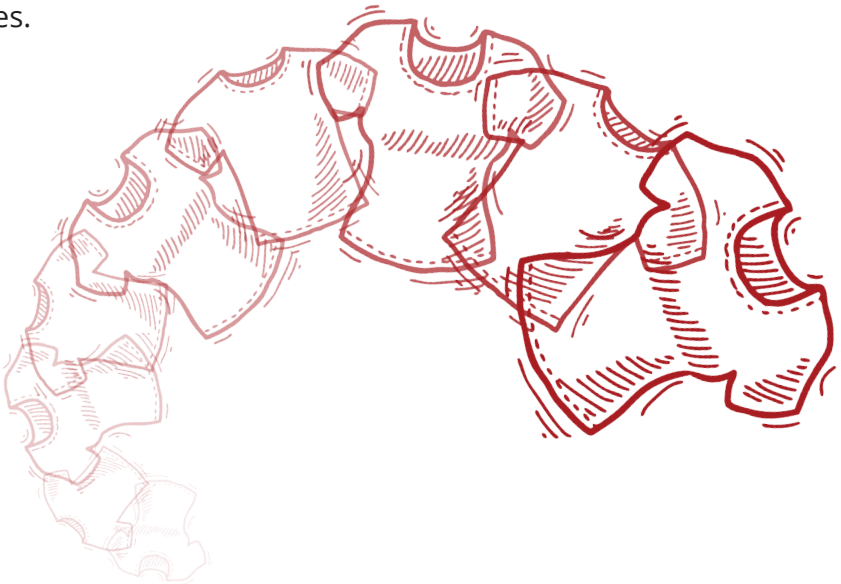


It is a good idea to advertise the swap well in advance and, if you are using emails/ social media, remind people about a week before the swap to start looking out what clothes they would like to swap. If you are asking people to make sure the clothes they bring are clean and freshly washed, it is worth remembering that this takes time and people will need to be reminded to do this in advance.

### Targeting certain groups

Remember that, for a clothes swap to work, you need to have people with similar styles and clothes preferences attending. I.e. a clothes swap wouldn't work if you had one baby, one teenager and one adult as none of these people would be able to swap clothes. You may want to specify one group of people for your swap, or you may want to try to make it as inclusive as possible.

If you are having an inclusive swap, it is worth noting that often, clothes swaps are dominated by female coded clothing (as this is what the fashion industry produces most of). It can be a good idea to put in an extra push for male coded clothing, or to think about where you can get some gender neutral clothing from before the swap to make sure that there is something for everyone who comes.



## Accessibility

As with all events, it is good to consider accessibility. This includes the venue, the language used in advertising materials etc.

### *Venue:*

In any advertising material, let people know how accessible the venue is. If you aren't sure what information to include, there are many accessibility checklists online that you can use.

### *Language:*

Make sure that you specify who the swap is for and who can attend. If everyone is welcome, remember to specify that too. It might be worth specifically saying that all genders are welcome, or specifically saying that transgender/ non binary people are welcome. When talking about the gender of clothes, using the terms 'male coded clothes' and 'female coded clothes' is more inclusive than saying men's and women's clothing.



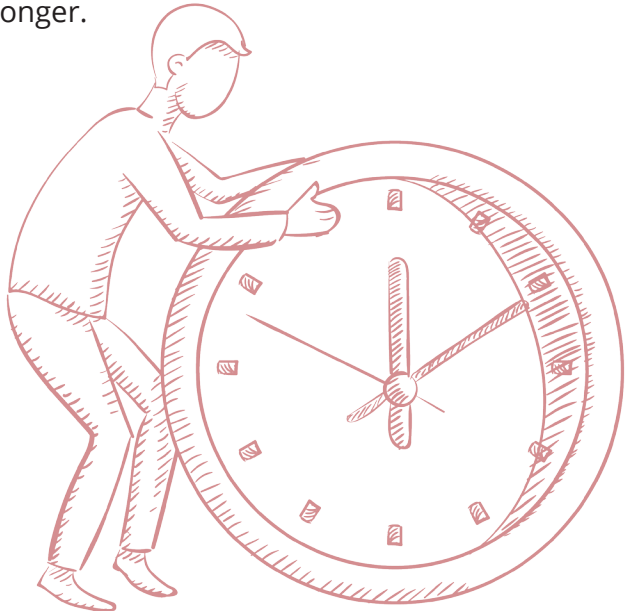
## Timing

Clothes swaps don't take as long as you think!

### *Arriving Early*

If you are asking people to bring their clothes to swap on the day, it is good to ask people to arrive promptly for the start time of the event or set an arrivals period (e.g. the first 30 minutes of the swap). This allows time for all the clothes to be hung up so that everything is ready to be swapped at once. If you don't do this, you can often end up with only a few people coming at the beginning and not having much of an opportunity to swap, or, someone coming at the end of the swap when most of the clothes have been taken, again, not giving them much of a chance to swap.

In total, allow 2-3 hours for the swap. If you can and would like to, you can have a longer swap and have a space for teas/ coffees and catch ups, however, the swapping itself won't take that long. The length of time the swap needs will depend on the amount of clothes and people there so smaller swaps will be quicker and larger swaps will take a bit longer.



## On the Day



### Arriving and Setting up

If people have brought in clothes beforehand, you will need to hang them up before people arrive. If people are bringing clothes on the day, it is a good idea to have a set arrivals period (see Timings).

If there is any information you would like to give to the people who are attending the clothes swap e.g. information on clothing sustainability or a charity you are raising money for, the time while people are hanging up clothes and waiting for the swap to start can be used for this. It can also be a time to have a cup of tea or coffee and create a sense of community between the attendees.

### Displaying the clothes

Whatever display method you are using, try to make sure that there is some order to how the clothes are organised. Making it easy to find things means that people are a lot more likely to find what they are looking for. An easy way of doing this is putting trousers with trousers, tops with tops etc. If you have some hangers but not enough for everything, it is usually better to hang tops and fold trousers on tables.

For children's and babies clothes, having some separation of sizes/ ages can make it a lot easier to find things that will fit.

## Swapping 'rounds'

Occasionally clothes swaps have issues with people taking as much as possible as fast as possible to make sure they get all the best things. This can create a negative atmosphere. One possible way of preventing this is to have 'rounds' of swapping. The idea is to have a maximum number of items that can be taken in each round, i.e. everyone can take up to 4 items, there is then time to try them on and put back any you don't want to keep. Once everyone has completed this round, there is then a chance to go back and have a look again. This can continue until everyone is happy with what they have.

Again with rounds, there is often a lot more time while waiting for people to try on clothes which can be used for conversations or education.

A slightly different and less structured approach to this would be a maximum number of items that can be tried on or picked up at once.



## After the Day



### Say Thank You!

Remember to thank people for coming. If you weighed the clothes, let people know how much carbon was saved. If you were raising money for a charity, remember to let those who attended know how much they raised.

If you are planning on having clothes swaps frequently, you can let people know when the next one will be. If you are going to run a swap box (see below) let them know when and where this will be.

### Swap boxes

If you like the idea of swapping clothes but don't have the capacity to run events regularly, you could try having a swap box. Put a clearly marked box in a designated area and leave it for people to put clothes into and take clothes out of in their own time. If possible, it is really great if you can put some clothes in the box to start it off.

You might have to keep an eye on it and make sure that it isn't overflowing. (if it is you can pass the clothes on to a local charity.) Even if you want to regularly have clothes swaps you could put some of the left over clothes in a swap box in between the swaps.