

How to set up a Swap Shop

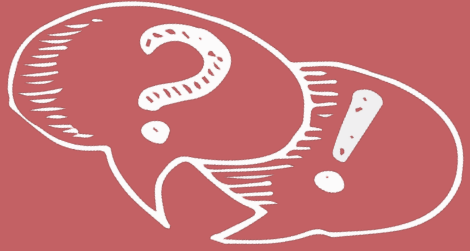


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INTRO

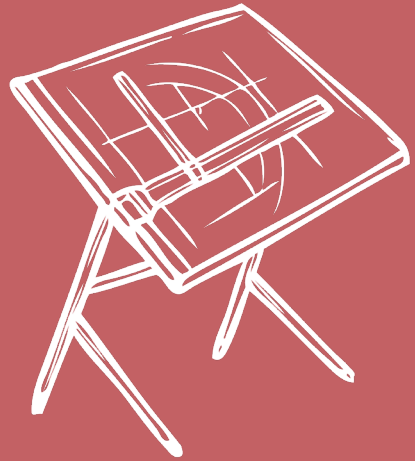


The aim of this guide is to help you set up a swap shop in an already existing community space. If you want to set up a self existing swap shop, it is a great project but will probably require funding and be a much bigger operation. If you have any questions about this, please reach out to SHRUB members of staff.

A swap shop can be a great way of bringing a community together as it encourages swapping between people within the community. It can be really nice when you find something new, to hear about the story of where it came from, and it can often be easier to part with things if you know where they are going.

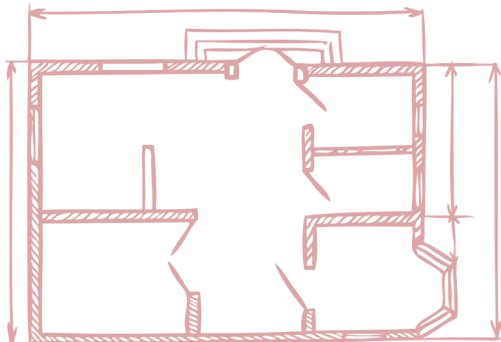


SPACE

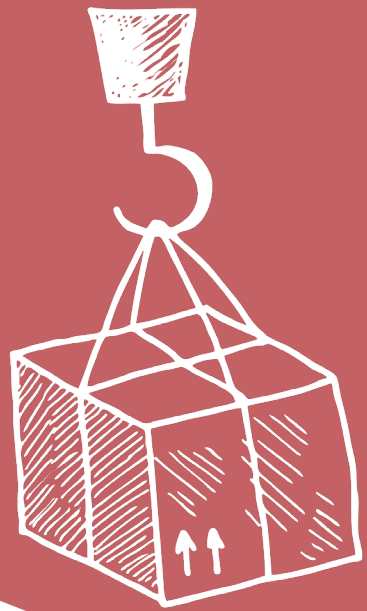


The main requirement for setting up a swap shop is space. How much space you want will depend on how big you want the swap shop to be and how much capacity you have to run the shop. A smaller space and smaller shop will take less time to keep on top of. This may be a problem, however, if you have a small space but a lot of people donating things as you will need a space to store them or a good way of passing them on.

Within the space, you will need some way for people to drop off items, some way of processing the items and deciding on tokens, and some way of displaying the items.



DROPPING ITEMS OFF

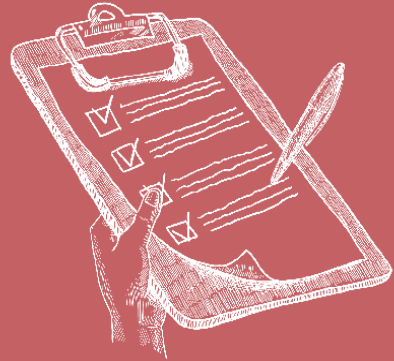


In order to have things to swap, there will need to be a way for people to drop things off.

This could be something as simple as a box that people can put a bag in (making sure that their name is attached if they want to), allowing you to sort the donations in your own time. This would mean that people could drop off items whenever the space is accessible, however, it would also mean that you would need some way of keeping track of everyone's tokens rather than it being the individual's responsibility, and that you would be less in control of what people are donating.

You might decide that you only want people to drop things off while there is someone there and the shop is 'open'. This will give you more control over what you receive as you will be able to give back anything you don't want/ can't accept on the spot.

PROCESSING



In processing items, you will need to decide what you want to keep and what you don't want. This may be because the quality of the items is not great, or because you don't accept a certain type of item (e.g. kids clothes or electrical items). You will either need to make sure that people can't donate this (e.g. have someone sorting the donations on the spot and giving anything back that you don't want) or you will need to have somewhere to pass these things on to (e.g. a local charity shop or direct action charity that will accept them).

It might be worth thinking about this before you set up the swap shop so that you know where you will take things and don't end up being overwhelmed and not having a plan of what to do. It might also be a good idea to think about what kinds of things you want to have involved in the swap. Do you want it to be for clothes, for books? Do you want to have electrical items and will this require any PAT testing. (In order to sell second hand electricals you need to have them PAT tested but this might be different in a swap shop).

Having a clear idea of what you will accept will help you to set up a tokens system and have some clarity around what people can and can't bring in.

TOKENS



One of the main aspects of processing the clothes will be tokens. The idea of a tokens system is that people can only take things of an equal value to those they bring in. There are many different ways of running tokens systems, all with their own benefits. Remember that whatever tokens system you are using, you need to have a way of people knowing how many tokens they have, and how many tokens an item in the shop is. You also need to make sure that whatever system you are using is consistent so it should be clear and easy to use by those giving out the tokens.

Example Systems:

(For these examples the items are all clothes however this can be translated to whatever you want to have in a swap shop).

- 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) This will make calculating the tokens much quicker, however it doesn't account for differences in the quality of clothes.
- A quality based system (for each item of clothing, e.g. trousers or jumpers, you have a different amount of tokens based on whether it is of a higher or lower quality). Normally having around 2/3 categories of quality will keep this system easy to use. Having more categories makes the system more comprehensive however it will take more time to ensure that the tokens are being given out consistently.

It is important to make sure that it is obvious how many tokens an item in the shop is worth.

For a simpler tokens system, e.g. the tiered system, you don't need to label every item individually. You could also use colour coordination, i.e. green = 1 token, orange = 2 tokens and so on, or items could be laid out based on how many tokens they are, i.e. having all 3 token items displayed in the same area.

For more complicated systems, you may need to individually label items which will require more time. If you do decide to do this, small paper tags or stickers can be used and attached with string or safety pins.

Keeping track of tokens

You may choose to have a system where people bring in clothes when they want to swap and take other things away the same day. This would mean that there is no 'roll over' of tokens and therefore you don't need to remember what people have brought in and taken away in the past.

This system is quite restrictive however so, if possible, it is good to have a system where people can keep track of tokens over a longer period of time.

Either you have to keep track of everyone's tokens, (in a book or digitally), which may have data protection implications, or, perhaps a better option is to give the individual responsibility of keeping track of their tokens. This can be done by giving the individual a card which can be updated every time tokens are added or spent. If you are giving individuals the responsibility of keeping track of their tokens, you might want to create a clear policy for what happens if they lose the card that keeps track of them.

DISPLAYING ITEMS



You might need to spend some time thinking about the best way of displaying the items in the shop. For clothes, having rails and hangers is good whereas for other items you may want to display them on tables.

Feel free to be CREATIVE with the displays.
Some ideas for clothes could be:

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

Displaying items creatively and interestingly will make them look more appealing to people coming in.

Some charity shops choose to have a 'rummage' kind of aesthetic where there are lots of things piled into not much space, whereas others choose to limit the number of items on display to keep the space looking tidier. There is a lot of information online about visual merchandising if this is something you want to think about a bit more...

Stock Rotation

Depending on how much is coming in, you might need to have a way of passing on things that have been in the shop for a long time, both to keep the shop looking new and to ensure that you don't have items piling up.

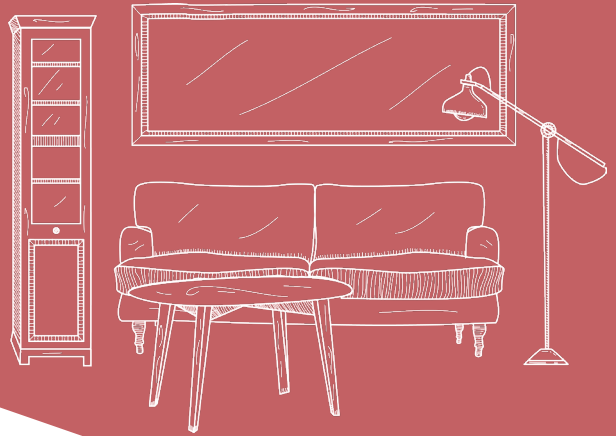
One of the easiest ways of doing stock rotation, other than just doing it by memory, is to put the week number on items as they go out.

You will then be able to keep track of how long things have been in the shop for and can decide on a stock rotation system that suits you and your shop.

If you want any more information about potential systems, feel free to reach out to SHRUB members of staff.



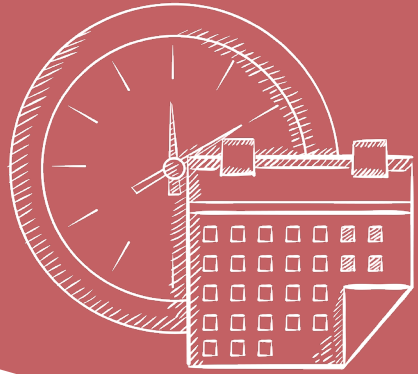
CAPACITY



Depending on the capacity you have and the number of people involved in your project, it may not be possible to have people in the shop all the time. If you have a simple tokens system, you could allow it to run on an honesty system of people taking tokens off themselves. This may also fit with having a box for people to leave donations in.

If you want to have someone there, it will require someone's time to have the shop open, hopefully on a regular basis so that people know when they can come. Having regular hours is important as if people aren't sure when the shop will be open, they may be less likely to come to it, especially if it is not in a place they normally go to.

ACCESSIBILITY



Thinking about accessibility will help you to make sure that your swap shop is as open and welcoming as possible.

This can include thinking about:

- Opening times (are there certain groups of people who won't be able to make it?)
- Location (is it accessible to wheelchair users, people who cannot go up steps etc?)
- Language (is the language you are using inclusive?)
- Signage (Are signs clear and easy to understand? Are signs big enough to be read by people with sight impairments?)

These are just a few things to think about, more comprehensive accessibility lists can be found online.

INCLUDING A SUSTAINABILITY ELEMENT

A swap shop can be a great time to think about environmental and social sustainability as avoiding consumerism will reduce your carbon footprint.

You may want to have some statistics relating to this displayed in the space (there are some really clear and useful infographics about clothes sustainability on the fashion revolution website: www.fashionrevolution.org)

Some examples of facts from fashion revolution include:

It takes 2720 litres of water to make a t-shirt (roughly equivalent to what a human would drink over 3 years)

Around 150 billion garments are produced annually.

One way of doing some fairly easy carbon accounting to work out the savings by buying/ swapping second hand is to weigh everything you are saving from landfill/ weigh everything people are buying second hand instead of new. This can be done with a set of bathroom scales or luggage scales. If you choose to do this, it is up to you to decide whether you want to weigh things as they come in or as they go out, which might depend on what you are doing with anything you pass on.

You can then find information about roughly how much carbon it takes to produce various products, for example, 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 swap shop.