



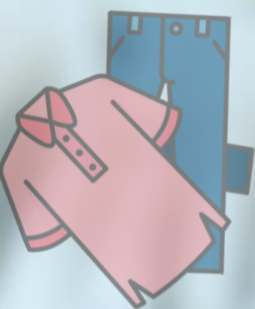
How to Organise a Clothes Swap Without Costing the Earth





How to organise a swap shop

The first question to ask is who is the clothes swap for and why do you want to host one? Is it to raise money for your community group, are you doing it as a positive environmental action, or are you and your friends simply looking for some new clothes? Once you have identified the reason, it will make the planning of the event or party easier.



Things to consider



It's a lot of work to set up a clothes swap on your own. Asking for some help from friends or colleagues will help it to run more smoothly.

Carlow County Council's swap kit includes a basic kit of clothes of all adult sizes, but if you're planning a more specific clothes swap, such as sports kit, Halloween outfits, maternity wear, or Christmas jumpers, you may need to ask people to drop the clothing to you before the event.

Swap shops can be free of charge, where you ask people to bring a number of items, and swap them for the same number. If you're hoping to raise some funds, you might consider charging a small entrance fee to the event. Your venue might also require a fee to host the event.

Unfortunately some of the clothing that arrives may not be fit to wear. Decide what will happen to that and who might drop it at a clothes bank after the event.





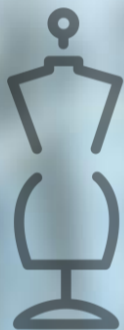
How many items will you swap?

If you don't limit the amount of clothes people might bring to your event, you could end up with bags of items that you'll end up taking to the charity shop on someone else's behalf. Be specific. Anything between 5 to 10 items per swap works well and setting a minimum and maximum ensures fairness.

What to swap

Some groups might prefer to only swap clothes, but others might include shoes, bags, jewellery, belts and scarves. It's really up to you but when sending out the invitation, again, be specific. Carlow County Council have included an example invitation in the 'press pack' for a clothing only event, add to it if you plan to include more.

It might be a good idea to list the things you don't want people to bring for Health and Safety reasons. These might include underwear, swim wear, pyjamas or earrings.



Where is the swap taking place?

If it's in your home, you won't need to worry about too much other than the amount of people you invite. If it's a larger community event, you might like to consider whether the venue has public liability insurance, access to a bathroom, and is accessible to all.





Entertain or educate?



A clothes swap provides an opportunity to learn more about simple climate action. You might consider running a repair cafe alongside it, where people demonstrate how to make alterations, fix zips, add patches or sew on buttons. You might be able to encourage a local alteration service to get on board for a small fee.

Consider whether you would like music, hold a raffle, have a guest talk or provide light refreshments.

What to do with left over clothing?

If you've borrowed the Carlow County Council kit, you will be expected to return the same amount of clothing that was in the initial kit. If there are many more items, consider donating them to a local charity shop, recycling them, or dropping them into the County Carlow Development Partnership Be Kind project in Carlow town centre.

How long will the event last?



The duration is up to you but allowing for a couple of hours at least where people can drop in and out is a good starting point and allows for a decent exchange of clothing during the time period.

The time allocated will also depend upon your volunteers, the availability of the venue, and whether it clashes with other local events.



How does it work?



The County Carlow Swap Kit includes tokens that act as a substitute for money. Set up a table at the entrance and when someone arrives with an item of clothing, they are provided with a token in exchange.

Some clothes swaps use different amounts of tokens for different items of clothing, eg., occasion wear might be worth two or three tokens, whereas tee shirts and jeans might be worth one token. If it's your first swap, you might like to keep it simple and use a one for one system until you become more familiar with clothes swaps.

If you are using the swap shop as a fund raiser, aside from charging an entrance fee, you could allow people to buy additional tokens with the money going to your chosen cause.

What might you need to help the swap run smoothly?

If it's a small party or event you might only need to ensure there's room for people to move around, and possibly try items of clothing on. If it's a larger event, it's a good idea to consider:

- Should you stagger the times or might you need a waiting area if lots of people arrive at the same time?
- Where will you set up the tables, rails, mirror etc., to ensure there's accessible space all around.
- Will you try and display items by size, colour or type or will it be a random swap?
- How many volunteers might you need to help? Consider setting up and taking down, directing people, welcoming people and swapping the clothes & tokens, as well as displaying new items of clothing as they arrive. It can get a bit hectic if lots of people arrive together!





Anything else to consider?

You will be provided with a certain amount of coat hangers with the County Carlow Clothes Swap kit but you might need more, along with empty shopping bags.

How are you going to invite people to your event? Do you need to advertise in the local parish notes or newspaper, set up an event on social media, or simply send invitations out via email, text or private messaging?

Give people notice so they can consider what they might bring along to swap. One or two weeks is usually sufficient.

Only accept items that are fit to wear. Give back anything that is smelly, stained, broken or in poor condition unless you're willing to dispose of it on their behalf.

Have some fun & spread the word!

Clothing swaps are a great opportunity to have a bit of craic and try out new styles and fashions. Remind people to be mindful and only take what they genuinely need or will wear.

If you have an idea who was at the swap and kept a note of the numbers of clothing that arrived when you exchanged the tokens, follow up the fun facts and share with participants or the media at large. You might mention how many textiles were saved from landfill, how many greenhouse gases were reduced (look out for a simple CO2 calculator online), and the impact this climate action has had on our planet.



Why bother?

The production of textiles involves complex, global supply chains. Their increasing rate of production in terms of ultra fast fashion, and consumption has highlighted that the way we utilise textiles in the current linear model is unsustainable. We buy, use and discard. It has been estimated that there is enough clothing currently in circulation to clothe the next six generations, with over 100 billion garments being produced annually.

According to a report published by the EPA in November 2021, the single largest source of post consumer textiles (those that have been discarded once we've bought and used them, including clothing, footwear, towels, bed linen & upholstery products), at 65% ends up in the general waste bin. Following that, 24% is collected in commercial textile banks and collections and sold to textile wholesales for overseas consumption, 10% is collected by charities and just 1% resold in vintage shops and online.

From a circular economy perspective, prevention of textiles being over purchased and consumed is the first step in reducing waste, quickly followed by education and awareness in the care and longevity of clothing.

Reuse is the next step. Selling online is one option, but Clothing Swaps are another. This is where Carlow County Council, and others such as the Rediscovery Centre and Change Clothes in Dublin, are here to help.



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