NEWS LESSON

Where Do Your Donated Clothes Really Go?



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. What makes you stop wearing something that still fits?
2. Would you buy fewer clothes if each one cost more?
3. What do you imagine happens after you donate clothes?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**resale**	☐	A	breaking or ruining something completely
2	**trends**	☐	B	selling something again after someone else owned it
3	**encouraged**	☐	C	things that are not included in a rule
4	**recycling**	☐	D	big cupboards where people keep their clothes
5	**exceptions**	☐	E	new styles that many people like for a short time
6	**budgets**	☐	F	using old things to make new things
7	**wardrobes**	☐	G	the money people have to spend
8	**destroying**	☐	H	made someone want to do something

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

The bag leaves your wardrobe, but some of the clothes inside may never reach another customer.

1 You fill a bag with clothes you no longer wear and leave it at a charity shop. It feels like a good ending: the shop can raise money and someone else can enjoy the clothes. Then the bag is opened. One top is damaged, another is made from poor material and a third is unlikely to sell. Instead of earning money for the charity, some of your donation may cost it money to remove.

2 That is happening more often as charity shops receive more clothes than they can sell. In October 2026, one charity operation in south London said it received as many as 100 bags a day. Only about one quarter of the items were suitable for resale. Staff still had to sort through everything, using time and money that could have supported the charity's main work.

3 This problem is connected to fast fashion, which means producing inexpensive new clothing styles very quickly. Social media helps trends catch on, and shoppers are encouraged to buy things they may not need. Research by Oxfam in 2026 found that 32% of clothes in British wardrobes were never worn. Making all those clothes requires water, energy and materials, even if they are hardly ever used.

4 There are ways to reduce waste. People can buy fewer clothes, choose items that last longer, repair small problems and use second-hand shops. But recycling clothes is often difficult, especially when different materials are mixed together. From July 2026, large companies in the European Union were also banned from destroying most unsold clothing and shoes, with some exceptions.

5 Affordable clothes are important, especially for families on limited budgets. The answer cannot simply be to tell everyone to buy expensive brands. Clothing companies also need to make better products and avoid creating more waste than necessary. Before buying something new, it may help to ask whether you will still want to wear it next year, though that is easier for some households than others.

Sources: The Guardian. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. According to Oxfam, nearly a third of clothes in British wardrobes were never worn. (T) (F) (NG)
2. All donated clothes can be sold in the shop. (T) (F) (NG)
3. Charity shop donations have fallen since 2025. (T) (F) (NG)
4. A charity in London says it can get up to 100 donation bags in one day. (T) (F) (NG)
5. Oxfam found that most clothes in British wardrobes were never worn. (T) (F) (NG)

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

affordable **donation** **fashionable** **material** **recycle** **repair** **suitable**

1. Families with little money need clothes at _____ prices.
2. This jacket is made from a warm _____ called wool.
3. If a button falls off your coat, you can _____ it with a needle and thread.
4. She left a _____ of old coats at the charity shop on Saturday.
5. A torn T-shirt with a big mark is not _____ for the shop to sell.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. Last Saturday, Maria _____ a bag of old clothes to the shop. **(TAKE)**
2. Then the bag _____ . **(OPEN)**
3. In October 2026, one charity said it _____ as many as 100 bags a day. **(RECEIVE)**
4. Research by Oxfam in 2026 _____ that 32% of clothes were never worn. **(FIND)**
5. Large EU companies _____ from destroying most unsold clothing. **(BAN)**

7 Language focus: prepositions

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Some words always go with the same small word, such as good at or rely on. Learn the pair together, not just the word.

at for in of on to with

1. Maria paid ten pounds _____ a second-hand coat.
2. Some people are addicted _____ buying new clothes every week.
3. Few teenagers are interested _____ repairing old clothes.
4. Many shoppers are afraid _____ missing a new trend.
5. Many families rely _____ cheap clothes because money is tight.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. What should someone check before putting clothes in a donation bag?
2. Would you rather own ten reliable outfits or lots of cheap choices?
3. Who could make the biggest difference to clothing waste?

9 Role-play: what to do with the old clothes

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the housemate who wants to donate

You and your housemate have six bags of old clothes. You want to give everything to a charity shop this weekend. Explain why, and listen to your housemate's idea.

Student B · the housemate who wants to sell

You want to sell the best clothes online and give the rest to charity. Explain why, and ask what the charity shop will do with damaged items. Try to agree on a plan.

Useful phrases

I'd like to give everything to the charity shop.
That's a fair point, but it'll take a lot of time.
What if we sell the best pieces online?
I'm not keen on that, because it's a lot of work.
How about we split the bags in two?
Let's check every item before we decide.

Afterwards, tell the class: what did you decide to do with the clothes, and why?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 B · 2 E · 3 H · 4 F · 5 C · 6 G · 7 D · 8 A

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 affordable · 2 material · 3 repair · 4 donation · 5 suitable

6 Verb forms

1 took · 2 is opened · 3 received or receives or had received · 4 found · 5 were banned or have been banned

7 Language focus

1 for · 2 to · 3 in · 4 of · 5 on

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