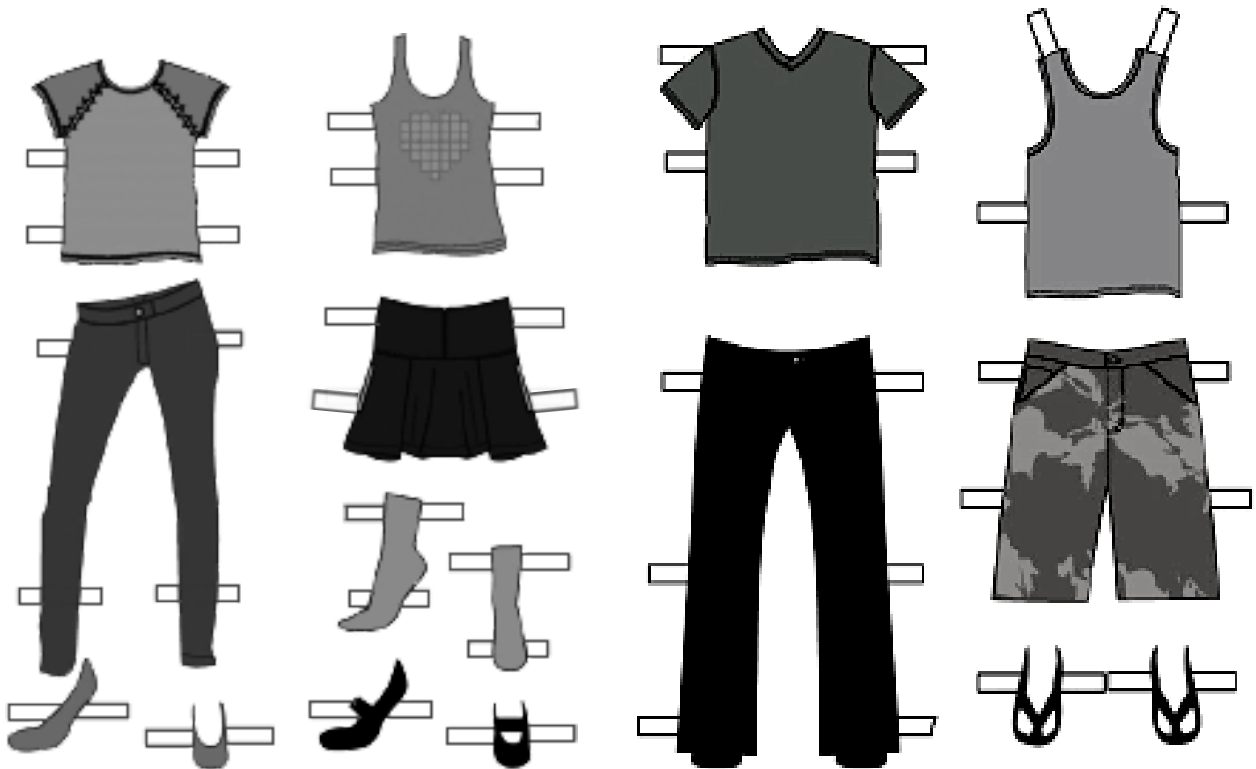


# A MADE SAFE® Guide for Safer Options



an approachable guide to

# Sustainable Fashion



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## Getting started:

Creating a more sustainable wardrobe can feel intimidating. Just a toe-dip into the realm of clean and ethical fashion can make you start asking questions like: How was this item of clothing made? Who made it? What's it made of? How do I spot safer and more ethical items online or on the rack? There's a lot to consider, we know.

To help get you started, we created an approachable guide to sustainable fashion – a how-to with no pretense of perfection and no philosophical wardrobe dogma to subscribe to. That's because we know that this is a journey and everyone has to find the approach that feels right for them. Instead, what you'll find here are some detailed, yet flexible steps to get you started.

### 1. Swap your mindset

The most sustainable wardrobe is the one you already have. That's why, instead of advocating for totally overhauling your closet, we believe one of the first steps towards a more sustainable closet is overhauling your *mindset*.

We are bombarded daily by advertisements with messages that what we have and who we are aren't enough and that we *need* more: We need more clothing in order to stay on top of the newest trends and to feel like we fit in. No wonder so many of us end up one-click shopping, choosing trendy fast fashion pieces and making impulse buys.

Instead, we invite you to consider your assumptions about fashion. Does more clothing equate to being more fashionable? What if a highly-curated closet that screamed completely of *you* was actually what having style was about? What would it feel like to have created a sense of personal style, instead of just chasing trends? Will buying more truly make you feel good?

Understanding our own personal motivations and blind spots can help us avoid the pitfalls of advertising and **fast fashion**. By investigating some of our underlying assumptions about fashion and style, we are taking a huge step towards a more sustainable closet. Because really, awareness is always the first step.



## 2. Clean out your closet and pay attention to your keep + donate piles.

We've all got 'em. Those items relegated to the back of our closet that we'll wear when we have the right matching piece, when they fit again, when the right event comes along. And on the opposite side of the spectrum, we all have the pieces we practically live in. The denim jacket that's worn so often, it's softened to perfection. The go-to top that always looks good on you. The LBD that works for every occasion.

For so many of us, when we take a closer look at our closets, we find that the items we truly wear represent a much smaller percentage of a closet than we think. Here at MADE SAFE, we believe in a curated closet made up of clothing that you love, that makes you feel good, and that you actually wear.

That's why the benefits of Step 1 - cleaning out your closet - are two-fold. First, you make space for new items you love, and second, by paying close attention to what you're getting rid of and what you're keeping, you'll get a better sense of your own personal style.

You can approach cleaning out your closet however works best for you, whether that's [Marie Kondo-ing](#) by asking yourself which items spark joy, having a trusted friend or partner weigh in with honest but kind opinions, or taking on the challenge solo. No matter your approach, we recommend creating three piles: keep, donate, and recycle.

You might consider asking yourself the following questions as you try on each item: Do I actually, truly wear this? How often? (If it hasn't been worn in more than a year, it's probably not a keeper.) Do I feel good in this? Does it serve a necessary function in my closet?

After you've sorted each item, take a look at the *keep* pile. What do the items have in common? Are you noticing a certain color palette? Do you gravitate towards certain fabrics? Do you feel best in particular cuts and fits?

Next, take a look at the *donate* and *recycle* piles. Again, what do they have in common? Are there certain pieces that you just don't feel confident in? Are you noticing a pattern in colors or prints? What hemlines and fits didn't make the cut?

Maybe you've learned that yellow just isn't your color, wide-leg pants will never be your jam, or no matter how much you want to like flowy pieces, clean-lined construction is more your style. Taking note of where the similarities lie will help you shop smarter and avoid those pieces that end up forever banished to the back of the closet.

### 3. Identify the gaps.

Before you tuck the *keep* pile back into your drawers or take the *donate* pile to your favorite charity, take a few moments to spot the gaps in your wardrobe. Are you keeping a black cami that you really don't like because it's your only one? Have you suddenly realized that you actually only wear a few work shirts? Do you have a top that you're obsessed with, but you never wear it because the only pants that match no longer fit?

Take inventory of the holes and make a list. Congrats, you've just made your shopping list!

### 4. Don't forget the basics.

Remember your humble undergarments and socks. Get rid of holey or worn out pairs. Replace them with sustainable options made from the natural fibers listed below. Because basics like undergarments and socks are typically worn closest to the skin, they're a great place to start your sustainable wardrobe journey.

### 5. Choose natural fibers and safe materials.

When you're ready to tackle an item (or multiple items!) on your shopping list, look for natural fibers and safe materials. Here are our top tips:

✓ **Select natural materials like organic cotton, wool, linen, silk, and hemp.**

These materials are biodegradable, so when they *do* end up in the trash someday – when they can no longer be worn, upcycled, or recycled – they'll break down.

✓ **Avoid synthetic materials like polyester, rayon, nylon, and acrylic.**

Synthetic fibers are derived from fossil fuels. This means that when they end up in a landfill – and **they inevitably will** – they **won't break down**. Many synthetic fibers also shed microfibers – microscopic plastic fibers that contribute to **harmful plastic pollution** in our oceans, freshwater, and even our **drinking water** and **food**.

Use a microfiber-catching **laundry bag** to wash synthetic clothing you already have in your closet or that you've purchased from thrift stores to reduce your contribution to ocean microplastic!

✓ **Look for clothing without treatments.**

Some clothing is treated with toxic chemicals like **PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances)** in order to make it “stain resistant,” “easy care,” “no wrinkle” or other similar treatments. Let these labels tip you off to the potential of a chemical treatment, as they won't be listed on clothing labels.

✓ **Skip clothing labeled “antimicrobial” or “antibacterial.”**

These terms are most commonly found on workout clothing labels (and [period panties!](#)). These items can be treated with [nanomaterial silver](#) or other harmful antibacterial chemicals.

✓ **Don't be fooled by bamboo.**

In order to make it into a textile, some manufacturers use toxic substances to turn bamboo into fiber. Although bamboo is a renewable resource, the process can be chemically intensive. Always get the details or rely on certifications to make sure it's a safer process.

✓ **Consider Tencel.**

Tencel is a more eco-friendly option, and though it's not perfect, it's a better alternative to synthetic fibers. Tencel uses a closed-loop system where tree cellulose is transformed into textiles using a solvent spinning process. The process does still use some chemicals that are less-than-ideal, but because it's a closed-loop system, those solvents are captured and re-used instead of discharged.

✓ **Choose ethical animal fibers.**

Out of respect for the creatures with whom we share this planet, look for animal fibers (wool, silk, alpaca, etc.) that are sourced ethically. Companies that treat animals with care are typically proud of their practices and therefore are transparent about them, disclosing this information on their website. If you can't find any of this information on a company's site, make sure to ask before purchasing!

## Look for independent, third-party textile certifications:

### MADE SAFE®

MADE SAFE® certified apparel is made without known or suspected toxic ingredients. As part of the certification process, MADE SAFE analyzes the entire production process - including chemical inputs. [Shop MADE SAFE® Certified Apparel.](#)



### GOTS Certified

This certification has stringent requirements for chemical inputs used in the growing and production process. Items can either be certified “organic” (made with 95 percent organic material with a five percent allowance for necessary materials like elastic or zippers) or “made with X% organic” (made with a minimum of 70 percent organic material).



### OEKO-TEX

OEKO-TEX lab tests finished garments for substances the organization has catalogued as harmful. OEKO-TEX has multiple standards, so make sure to look for “OEKO-TEX 100” on labels, meaning the garment does not contain any of the substances they deem as harmful.



## 6. Look for ethical brands.

We love companies that are transparent about their efforts to make clothing that is not only sustainable but is made ethically with respect for workers throughout the supply chain.

We recommend looking for companies that publicly declare their ethics and are proud of how they operate. Generally speaking, the more transparent a brand is about their ethics, the greater the odds that they are truly acting with integrity. But when in doubt, ask the company!

What to look for or ask about? Companies that do not use child labor, pay fair wages to employees, have appropriate working conditions, and have complete understanding of and transparency surrounding their own supply chain so they can truly vouch for each step of the process.

### Company ethics certifications to consider:

#### B Corporation Certified:

B Corp measures not just a company's environmental integrity, but also their social integrity by assessing a company's impact on workers, customers, community, and environment.



#### Fairtrade International

This standard establishes criteria for sustainable development of producers and workers in developing countries by evaluating social, economic and environmental factors.



#### bluesign

This certification verifies that companies are acting responsibly and sustainably, both in terms of people and the environment, in accordance with the bluesign criteria.



## 7. Choose high-quality.

Where possible, shop for high-quality pieces that are intended to last instead of throwaway fast fashion. This is where the shopping list of gaps in your closet comes in.

By shopping to fill in the gaps, you'll know where to focus your efforts so that you don't buy extraneous items. And you'll be able to focus your funds on high-quality piece(s) instead of purchasing numerous low-quality items that won't last. We recommend focusing on one essential piece at a time.

This might take a little more financial planning than you're used to when it comes to shopping for clothing. But you might find that by cutting back on buying unnecessary fast fashion items, you'll be freeing up a chunk of your budget.

When considering the purchase of a high-quality item, try it on numerous times and be honest with yourself. Order online or purchase in-store with a good return policy and take it home so that you can try it on with other items in your closet. Does it fit properly (or will it with a bit of tailoring)? Do you love it? Does it match your vibe? Do you already own pieces that go with it? Be ruthless. If you're not sure about it, don't buy it! If you buy something you don't love, it will end up in the donate pile someday.



## 8. Thrift it.

We love thrifting for so many reasons.

First, if investment pieces are out of reach or just not your thing, thrifting offers a great, budget-friendly alternative.



It's also the perfect way to shop for trendy pieces. You know you want to get in on that '90s revival, but don't want to invest in a high-quality crop top? Thrift it.

Used clothing, obviously, has already been made - so you're not contributing to the energy it takes to grow, produce, or ship new clothing. Plus, most thrift stores are either charities or local, small businesses, which means your dollars are contributing to good beyond your sustainable wardrobe.

Thrift shopping can be a little overwhelming if you're new to it, so we recommend shopping with a mission (know what you want in advance!). When browsing, keep in mind the similarities in both your keep and pitch piles. Yes, it's tempting to reach for those wide-leg jeans, but remember the three pairs you just donated? Be real with yourself to avoid the thrift shop overwhelm.

If you're thrift shopping online, know your measurements so that you know the item is more likely to fit. And make sure they have a good return policy, just in case!

## 9. Borrow or rent.

We're talking special occasions, costumes, or any situation where you find yourself in need of an item you'll wear only once. Reach out to your community - maybe they have the perfect piece to finish off your Halloween costume or to wear to that wedding. Or consider renting. Rental services are a great option for special occasion wear because let's be real, you probably don't have a floor-length gown for that gala - nor do you need to own one.

## 10. Take good care of the items you already own.

Yes, that means actually following care instructions (but make sure to avoid [dry cleaning](#) when possible!). Store clothing and shoes properly in off-seasons, repair small issues before they turn into big ones, and treat your items with care.

If you can't sew, we suggest you make friends with someone who can (or who will teach you) or find an affordable seamstress. They'll be an invaluable resource for small repairs that will extend the life of your clothing. Small repairs are typically a small investment that yields big rewards.

The same goes for tailoring items to fit you perfectly - hem something you love that is too long or take in the waist on the pants that fit everywhere else just the way you like. A good seamstress can be as good an investment as some of those investment pieces in your new, sustainable wardrobe.

## Remember, it's a process.

Searching thrift stores for gems, budgeting for investment pieces, finding companies you love and that offer safe and sustainable options - it's a process, and it takes time. Plus, totally changing your approach to fashion requires an adjustment.

Shifting from thinking about expanding your closet to curating your closet might be challenging. But we think that the reward is worth it - a closet full of pieces that are true to your personal style and are friendly to your health and the health of the environment.

