

Clothing: Dressing for the Climate



Four ways to keep down clothing costs, heating/cooling bills and greenhouse gases



- Use your clothing, not your thermostat, to reach a comfortable temperature
- Learn to mend your clothes rather than buying new ones
- Organize a clothing swap and donate what's left over
- Offer hand-me-downs to other families—or ask for them

Clothing can be a source of power and pleasure: a way to decide how we present ourselves to the world, a way to control how people see us and treat us. Because we can buy inexpensive clothing in Rhode Island's consumer economy, and because our indoor environments are often heated or cooled, how we want or need to look is often our main concern about the clothing we buy. But dressing for the weather reduces the amount of energy needed to heat or cool the buildings where we live, learn and work.

Household action: Use your clothes rather than your heating/cooling system to

regulate your temperature and comfort—turn to your dresser or closet before you turn to your thermostat. We heat and cool large spaces to keep ourselves comfortable when we could be saving energy and money by insulating or aerating just our bodies. (For more about ways to keep a comfortable temperature with fewer fossil fuels, see “Heating and Cooling Systems.”)

The costs of inexpensive clothing are passed on to the environment and to the people who make and sell it. Buying new clothes less often reduces the fossil fuels used to make and transport them.

Community action: Organize a clothing swap with your similarly-sized friends. The clothes you're bored with may look great on them; the pants that don't quite button may fit you. Everyone gets the pleasure of clothes that are new to them without any fossil fuel burden at all! If they're in good condition, donate any leftover clothes to an organization like the Dorcas Place Clothing Collaborative or the Career Closet, which supply professional and family clothing to people in need.