

Upcycling

Creative gift ideas
that spare the
student's pocket AND
the environment.

Who are we?

We are Fenix, the student association for environmental protection at Malmö University.

It is our aim to enhance consciousness for environmental issues around uni and the world, to make our university more environmentally friendly and promote alternative ways of thinking, consuming, and living.

We know that environmental issues are closely connected to society, that it is on us, the people, to get active and creative for a change! Therefore, we want to invite all students (and staff members) at Malmö University to get engaged and join our quest for a better tomorrow.

Cool! But what can we really do?

It's not Fenix' aim to change the whole world or turn all students into militant climate warriors who run around barefooted, harass others to stop using paper cups and dumpster dive vegan-only food (although you are welcome to do so – we've tried it and it's great!). But we are convinced that small steps are just as important as big changes and that we can all make these small steps, barefoot or not.

This booklet is full of some of our ideas for little improvements which are not only environmentally friendly but also creative, useful, and cheap. AMAZING.

So what you really can do is to read the incredible facts about waste on the following pages and then get started with your crafting.

**"alternative
ways
of thinking,
consuming,
and living"**

Of course, you are also more than welcome to share this message, join our Fenix team or come to our events, all to be found on Facebook: [@ Fenix Miljöförening](#)

Thanks a lot for reading so far and please feel free to go on!

.....



What is up-cycling? Can I join the cult?

Upcycling refers to the simple practice of creating something new out of something old. Stuff that you don't need or want anymore can be transformed into useful or decorative new items –unique, creative, and cheap.

Usually, you don't buy a bunch of material for your project, as e.g. for "normal" handicrafts. The whole point of upcycling is to use materials you already have and don't use anymore but don't want to throw away – so all you need is a pair of scissors, glue, some rubbish, and you can get started!

Isn't that recycling? Why use such a hipster name?

Obviously, you are free to define your creative energy outlet and all resulting pieces of art the way you want to define them. Call it "recycling", "upcycling", "rebirth of the discarded inanimate souls of a consumerist society" or just "stuff I made yesterday".

There is an explanation though why there is a fancy new name for what we are doing: Recycling mainly refers to the chemical process of transforming used material into re-useable material, such as the melting of old plastic packaging into recycled raw plastic. Upcycling, on the other hand, crafts something entirely NEW and SHINY and UNIQUE through CREATIVITY for immediate use, as for example an incredibly handy cotton bag made of an old t-shirt.

So where is the point?

We know that environmental issues are closely connected to society, that it is on us, the people, to get active and creative for a change! Therefore, we want to invite all students (and staff members) at Malmö University to get engaged and join our quest for a better tomorrow. Upcycling is a useful way for giving stuff a second life. Solid waste is an increasing problem worldwide but especially in urban areas in the Global North – that's us in Malmö, guys!

Urban populations generate more waste than rural people and urbanisation is an ever-growing phenomenon around the globe. Just to give you an idea of the problem we are facing:

In 1900, 13% of the world population lived in urban areas, producing **300,000 tonnes** of waste per day.

In 2000, an astonishing 49% of all the people in the world had moved to cities and threw about **3 million tonnes** of rubbish away every day.

By 2025, this amount of waste is expected to double to **6 million tonnes**; just to put this into perspective, the Great Pyramid of Giza is estimated to weigh a bit more than 6 million tonnes, and the urban population alone is expected to produce this amount of waste EVERY DAY.

Where does all this waste end up? Much trash is burned, sometimes in incineration sites that produce energy. So the trash just disappears in a puff of smoke and energy?!

Well, burning waste, especially materials made of fossil fuels, emits more CO₂ than even a coal power plant – which most people consider to be the most air-polluting way of gaining energy. Åh fan.

An alternative are landfill sites, but we guess we don't need to explain why mountains of trash should be kept as small as possible – especially since even they emit nasty stuff such as CO2 and methane gas. Hang on, a pile of rubbish emits Greenhouse Gases??

Unfortunately, yes: there is a lot of decomposing and rotting going on in the depths of landfill sites, and in fact they produce about 6% of the world's methane gas emissions, according to the NASA.



That sounds pretty depressing. So how can my little upcycling project help?

Of course, you are not going to save the earth. But anything is better than giving up and just going on with our consumerist lifestyles. Try to reconsider before you throw stuff away: Maybe next week you are going to find the upcycling idea for your broken chair, granny's old jumper or the piles of scrap paper that constantly litter your desk.

Another aspect to keep in mind: The only way to really do something against our increasing waste output is, obviously, to consume less.

Our landfill sites are not filled with items that we don't need any more, but often with stuff that we never needed in the first place or only replace because we found the same item in glitter-design. If we try to upcycle things instead of buying new ones, we don't only reuse material but also create something instead of buying it – that's a double advantage for the environment.

Also, for those of you who celebrate it: Christmas is coming up! But we are poor students and can't afford buying expensive gifts! Why not make some? Considering that Christmas is, at least in the western world, an annual peak time of increased consumption and waste, take a stand against this extra pressure on our environment – why not try to consume less during Christmas time instead of more?

This booklet is full of ideas and links to instructions for easy and useful upcycling projects, many of which make great gifts under the Christmas tree – which might actually be made out of old plastic bottles: green, flashy, doesn't lose its pines everywhere and you can reuse it next year.

We hope that you enjoy a creative afternoon with your friends busy crafting new little treasures more than spending a day in a stuffy, crowded shopping mall trying to find non-standard Christmas gifts among 500 other people doing the exact same thing. It's cheaper, more relaxed, more inventive and you do your share to protect the environment – yay!

Enjoy
and create!
/Your
Fenix-team.

(I'm not as big a smartass as I pretended – here are the links to all my trash-wisdom:

[Upcycle.](#)

[Environment waste.](#)

[Energy justice.](#)

[Landfills.](#)

Inspire me!

We were a bit too lazy (er, I meant to say busy) to write detailed instructions. Apart from that, we found most ideas in this booklet in the wonderful width of the world wide web, and that's where we redirect you to. On the following pages, we give you some ideas, including shiny pictures, a list of materials you will need and a link to the instructions. Some of them might not be easy to follow immediately because most people making these blogs, videos, and webpages are not professionals,

Hanging flower pots made of old tights, leggings or t-shirts

You need:

- Two pairs of leggings or tights or one t-shirt
- A big flower pot (and a happy little plant)
 - Scissors

Time: ca. 20 min

Instructions: [Knotted hanging planter](#). (you have to scroll down the page a bit)



Secret book safe

You need:

- A hardcover book
- Carpet cutter

Time: ca. 30 min, depending on the size of the book.

Instructions:

Fairly easy: Open the book and draw a rectangle on the first page. It should be the size of the secret compartment you want to create (it's easiest to just cut out all the text body). Cut this rectangle out of all pages but make sure you don't cut outside the rectangle. In the end, all pages should form a frame for an empty space in the middle (like a very thick empty picture frame). So from outside, it still looks like a book... but who knows what you hide in your bookshelf? You can also cut out multiple smaller compartments and make it a jewelry box. Let the google picture search "secret book box up-cycling" inspire you!



Fenix

Miljöförening
Studentkåren Malmö

T-shirt carrier bag

You need:

- T-shirts
- Scissors
- (Sewing equipment, if you don't go for the no-sew-version)

Time: ca. 30 min

Instructions:

[Fancy granny's produce bag revival version.](#)

[No-sew-version.](#)



[10 minute T-shirt bag](#)

T-shirt headband

You need:

- T-shirt
- Scissors
- Sewing equipment, but that's not vitally important.

Time: ca. 20 min

Instructions:

[Upcycled T-shirt headband.](#)



Woven baskets made of catalogue/magazine leaves

You need:

- A bunch of catalogues or magazines (thin pages work best, you can also use news papers but they are not as colourful!)
- Glue

Time: ca. 2-3 hours, depending on the size of your project it might take FOREVER

Instructions:



[Basket from recycled newspaper](#)

[For a simple version with a cardboard bottom](#)



[For more advanced stuff with a woven bottom](#) (even though the background music is a bit distracting, this woman is amazing!):

Or: [This one](#).

Baskets/coasters/anything made of catalogue leaves

You need:

- Newspaper or magazines
 - Glue
 - Toothpick
- Some kind of pot/bowl/balloon in case you make a container

Time: ca. 20 min

Instructions:

[For a coiled paper bowl](#)

(This lady uses a hot glue gun, but you can also use normal liquid glue. This will take more patience though and you might want to start with a smaller project!)

[For coasters](#)

(and lots of other fun stuff!)



[Upcycling old magazines.](#)

Notebooks made of scrap paper, cardboard, ANYTHING

You can basically use any pile of old paper (printed out scientific articles you never read anyways, skatteverket letter envelopes, even pages of old notebooks you only used half-ways etc.) as pages. That's much more upcycling than using new paper, as some of the following instructions suggest. There are so many different ways to make a notebook on different levels of difficulty that we chose to give you a couple of them, some easier, some quite tricky.

Easy version with sewing

You need:

- A bunch of paper
 - Scissors
- Some cardboard, e.g. from your last bokus parcel
 - Postcards or scrap paper for the cover
 - Ruler and pencil
- Sewing machine or thread and a thick, strong needle
 - Possibly tape/glue for the scrap paper cover

Time: ca. 1-2 hours

Instructions:

[Upcycled notebooks.](#)



Really easy no-sew version

You need:

- 2 floppy discs or cardboard, which you are most likely more likely to have
 - Pile of paper
- 1 meter cotton string
 - Scissors
- Hole puncher
 - Scissors
- Thick needle

Time: ca. 30 min

Instructions:

[Notebook from old Floppy Disks](#)

More advanced no-sew version

You need:

- Paper (again, surprise!)
 - Binder clips
- Cardboard and scrap paper for the cover
 - Scissors
 - Liquid glue

Time: ca. 2 hours

|

Instructions:

[Recycled scrap-papernotebooks.](#)



Fenix

Miljöförening
Studentkåren Malmö

Ideas to recycle your potential garbage



Wrap your new
hand-made gifts in
the most environme-
ntally friendly way!

If you want more ideas on what
to do with plastic bottles, [one of
these 38 tricks](#)
might inspire you.

Or, as promised, [the upcycled
plastic Christmas tree plus some
more decorative ideas.](#)

We hope you have enjoyed some
of these brilliant ideas!

/
Your Fenix-team.