



# Customer Care & Repair

CUSTOMER CARE & REPAIR

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# Overview

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During the use phase of a product's life, customer care can have significant environmental impact. In fact, some studies have found that the greatest environmental impact of a garment over its life is during customer use.

Many of these impacts can be significantly reduced through better consumer care. For example, 80-90 percent of the total energy used by a typical washing machine is to heat the water, so energy consumption can be dramatically reduced if consumers wash in **cold water and forego the dryer for a clothesline**. Not only does air drying use less energy, it's also better for your clothes and increases their longevity. (Paul Dillinger, VP of Global Product Innovation at Levi Strauss and Company, once called the dryer "a cruel torture chamber for your clothes.")

Washing clothes also contributes significantly to water contamination through the use of toxic detergents and softeners, as well as the release of microplastics from synthetic fibers. Some detergents and softeners are better than others, one great resource to share with your customers is the [Environmental Working Group's Guide to Better Cleaning](#).

In terms of microplastics, studies are still in early phases of understanding the problem and developing solutions. Possible solutions are currently in development, including filters for washing machines and coatings or processes that prevent synthetic fibers from shedding. The [Guppy Friend Washing Bag](#) is the only solution currently on the market. Still, these don't solve the initial problem, so it is important to take this very seriously when choosing to use synthetic fibers. When you do decide to use a synthetic fiber, we'd like to emphasize washing these products less!

PULSE OF THE FASHION INDUSTRY REPORT 2018 —

“Educating consumers on how to improve the usage of a garment increases its durability and *prolongs its lifetime*, lowering its overall footprint. A study by WRAP found that extending a garment’s life by just three months would lower the water, carbon, and waste footprint by 5–10%.”

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## WORKSHEET

# Design for & educate your customers about sustainable use

## 1. Design for durability and longevity

- Create high quality products that last for years and can be repaired.
- Adopt a Quality Assurance Program to enhance durability and longevity.

## 2. Design for low-impact care & educate your customers about it

### Design for low-impact care, which includes:

- Wash less, wash in cold water, wash only when loads are full, wash on shorter cycles, use front-loading, energy efficient machines, air dry, use non-chlorine bleach and safe laundry detergents, don't dry clean

### Educate your customers about it

- Care labels are a great place to communicate instructions on how to wash, dry, mend, and further care for your product (in addition to information about materials, recyclability, and instructions for disassembly, if applicable).
- In addition to providing information with a product itself, provide resources on your website. This is a great opportunity to make creative content!

## 3. Educate your customers about repair

- Most people don't know how to repair damaged clothing, so you have a great opportunity to help them. This can

include written or visual guides. For specialized products or materials you might even want to provide physical repair kits.

## 4. Create an in-house care & repair program

- Provide services to repair and refurbish products for your customers.
- Track and measure repairs to improve product quality and longevity.

EILEEN FISHER

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“We’d like our clothes back now. Renew is more than a take-back program. It’s part of *our vision for a future without waste.*”

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## TOOLS &amp; RESOURCES

# Examples

Examples of customer care  
& repair initiatives:

## [Eileen Fisher](#)

Eileen Fisher established a take-back program called EILEEN FISHER Renew. Customers are encouraged to bring back old EILEEN FISHER clothes and receive a \$5 Rewards Card for each item. The old items are then re-sold online and in stores as the Renew Collection, turned into one-of-a-kind pieces as the Resewn Collection, or saved for recycling.

## [Patagonia](#)

Patagonia's Repair & Care Guides walk customers through everything from simple fixes like how to fix an unthreaded drawstring, patch a small hole, or remove all sorts of specific types of stains, to more complicated things like how to install a completely new zipper. As they put it, "Learn to repair tears, remove stains, figure out what those hieroglyphics on the care tags mean, and more."

## [Stella McCartney](#)

Stella McCartney's #Clevercare video series offers fun videos that demonstrate how to care for different items, from the iconic Fallabella bag to tailored pieces.

## [Levi's](#)

Levi's advises its customers to stop washing their jeans after every wear and provides washing tips to minimize damage and keep denim looking better, fitting better, and lasting longer. Levi's has gone to great lengths to encourage customers to [air-dry](#) their jeans, including hosting a design competition for air-drying racks called the [Care to Air](#) Design Challenge.

## [Reformation](#)

Reformation encourages their customers to "wash smart" and provides them with easy ways to lower a garment's environmental impact. As they put it, "Good news: up to two-thirds of clothes' carbon footprint occurs after you take it home. That's incredible because a lot of all the nasty stuff in the fashion industry is in your hands to fix."

## [Nudie Jeans](#)

Nudie Jeans offers free repairs on their products for life in Nudie Repair Shops and a Mobile Repair Station. If a customer doesn't live near a Nudie Repair Shop, they can order a free-of-charge [Repair Kit](#).

NUDIE JEANS

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“Every pair of Nudie jeans, no matter where you buy them, comes with a promise of free repairs. In 2017 we repaired 49,235 pairs of jeans, collected 7,463 pairs for reuse for new products and as patching material, which means *we saved 40,000 kg of clothes from being thrown away and saved 345,000,000 liters of water.*”

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## TOOLS & RESOURCES

# Organizations & people

### Craft of Use

What if we pay attention to tending and wearing garments? What if we favor their use as much as their creation? The Craft of Use – the satisfying and resourceful ideas and practices associated with using clothes – changes the way we think about care for the future in unprecedented, profound ways. For what the craft of use represents is compelling possibilities and practicalities for fashion mainly within the clothes we already have. Use is not dependent on producing and consuming more. It takes its bearings from the skills, practices and ideas of tending and wearing, in the context of real lives. The craft of use is a glimpse of fashion not dependent on a growth economy or rising consumption alone. Despite evidence that highlights the major limitations of dealing with sustainability issues primarily in a business context, this context continues to dominate the environmental response of the fashion sector. The craft of use offers a different point of departure for fostering change, by favoring sensitivity to people's lived experience rather than industrial or commercial ideas about what sustainability actions are or should be. It sees sustainability in fashion as a political challenge more than a technical one, exploring its relationship with consumerism alongside alternative ways and infrastructures of consumption. It builds ideas of a new responsibility in fashion tied to new knowledge, skills, satisfaction and connectivity in the life world of users of clothes: the craft of use.

### Local Wisdom

A sister project of Craft of Use, Local Wisdom was originated by Dr Kate Fletcher in 2009 and is now funded by The Leverhulme Trust. The project, which links together a network of partners and design activity in seven centers of high fashion consumption spread across three continents, explores satisfying and resourceful practices associated with using clothes. This 'craft of use' aims to challenge the dependency of the fashion industry on increasing material throughput and propose solutions through sustained attention to tending and using garments and not just creating them. Local Wisdom combines

ethnographic research methods with design process. It gathers stories and images from the public of how people use their clothes at community photo shoots. These use practices are then the basis and inspiration for design projects in the UK, USA, Canada, Denmark, Australia and New Zealand which aim to amplify these practices and explore their integration into larger programs or original business models.

### Tom of Holland & The Visible Mending Programme: making and re-making

The Visible Mending Program seeks to highlight that the art and craftsmanship of clothes repair is particularly relevant in a world where more and more people voice their dissatisfaction with fashion's throwaway culture. By exploring the story behind garment and repair, the Program reinforces the relationship between the wearer and garment, leading to people wearing their existing clothes for longer, with the beautiful darn worn as a badge of honor. By writing this blog, running darning workshops and taking repair work commissions Tom provides mending inspiration, skills and services to people and hopefully persuade them that shop-bought clothes deserve care and attention too, just like a precious hand-knit.

### Denim Therapy

A denim repair shop based in NYC with over four decades of experience restoring and reconstructing jeans, jackets, and more. No matter the adjustments needed on your blues, they offer a wide range of denim repair services, including hemming, tailoring, stitching, and many other restoration techniques. They also offer customization services, including inserts, distressing, chainstitch embroidery, patches, and many more.

TOOLS & RESOURCES

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# Organizations & people, cont'd

## [Celia Pym](#)

Celia Pym is a London-based artist, knitter and darning who specializes in visible repairs. From a recent [article](#) in the Financial Times: "Pym describes her style of mending as 'unapologetic'. Her work uses a mix of threads, colors and texture so that something as simple as a pair of socks or a scarf becomes a strange visual kaleidoscope under her attention. 'I'm interested in what's wrong and off,' she says of her mending skills, which invariably make old moth-eaten cashmeres and long-loved heirlooms far more beautiful in the remaking. 'I like it when things are lumpy and bumpy. It's nice when you can see the landscape of damage, which although I am mending, I am also distorting.'"

## [Reknit](#)

A small operation based out of Boston, MA. People can send them a knit sweater or clothing and they will unravel and restore the yarn and knit a new scarf and send it back within a few weeks.



## TOOLS & RESOURCES

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# Suggested reading

### Books:

[\*Craft of Use: Post-Growth Fashion\*](#)

Kate Fletcher

[\*Fix Your Clothes: The Sustainable Magic of Mending, Patching, and Darning\*](#)

Raleigh Briggs

[\*Mend & Make Fabulous\*](#)

Denise Wild

[\*Mending Matters: Stitch, Patch, and Repair Your Favorite Denim & More\*](#)

Katrina Rodabaugh