# Fashion's water footprint

"Fast fashion" refers to the business model of mass-producing trendy clothing at a low cost and selling items rapidly while demand is highest. Fast fashion comes at a great environmental price. It consumes vast amounts of water while generating high levels of water pollution, contamination, and waste.

## Consumption

- The fashion industry is the second-largest consumer of water.
- Material growing, textile processing, and garment manufacturing all require water.
- The fashion industry is said to use around 93 billion cubic meters of water per year—enough to meet the needs of 5 million people.
- In order to produce a single cotton shirt, about 700 gallons of water are needed. This is enough water for one person to drink for 2 ½ years!

## Contamination

- Fabric dying and treatment practices generate about 20% of the world's wastewater.
- Textile manufacturing introduces chemicals into the water, including oil, phenol, dyes, pesticides, and heavy metals.
- An estimated 35% of all microplastics in the ocean come from the laundering of synthetic textiles.
- Microfibers are released during clothing production, wear, and washing. Traces of microfibers from synthetic sources, like polyester and nylon, have been found in fish and other seafood.

## What can you do?

### Care for your clothing

You can prolong the life of your clothing by washing it less or washing by hand, air drying, removing stains immediately, and mending your clothing.

### Don't dump; donate!

The United States only recycles 15.8% of its total textile waste. Instead of throwing away clothes you no longer need, donate them to a local charity or sell them to a consignment store.

### Buy secondhand

Reduce fashion's environmental impact while saving money! Check out local thrift, consignment, and resale stores.

### Buy quality clothing

People with higher incomes generate 76% more clothing waste than those with lower incomes. If you can afford to, don't support fast fashion brands. Buy good-quality clothes, and buy from brands that use sustainably produced materials such as linen or organic cotton.

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