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CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

How to ditch your prepackaged Halloween costume

Single-use costumes are designed to move from the warehouse to the landfill.



Using crafts or items you already have on hand to put together your costume can make your spooky season less wasteful. (iStock)

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If you're feeling excited about spooky season, you're not alone. Halloween spending is expected to reach \$12 billion this year.

But costumes that are worn for one night and then discarded are the epitome of fast fashion, experts say, contributing to the 92 million tons of textile waste each year.

"The costumes bought and sold within these few weeks are targeted for something that's relevant right now and it's not going to be funny next year," said Kirstie Pecci, the executive director of Just Zero, an organization that promotes sustainable waste policies.

These prepackaged Halloween costumes are overwhelmingly made of petroleum-based plastics that are impossible to recycle, she added.

“If you don’t plan on going as the exact same thing you went the previous year for the next Halloween, what are you doing with that costume?” posed Lexy Silverstein, a sustainable fashion advocate. “Realistically, not much.”

But being sustainable doesn’t just mean you have to repeat costumes. Rather than buying a prepackaged Halloween costume, here are some tips from industry experts to make your spooky season less wasteful:

Lean into basics

Instead of buying specialty items that won’t be worn often, turn to versatile basics that are already in your wardrobe.

Try this: A white button-up shirt paired with dark sunglasses and a tie can transform you into a Men in Black

agent, or ditch the glasses and trade in a headband and a pleated skirt for a “Gossip Girl” costume, Silverstein

suggested.

Go monochrome in all pink and add a blonde wig to emulate Barbie, or pair the pink with a wand and tiara to

become Glinda from the musical “Wicked.”

Dress like the ’80s (or any past era) by sifting through your parents’ or grandparents’ closets for vintage items, said

Myriam Laroche, a former buyer and founder of Eco Fashion Week in Vancouver, B.C.

Buy secondhand

Thrifting is always a more sustainable option than buying new, but you may not need to dig through the racks to find a costume.

“Each of the stores curates their own Halloween collection,” said Brendan Hurley, chief marketing officer at the Goodwill of Greater Washington. “You can walk in Halloween morning and curate an interesting outfit based on what’s still on the racks.”

Try this: Visit goodwill.org/halloween. You can browse costumes via genre. If you’re looking for inspiration, the site has a costume idea generator, a tool that displays a different costume each time you click a button. Savers, another thrift chain, also hosts an online thrift blog that features Halloween inspiration. See what you have in your own closet before heading to the store.

DIY your props



Get creative with your costume this Halloween. (iStock)

Bring back the creative element of Halloween by using crafts to put together your costume. For extra fun, gather a group of friends or your family for an evening of crafting and bonding ahead of the holiday.

Try this: Instead of buying animal ears, cut them out from a piece of cardboard and tape them to a headband you already own.

Wanna go as Thing 1 and Thing 2 with your boo? Use a red T-shirt you already own. Write Thing 1 (or 2) on a piece of paper and stick it on your shirt.

Don't buy a plastic mask; use makeup to turn into an emotion from "Inside Out" (2015). Plus, a makeup palette is a purchase you can use throughout the year.

Ditch the dog costume



Rather than buying a separate costume for your pet, consider integrating them into your look. (iStock)

Instead of buying your pet a costume they're unlikely to wear often, integrate your pet into your look. For example, Silverstein wore pink clothes from her closet to be Elle Woods from the hit film "Legally

Blonde” (2001). Silverstein’s Yorkie went as Bruiser Woods, Elle Woods’s iconic chihuahua.

Try this: If you have a small dog, you could also go as Sharpay Evans from “High School Musical” or Dorothy from “The Wiz.” A bigger pup can be the Scooby-Doo to your Shaggy.

If you need to, you can DIY props for your dog, too.

Borrow your costume

Renting is a great eco-friendly option for instances when you’ll only use an item of clothing once.

“You’ve got people spending money on very low quality polyester costumes that you can buy from eBay and Amazon last minute,” said Eshita Kabra-Davies, the founder of By Rotation, a peer-to-peer clothing rental platform.

In contrast, for a more adult look, Kabra-Davies suggested renting a vintage gown to be a character like Morticia Addams. “No one else is going to be dressed like me,” she said.

Try This: Use peer-to-peer clothing rental platforms like By Rotation, Tulerie, or Pickle. Rent-by-location features allow you to find items in your radius even if you’re looking last minute.

For an even cheaper option, swap old costumes with your friends so you both get to go as something new. Display clothes you don’t want next time you host a gathering, so your living room can become a Halloween thrift shop.

When shopping, said Silverstein, always ask yourself these three questions: How many times am I going to wear this? Where am I going to wear this? What am I going to wear it with?

During Halloween or otherwise, it’s always a good idea to extend the life of your clothes.