

Tote-ally Upcycled!

Celebrate Earth Day all year long with your own reusable upcycled T-shirt tote.

There are many ways we can take care of our planet; everything from conserving energy to limiting waste to creating sustainable products and habits! This patch is going to guide you in doing all of that and more!

You're just one craft away from a BIG impact!

How to earn the Upcycling patch the Girl Scout way:

Steps:

1. **Discover**—Explore why it's important to limit plastics where we can.
2. **Connect**—Make your own reusable tote bag.
3. **Take Action**—Make an impact on your community (and the planet)!

Materials Needed:

In order to complete this patch, you'll need a few things:

- resources (You can either go online with an adult, ask a professional, or visit your public library.)
- old T-shirt
- marker
- scissors

Step 1

Explore why it's important to limit plastics where we can!

Take a look around you and note how many things you see that include plastic in some way. How many are necessary in our lives? How many are for fun?

Usually, we don't have to look far to see a lot of items that contain plastic or are made ENTIRELY out of plastic. Of course, sometimes that's a good thing. It can be durable, lightweight, and inexpensive. In some cases, it's even a safer option.

- With fellow Girl Scouts or a trusted adult, discuss different items in a doctor's office or hospital that are better because they are made of plastic instead of other materials. Plastic can be used in many ways that are safer, more sanitary, durable, and even lifesaving. Explore ways that plastics have had an impact on our well-being.
- Bonus conversation: How can we improve those materials in the future? Can we find alternatives to plastic?

If plastic is being used in good ways, then why are we always hearing how we should limit it? Well, plastic lasts for a LONG time. Longer than us and longer than lots of other materials we use.

- With permission, check out resources at your local library or online to find out how long it takes different materials to break down. Consider the things you use every day and see how long they hang around. How do they compare?

Since plastics take an extremely long time to break down in our environment, we must be careful how much we create and where it goes when we're done with it.

- Consider plastics in everyday life: food packaging, toothbrushes, toys, shoes, decorations, certain fabrics, appliance parts, playground materials, etc. Some are unavoidable at this time or would take a longer time to eliminate, but some are easier. Are there any you could use less of?
- Let's do a plastic-use check-in! Make a list of five ways you could use less plastic in your life in the next month. Make a commitment to check in each month and see what you might be able to improve. (Maybe the 22nd of each month?)

Why the 22nd? Each year on April 22 we celebrate Earth Day. It's a great time to show our gratitude for our planet and practice being good stewards. We want to take the best care of our home since it takes such wonderful care of us! Hopefully, you'll find ways to celebrate Earth Day on April 22 and all year long!

Step 2

Make your own reusable tote bag.

Here's your chance to make a big impact with a simple craft!

Reusing old clothing items that you wouldn't wear anymore saves them from ending up in the landfill right away. This is a great way to extend the life of an old T-shirt and cut down on the plastic bags used for your purchases.

Using resources wisely: Consider a T-shirt that you can't give away (faded, has a hole, stretched out) but is still in good enough shape that it's not ready to become a cleaning rag or puppy chew toy. (Keep those in mind for when your T-shirt bag is worn out—you'll be able to give that T-shirt another use or two before it gets tossed!)

1. Gather your supplies: An old T-shirt, a marker, and a pair of scissors.
2. Lay the T-shirt flat and draw the lines shown below. The lines around the sleeves will become the handles of your tote bag. The lines at the bottom will create ties that close off the bottom of the bag.

3. Carefully cut along the lines to:
 - remove the sleeves,
 - widen the neckline, and
 - create "fringe" at the bottom.



4. You're almost there! The final step is just to close up the bottom of the bag. Starting at one side of the t-shirt, match the front piece of fringe with the back piece. Tie a double knot. Continue with each pair until you've worked your way across the whole bottom.

Step 3

Make an impact on your community (and the planet)!

Making a T-shirt tote is a fun way to get creative and reuse old items.

- Think of all the resources it took to make that T-shirt in the first place. (Explore your library or go online with permission). By extending the life of the T-shirt, you've made even better use of those resources than the T-shirt would have on its own. You've also cut down on the resources that would be used in making a plastic bag, vinyl grocery tote, backpack, or another item you might purchase in place of this tote bag you made for free!

See? You're already impacting the world around you for the future! To keep the impact going, you'll want to make sure you use the tote as often as you can.

- Example: Use it as a shopping bag! Keep it near your shoes and coat to help you remember to bring it with you. Each time you use it, it's one less plastic bag from the store that ends up in our environment. Those plastic bags last a long time out there and are usually only used once or twice. This will save a lot of those!
- What are some other things you could use your bag for? Where could you keep it so that you remember to use it? What other materials are you saving by using your tote bag?
- Consider asking your family if they would like to join you in this! You could start a basket at home for T-shirts that are ready to become tote bags. Then, every so often, you could make a few more! (Maybe your family would join you on your monthly plastic-use check-in too!)

Enjoy your tote bag and continue exploring different ways (big and small) you can celebrate and care for our planet all year long!



All done? CONGRATULATIONS!

You've completed all the necessary steps to earn the Upcycling patch.

After completing the activities from each step, visit or call a Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania retail shop at 800-248-3355 to purchase your patch.* A patch may be worn on the back of a vest, sash or tunic.

*Patch shown may be substituted with similar patch, based on availability.