



How to run a fix-it party

What is a fix-it party?

A Community Repair event is where local people come together to share their skills and knowledge and have fun while doing so. Its aim is to build sustainable communities by encouraging lots of volunteers to bring what they know and can do for others, as well as to promote the environmental benefits of repairing and recycling instead of throwing away.

Here, we outline a simple approach to repair with a button-sewing task but an alternative open event is also described where anyone is welcome to bring one item they need help with and the idea is to learn basic repair tips by working with the repairers (your volunteers). This session is all about making repairing things less daunting and more accessible so try to make it light-hearted by providing music and refreshments.

Why run a fix-it party?

'Make Do and Mend' might hark back to WW2 but with the current concern over our levels of waste, it's a slogan that is very on-trend. Fixing things saves us money as we don't need to buy a replacement item,

it reduces the use of CO2 used to manufacture that item, and it removes the need to treat that item when it enters the waste stream.

Learning to fix something is a great life skill and great fun. What's more it can provide confidence to try your hand at fixing other things too. A well-stocked toolkit alongside so practical experience and access to the internet is often all we need to fulfil a basic level of repair that's all most of us will ever need. The aim of this session is to send people off on this track.

This session should take no longer than 2 hours.

What things do I need?

- A practical venue, taking into account numbers of people you might expect.
- Handy volunteers to help people carry out their repairs.
- Tables and chairs for carrying out the repairs.
- Plenty of scissors, needles, spare buttons and thread (and depending on your event, screws, pliers etc – whatever you might need for repairing items).
- Magnifying glasses, just in case
- A few old but clean shirts or odd bits of material, just in case
- Refreshments
- Display information on waste reduction

TOP TIP

Bring in the experts...

Our guide focuses on a very simply introduction to fixing – you don't get much more simple than stitching a button. But if you have experts within your community then feel free to up the ante a little. Repairs to electrical items, bikes, household fixtures are all a possible demonstration if you know the right people.

Running the session

Before the event:

Deciding on the style of the event

Decide whether you intend to follow the straightforward session outline provided below or whether you wish to include a more open event where people can bring any one item for repair. The choice will largely depend on how handy your volunteers are. If you go for an open repair event you will need to provide sheets to protect tables, any adhesives, screw-driver sets and other tools to do the repairs, and cleaning equipment. You would also need to decide whether to include rules such as:

- Please arrive in the first two hours (of a 3-hour event).
- Please do not bring any
- If bringing electronic devices, please bring them charged AND with any power leads/adapters.
- Please bring all the parts of your item and not just the part that is broken. We probably won't have spare parts or replacements.

Managing risk

Undertake a risk assessment on the repair activity and ensure you implement the actions needed to reduce any risks. This should include checking any tools are fit for purpose and providing safety equipment where needed – see *Resource A for an example risk assessment*.

It is also good practice to display a disclaimer along the lines of:

“Persons taking part in a community repair event do so at their own risk. Please take all reasonable measures to check the condition of any item repaired for your own protection. Cumbria County Council accepts no liability for any claim or loss resulting from any repair taking place at the event.”

But remember this will not absolve you of responsibility if you have not taken adequate steps to prevent incidents.

On the day:

1) Introductions and icebreaker – approx. 5 mins

Ask people to introduce themselves and say something that they have mended recently, however big or small the repair was. Apart from breaking the ice, finding out whether there are any areas of expertise in the group might encourage people to offer to help each other after the session has ended.

2) Setting the scene – approx. 10 mins

Give a short talk on community repair. You could start with the following quote from the website, *Nigel's Eco-Store*:

“It seems incredible but 80% of what is made gets thrown away within the first six months of being bought; more significantly many of these products are then replaced with new ones. When you consider that 95% of the raw materials used in making products end up as waste by the time the finished goods get to the shops, it's clear it's the replacement and not the disposal of goods that creates the most waste.” (Victoria Jackson, Why it's better to mend your old pants than throw them away.” <http://www.nigelsecostore.com/blog/2014/04/15/why-its-better-to-mend-your-old-pants-than-throw-them-away/>)

The rest of your talk could cover the following areas...

- *What can I repair?* Describe how repairing things rather than throwing them away helps both the environment and the community, using information from the introduction to this guide. Everything that breaks is a potential project.
- *How can I get started?* Even if people aren't very practical, help is on hand either on-line on websites such as www.ifixit.com or, better still, by asking friends, family or neighbours. Sharing expertise and tools or bartering skills – such as baking a cake in exchange for help with a repair – can strengthen communities. Do warn people that repaired electrical goods should still be checked by a qualified PAT tester.
- *What happens if an item can't be repaired?* Let the group know the details of your nearest recycling centre (this can be found on www.recycleforcumbria.org) where goods, including electrical ones, can be broken down into their component parts for recycling.

3) The button-sewing task – approx. 20 mins

Give an explanation of what they will be making in the session, keeping it short and simple. Then get stuck into the practical task:

- Start by marking the spot where you want the button to go.
- Cut the thread to a manageable length, up to an arm's length, and double it over.
- Thread the needle and tie a knot at the end of the doubled thread.
- Bring your needle up through the fabric next to the spot, then sew two small stitches to help anchor the thread.
- Bring the needle and thread through one hole in the button and back down through the other and through the material next to the spot. Continue this step until the button feels secure.
- When the button feels secure, wrap the thread tightly round the thread under the button a few times and finish off with another couple of small stitches. Cut off any odds and ends of thread.

4) Refreshments – approx. 20 mins

5) Group discussion 2 and take away task – approx. 10 mins

Set a challenge for the group to repair another item they have that is broken. Go round the group and discuss how each item might be mended. Encourage the group to agree to share any tools or other resources between themselves.

Once done, suggest they take a photograph and share it on the group's facebook page or by another means appropriate to your group.

6) The team photo

Just before you end your event, ask everybody to pose with their mended item for a team photo. Again add this to your facebook page and share it with us so we can promote your success.

Further information and support

<http://therestartproject.org/> has plenty of advice about repairing electronics and running 'Restart Parties'.

<https://www.ifixit.com/> has lots of guides on how to repair different items as well as other related articles.

<http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/series/live-better-how-to-mend> has guides on mending various things – including how to sew on a button, with pictures!

Recycle for Cumbria provides advice on resourceful living, including listing furniture reuse centres located throughout Cumbria: www.recycleforcumbria.org

Frengle is a web-based organisation with groups in local communities throughout Cumbria promoting reuse and recycling: www.ilovefrengle.org

Streetbank is a website helping you share and borrow things from others locally – members join by adding one item, skill or recommendation: www.streetbank.com

Running your event might be an opportunity to raise awareness of the environmental benefit of repairing things and you can find interesting facts and figures at: <http://www.recycleforcumbria.org>

Recycle Now is the national recycling campaign for England. The website includes lots of helpful advice on dealing with unwanted items, whether by reuse, repair or recycling: www.recyclenow.com

Environmental action groups such as Transition town initiatives may already be campaigning for repair and reuse in your community, so it's well worth finding out what's already going on locally and linking in: www.transitionnetwork.org/nearby