

FREE SWAP



TOOLKIT



What is a Free Swap?

A Free Swap is a fun community event where people get together and bring gently used clothing or small household items they no longer need and swap them for 'new to them' items. Items are dropped off upon arrival and then folks can browse the swap tables and racks to find something they can use. Free swaps are a good way to find new homes for unwanted items, reduce waste going to the landfill, and foster a sense of community.

Using this toolkit & checklist

This toolkit and checklist are guidelines intended for those interested in organizing a Free Swap event for the first time. While best practices are suggested, we encourage you to adapt your event into something that works for you.

Questions?

reduce.waste@vancouver.ca



BUILD A TEAM

Find volunteers who are keen to help and can commit to either assist in organizing the swap, helping on the event day, or both. Delegate roles and responsibilities as early as you can. Some possible event day roles for your team are:

- Greeters – welcome guests and explain how the swap works
- Check-in/check-out – check in donated items and check out taken items
- Sorters – sort items by category and keep tables tidy



SELECT A DATE, TIME & LOCATION

Select a **date** and **time** when the majority of your target audience will be available. Weekends or weeknights are usually best.

After you pick a date and time, identify and secure a **location**. Think about accessibility, public transit, and time of year (e.g. outdoor locations may not work in winter). Free swaps can take place in the lobby of an apartment building, a backyard, a community centre, or even at a supportive local business.



WHAT TO ACCEPT

Decide what types of items will be accepted and not accepted and communicate this information clearly in your marketing materials and signage. Consider putting a size limit on accepted items. For example, all donated items must be small enough to fit into a regular grocery bag.

Examples of **accepted items** include gently used clothing, accessories, housewares, small working appliances, books, music, games and art.

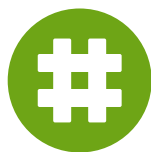
Examples of **unacceptable items** include bedding, food, footwear, sharp objects, weapons, furniture, TVs, microwaves, medication, dirty or ripped clothing, personal care products, and incomplete/ broken items.



HEALTH AND SAFETY

To ensure volunteers and participants are safe:

- Prior to the event, communicate that donated items must be clean.
- Thoroughly inspect items when they are dropped off to ensure they are clean, safe and complete.
- Reject dirty, dangerous or risky items.



SET A LIMIT ON NUMBER OF ITEMS

Consider setting a limit on the number of items people can donate (and take). An item limit will help reduce the amount of stuff that remains at the end of the event. We recommend a limit of between 1 and 5 items.



TICKETING SYSTEM

An example of a ticketing system would be where a ticket is issued for every item that is dropped off, and that ticket is then used to swap for another item. Swap events can run very well without a ticketing system and you may not need one.



EVENT DURATION

Plan and communicate the start and end time for accepting items. Typically, items are accepted from the start of the event until 30 minutes before the end of the event.



OTHER STUFF

Put together a checklist

A checklist can help you plan and track your event. See a sample checklist on page 7 of this toolkit.

Create a starter kit

A starter kit is an inventory of swappable items ready for the start of the event so that tables are not empty when the first participants arrive. Ask team members to bring items before the event begins, or offer an early drop-off, either on event day or in the days leading up to the event.

Make category signs

Create category signs for the display tables and racks. Category examples include:

- Books, media & games
- Housewares
- Children's clothing
- Adult clothing
- Clothing accessories
- Art
- Small Electronics
- Toys
- Home decor
- Sporting goods
- Music
- Tools



COMMUNITY OUTREACH & PROMOTION

Promote your swap event through:

- Word of mouth – tell your friends, family and neighbours
- Posters – put up posters at local neighbourhood hubs, such as community centres, libraries, cafes
- Digital posters – e-mail to partners and local organizations
- Web – if your group has a website, create new content for the event and use a QR code to direct traffic to your webpage
- Media – reach out to local media such as community newspapers, radio stations, news sites, and tv stations (they may even visit your event!)
- Local online event directories – register your swap online



SOCIAL MEDIA

- Create a Facebook event
- Join local Facebook groups that share an interest in zero waste
- Post on your social media accounts:
 - Frequency – post each week starting one month before the event, and on the day of the event
 - Images – post photos of accepted items, people browsing at a thrift store, behind the scenes activities
 - Video – post short videos on event day showing what happens at a free swap





SET-UP

Here are some set-up tips:

- Arrange tables, chairs, clothing racks and hangers to best suit your space. Avoid blocking walkways and exits.
- Provide pens, tracking sheets and other supplies at check-in and check-out stations.
- Organize items on tables and racks.
- Put up category signs.
- Use items from your starter kit or early drop offs to get you started.



CHECK-IN STATION

- Assign several team members to screen and accept items.
- Record the number and type of items dropped off. Consider weighing the items to calculate the amount of material kept out of the landfill.
- Organize the items on tables/racks throughout the event as more items are dropped off.



CHECK-OUT STATION

- Assign one or two team members to record the number and type of items taken.
- If you are using a ticket system, collect tickets in a container and reuse them.
- Collect feedback from participants as they leave (Did they enjoy the swap? How did they find out about the event?). This information will help you plan future events.



DATA COLLECTION & REPORTING

Reporting your data back to the City of Vancouver is not required; however, we would love to hear from you about your success. Please consider sharing the following information by e-mail (reduce.waste@vancouver.ca):

- Number of items you started with
- Number of items given/taken
- Number of items remaining at the end of the swap
- Number of participants
- Feedback from participants



AFTER THE EVENT

Gather up leftover items and keep them for your next swap event or donate them to a local charity.



Use this checklist to assign roles and responsibilities and track your event, from start to finish. This checklist is intended as a guideline only. We encourage you to customize the checklist for your event.

Task	Assigned to	Status	Notes
Before the event			
Recruit volunteers			
Choose a date & time			
Choose & book event space			
Create guidelines for the event			
Promote the event (email, letters)			
Create & print signs & posters			
Create / manage social media			
Purchase supplies			
Organize additional outreach			
Arrange pick-up & drop-off of leftovers			
During the event			
Assign roles to staff / volunteers			
Set up tables / racks / hangers			
Put up signs & posters			
Receive / organize donated items			
Weigh / record items			
Hand out tickets to attendees			
Take photos / post to social			
Regularly tidy items on tables			
Check in / check out items			
Ask for feedback from participants			
After the event			
Take down & cleanup			
Set aside items for next swap			
Prepare leftovers for pickup/drop-off			
Send us the details of your event			