

# Smart Recycling: What To Do With Old Tires

We're living in a world of cars and drivers and tires are maybe one of the most inconspicuous things that are actually everywhere around us.

Taking into account an average of three cars per family and each car goes through two sets of tires per year (winter and summer), then 24 tires are used in three years. That's right – two dozen tires are worn out! And the old ones go to waste, most of the time.

It is estimated that approximately 290 million old tires are disposed of every year and almost 20% of them (55 million used tires, give or take) are illegally dumped in landfills, on someone else's private property or just thrown away on roadsides.

Most people don't realize it but improperly discarded tires are a health hazard for you and your family. They make for perfect breeding grounds for mosquitoes and rodents, both of whom are capable of spreading disease: dengue fever, encephalitis, West Nile virus and hanta virus, just to mention a few.

The huge piles of improperly discarded tires are also prone to catch fire and smolder for weeks or even months, releasing toxic smoke and fumes into the atmosphere, thus causing various health (respiratory) problems for people that live nearby.

Another serious issue related to tire fires is that they produce pyrolytic oil that can contaminate nearby water supplies which can cause it to catch fire, thus creating additional pollution issues. Finally, burned tires are responsible for polluting water supplies with lead and

arsenic, two highly toxic heavy metals.

So, let's recap: we have 290 million tires thrown away year after year, many of which contribute to serious pollution issues. Well, that can be remedied: old rubber can be [reused smartly](#) and put to good use. Let us show you how.

As we already told you, burning tires release a compound, namely pyrolytic oil, that can be used as a fuel during a process called tire pyrolysis by specialized companies, a very clean process with virtually zero emissions or waste. Old tires can also be reclaimed and used for [building all sorts of things](#), like roads, athlete tracks, bed mats, tiles/flooring, mats and various engineering projects in both DIY projects and large industrial applications.



The vast majority of used tires are actually burned for their fuel value, but there are alternative ways to use them:

- As construction materials. I bet you did not know that, but you can build an entire home using old tires. These houses are called [Earthships](#) and they are built with

whole tires filled with earth and (sometimes) covered with concrete.

- Using the same method, minus the concrete cover, you can build walls made of tires filled with dirt, or even start your own garden (growing potatoes for example) using tires, straw and shredded paper (no earth required!).
- You can use old tires as bumpers around the house or for your boat dock.
- Use old tires in child's play areas. They're great for setting up an obstacle course or making a sandbox or a tire swing. Tire mulch is also sold as padding for children's playgrounds.
- You can put them around trees to protect them against mowers.
- You can make flower pots out of tires.
- You can make soles for shoes or even entire pairs of flip flops.
- Put concrete into an old tire and use it as a foundation for sunshades, clotheslines or climbing plants, use your imagination.
- You can make livestock feeders out of old tires.

*Video first seen on [Off Grid Build](#).*

- Make business signs/traffic cones.
- Used tires can be transformed into furniture with a little bit of skill and imagination.
- Since tires are black and they retain the heat from the sun easily, you can use them in your garden for starting your plants earlier. Basically, you can grow plants and veggies in tires earlier than in the ground. This trick works great with those species that require more warmth.
- You can use old tires for building shoot-houses; they make for excellent bulletproof walls. The military and the police do recycle old tires exactly for this purpose and they use two rows of tires which are staggered in

order to protect the vulnerable spots between stacks.

- You can build a bike rack using old tires, giving them a creative yet functional purpose
- You can make an outdoor storage bin using old tires secured together with some plywood and painted in your favorite color.
- Two old tires can be transformed into a cool coffee table or other cool pieces of furniture.
- You can roof an entire house using old tires.

Now, let's talk about a simple way of making money from reusing old tires. All you need is a pickup truck and/or a garage and you're good to go in the recycling tires business.

The concept behind this business idea is that all auto shops will charge their customers a \$5 fee per tire when they're replacing the old tires with new ones. This fee is actually the shop's costs for disposing of the respective old tire by sending it to a recycling facility (they must call them and schedule a pickup with the respective company). Recycling facilities have minimum requirements when it comes to picking up old tires, usually at least 100 pieces or something like that.

*Video first seen on [Work With Nature](#).*

This means that auto shops must store the used tires until they reach the 100 (or whatever) figure and since most states adhere to strict rules when it comes to storing used tires (the health issues/mosquitoes/rodents/fire hazards we discussed before), the majority of auto shops don't have large empty spaces for storing used tires. You can make a living by solving this problem for them.

You can be that reliable person that will pick up the old tires from the auto shop whenever they need you to and deliver them to the recycling facilities at your earliest convenience.

Due to the problems described before, auto shops are ready to “give away” about \$3 for every tire you’re taking away and that means \$300 for 100 tires hauled. That’s a pretty nice haul for a few hours’ work, right?



However, you’ll need to do your research and find as many local mechanics and auto shops as possible if you want to deliver 100 used tires every day. If you don’t have a big-enough truck for 100 tires keep in mind that recycling facilities will pick up the “merchandise” for free if you have that minimal number of used tires and even if you don’t have a truck, you can use your garage for storing old tires until you reach that number.

To transport 4-5 tires at a time to your storage facility, you can simply use your regular “small” car. All you need to do is to register your business and find your nearest recycling facility. Registration is less than \$50 in most states, but because anyone can pick up and dump tires on the side of the road, they require a registration. If you’re caught dumping, you’ll be held responsible. To find your nearest recycling facility, go to [1800recycling.com](http://1800recycling.com).

This is a great way of making relatively easy money out of old tires whenever is necessary. Just keep in mind that it’s a bit labor intensive; this part time job is not suitable for everyone. Give it a try if you’re capable and willing to work hard for a few hours per day.

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*This article has been written by **Chris Black** for [Survivopedia](#).*