

12 Resources That Most People Throw To Waste

If you're a hard core prepper, you must be aware of the fact that waste is maybe the worst thing that's plaguing our modern civilization. There's nothing wrong with reusing perfectly good stuff and people need to get into the habit of doing so. As resourceful preppers, we understand the value of repurposing items, but most don't.

This useful trick will save you lots of money in the process and unless you're not an eccentric millionaire with pillowcases full of money, that's a big deal. Stick around and let's see what can be reused when building a new house or an anti-atomic shelter or whatever.

Now, if you're building a new structure, keep in mind that you can reuse a lot of (old) construction materials, especially if you're demolishing an old structure in the process.

But, if you want to reuse old materials, you must deconstruct the previous structure in such a way that the integrity of the supplies is maintained for further use. Basically, deconstructing is different from a regular demolition.

What can be recycled? The short answer is almost everything. For the long answer, keep reading.

The DON'Ts of Recycling

Never ever try to re-use old electric and gas appliances unless you absolutely know what you're doing; they're prone to malfunctioning and thus they present a serious hazard for you and your family.

Also, it's not advisable to reuse old sanitary gear, such as shower units, sinks and toilets. It's better to purchase new

stuff, at least for your peace of mind.

Also, old buildings can contain materials that are no longer allowed nowadays, such as asbestos or lead-based paints. Keep in mind that asbestos abatement is a modern requirement prior to any demolition and since asbestos is a very toxic and dangerous compound, it must be handled with care and disposed of properly (in landfills that accept ACM).

Video first seen on [TED](#).

Everything Else Is Up For Grabs

And I mean, almost everything.

1. Wood can be safely reused: timbers, lumber, plywood, you name it. After demolishing your old house, even if you'd be tempted to pay a visit to your local Home Depot for buying new stuff like new doors, cool looking floorboards or new wood framing, don't get carried away in the moment.

Have a Kit Kat and try not to empty your bank account before you take a realistic look at what you already have. I bet you did not know that old wood is often of better quality than new wood. This is a point where lumber professionals agree; it's not opinion, it's science. The older the wood, the better (if it's not rotten/spoiled obviously) as long as it was of good quality to begin with.

Also, if you're an amateur, old wood may look very disappointing in your eyes, but significant quantities of old wood can be salvaged and reused. All it needs is a professional hand. It needs to be stripped and refinished and that's often about it.

Hence, it would be advisable to seek professional help for restoring the wood from your old house because it can be very cost effective.

If you're doing the work yourself or with a little bit of help from your friends/family (ripping out old floorboards for example is not an easy job to do alone), you'll save a LOT of money. If you choose to hire a professional contractor, the costs will go up but likely not as much as if you were to replace everything.

There are lots of ways to recycle old wood for your new home.



2. Doors made of solid wood and windows (watch for double glazed units sans dry rot/woodworms), if they're in good shape, are absolute keepers.

Generally speaking, all they require is a little bit of finishing and repainting.

Refinished classic looking doors from old houses is a real treat; just try to buy them new. They will require a second mortgage on your home.

Keep in mind that you can reuse even the hinges and doorknobs, especially if they look "antique".

3. Floors are one of those assets that can easily sell a house on their own (according to real-estate agents), especially those beautiful hardwood floors.

All you have to do is to remove the floors from their grooves and reuse them on your new project. Beware though: this is not an easy thing to do.

Especially if you're an amateur, the process is difficult and time-consuming and you can damage the wood in the process so it would be a good idea to let a professional to do the job.

But if you do this right, your new home will benefit from some serious added value. Mark our words and you'll save big time.

4. Rafters and wood beams can be salvaged and safely reused as support beams if they're in good structural shape. If you're using the wood beams on the inside, they don't even require refinishing.

You can use the wood from your old house for building completely new stuff, provided you're a good carpenter. You can build tables, picture frames, benches, chairs, cabinets, mailboxes, dog houses, sheds, fences, or whatever suits your fancy.

Always remember that salvaged wood (and salvaged construction materials in general) are very cheap when compared to buying new stuff from your Home Depot.

If you're not the DIY type of person, a good source for finding cheap contractors is your local hardware or home improvement store. These people sometimes do construction jobs on the side or know people who do, so check that out.

5. Roof tiles (the clay tiles and ridges) can be reused or repurposed if they're in good shape, i.e. they're not cracked and your new roof is capable of withstanding the weight.

Other roofing materials, such as asphalt shingles, can be ground and after cleared of nails recycled for various asphalt mixes. Non-asphalt shingles such as slate, terracotta, sheathing or untreated cedar tiles can be reused if they're in good shape.

6. The central heating components such as cold/hot water tanks, the piping and radiators (especially copper made stuff, it lasts forever and it's very expensive), the thermostats and so on and so forth.

7. Guttering and downpipes (for the rainwater) are absolute keepers if they're the made of still cast iron or even aluminum. The modern stuff is made of PVC and similar materials (mostly plastic). The old school gear is made to last practically forever, so reuse it if you can.

8. Kitchen items such as cupboards, countertops or sinks (especially those stainless steel sinks that last forever) can be safely reused.

9. Concrete can be recycled too, there are lots of market outlets for recycled concrete out there. If you're demolishing a structure made of concrete, the concrete/rubble aggregate (provided it's not contaminated with paper, wood or trash) can be collected by a specialized company and put through a

crushing machine and used further as gravel, riprap revetments, mulch or landscaping stone.

Reinforcing bars (aka rebars) are also accepted because they can be removed using various sorting devices and melted/recycled elsewhere.

10. Metals like steel, copper and aluminum that are left after a demolition can be collected and sold to local recyclers/scrap yards to be melted down and reused.

11. Brick is yet another thing that can be reused/recycled.

12. Gypsum wallboard can be also removed and recycled in various ways: you can reuse it, sell it, donate it or whatever. If you decide to sell it, you may contact local cement manufacturers.

Keep in mind that you can save a lot of money if you choose to reuse/recycle old construction materials. Back in the day, unlike now, all things were built to last. Every time when you're demolishing something, your natural instinct will be to start over from scratch and you'll be tempted to pay a visit to your local hardware store to max out your credit card.

Our advice is to avoid rash shopping decisions and learn how to reuse/recycle old wood, plumbing, bathroom and kitchen elements. You'll be better in the long run.

If you have other thoughts or ideas, don't hesitate to share them in the comment section below.

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