

# Reduce Waste with Repair Clinics

## *A Community Guide to Organizing a Repair Clinic*

### **What is a repair clinic?**

A repair clinic (also known as a Repair Cafe or Fix-it Clinic) is an event where community members get together to share knowledge and fix things. They've been described as an activity that is "both for and by neighbors."

### **What do you repair?**

Depending on local expertise, items may include clothing, electronics, appliances, bicycles, furniture, and much more.

### **Waste reduction starts with repair**

Repair gives old belongings new life. Repair clinics help your community reduce waste by making broken things usable again and keeping them out of the trash.

### **How to get started**

- Locate and invite subject matter experts in the community
- Recruit volunteers to help plan, organize, and get the word out about the upcoming repair clinic
- Locate and gather appropriate tools and parts
- See if hardware and bicycle shops or other local businesses can offer spare parts for sale or an expert volunteer from their staff

### **Find the right venue**

- Libraries, community centers, town halls, faith centers, or schools are generally affordable, accessible, and familiar
- The facility should have electricity with ample outlets to plug into, adequate space, tables, plenty of parking, running water, and bathrooms—a kitchen is a bonus if available
- Donations can help cover repair clinic costs

### **Recruit skilled help**

Scout out local electricians, carpenters, plumbers, metalworkers, furniture makers, tailors, and technical school students when recruiting volunteers. Experts can generate good publicity for their business or institution just by donating a few hours of time to share their skills.

### **Get the word out**

Volunteers can help spread the word about the upcoming repair clinic. Hang fliers in the library, restaurants, coffee shops, town hall, and other favorite gathering spots, post notices on local social media groups, and tell friends and neighbors. Have contact information on all notices so people can reach out with questions or to volunteer.



Repair Café photo courtesy of Ilvy Njiokiktjien



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### Set some guidelines

- Visitors should do as much of their own repair as possible—they will learn a new skill and may even be able to pass it on to someone else in the future.
- A repair clinic is not a professional repair business and volunteers and community organizers:
  - ◊ Have the right to refuse to repair something
  - ◊ Will not be held responsible for an unsuccessful repair
  - ◊ Will not be held liable in the event of an accident or injury
- Visitors are responsible for their own stuff and must remove everything they brought with them.

### Legal and safety measures

Prepare a release form and ensure you have plenty of copies at the repair clinic for visitors to sign. Release forms contain house rules so visitors understand that not everything can be fixed, and organizers and repairers are not liable for damage or injury. Collect and store a form signed by each attendee. Some venues have public liability insurance to provide additional coverage for your event. Having a certified first-aid volunteer at the repair clinic adds another important safety measure.



Electronics repair photo courtesy of Wiki Loves Africa

View release form examples at the links below:

- <https://repaircafe.org/en/house-rules>
- <https://ppld.org/sites/default/files/policies/repaircafeguidelines.pdf> (link opens a PDF)
- [http://www.csvwmd.org/uploads/6/1/2/6/6126179/repair\\_cafe\\_house\\_rules.pdf](http://www.csvwmd.org/uploads/6/1/2/6/6126179/repair_cafe_house_rules.pdf) (link opens a PDF)

### Running the event—the basics

- Accept donations to help pay for event costs
- Coffee, tea, and snacks will be welcome—charge a reasonable fee to cover refreshment costs
- Set up repair stations for different categories of stuff, each staffed with a repair expert
- Have visitors check in
- Ensure each visitor signs a release form and understands the terms
- Direct each visitor to the appropriate repair station

### Additional resources for a successful repair clinic

- The Central Vermont Solid Waste Management District Repair toolkit includes a detailed planning guide, a release form template, sample outreach materials and much more.
  - ◊ View toolkit: <http://www.csvwmd.org/repair-cafe-tool-kit.html>
- Learn more about hosting repair events from the organization that started the trend, located in the Netherlands. They offer a repair café starter kit for a fee (name your own price).
  - ◊ Visit Repair Cafe website: <https://repaircafe.org/en/about/>

