



Trashmagination Podcast #25 – Car Seat Recycling

Welcome to Trashmagination, a podcast about reimagining trash. I'm Carla Brown.

Today's podcast is about carseats, but before I jump into that topic, I want to let you know that Trashmagination will have an interactive booth at KIDfest [<http://kid-museum.org/kidfest/>] which takes place in a week, Sunday September 24, in Silver Spring, Maryland from 12-5. This is great event – I have attended two times as a participant. This is my first year offering a booth and I'm at booth 54 inside the building! At the Trashmagination booth, you can make an adorable creature out of plastic caps, which I named Capulet.

Also, for podcast subscribers, if you come to my booth and show me that you have written a review of the podcast, I will have some gifts for you!

This is a free event great for people of all ages. Come early before I run out of Capulet supplies. You can also take photos of yourself wearing my trash fashion clothes and post a selfie.

Car Seats Make a Lot of Trash

So now let's get started with today's podcast theme which is car seats. Now this is a gosh-darn difficult item to creatively reuse here in North America. I'm guessing there are wonderful recycling programs in Europe.

A big challenge with car seats is that they expire after six years. According to Grist, the average car seat contains about 15 pounds of plastic, metal, nylon, foam, and other materials, and Americans buy almost 10 million seats each year.

This is National Child Safety Passenger Week [<http://cpsboard.org/event/child-passenger-safety-week-2017/>] and as part of that event, Target stores in the United States will take used car seats and have them properly recycled by Terracycle [<https://www.target.com/c/car-seat-trade-in-event/-/N-v41nu>]. The deadline is September 23. When you bring a car seat in to Target, they give you a coupon for 20 percent off your next car seat purchase. This is valuable if you need to upgrade to the next size of car seat. Or you can give the coupon to another family who needs to buy a car seat.

Target did this one time before, so it's possible they will do it again. But don't count on it – if you have a car seat that is expired, get to a Target store this week.

I have mentioned Terracycle before. This innovative company recycles challenging items. You can send your car seat to Terracycle any time for a fee. They have a product called the Baby Gear Zero Waste Box (https://www.terracycle.com/en-US/zero_waste_boxes/baby-gear). You pay for a small, medium or large size box and they'll recycle whatever you put in it. A small box is \$80 and the large box is more than \$200. There is another place that will take your car seat called BabyEarth (<http://www.babyearth.com/renew>). In that case, you only pay for shipping, and they send you a \$5 coupon for their store.

So all these programs shred your car seat and that's an energy intensive process. It tried to find ideas for you that involved creatively reusing your car seats. Unfortunately, I did not find great ideas. Even Pinterest showed only one idea which was to make a swing [<https://www.pinterest.com/Trashmagination/car-seat-recycling/>]. If you have found creative ways to reuse car seats, please let me know at trashmagination@gmail.com.

Some Communities Recycle Car Seat Plastic

When my kids outgrew their car seats, I searched earth911.org and other resources, and I could not find anywhere to recycle the car seats. But now there is a website called Recycleyourcarseat.org with a directory of places across North America where you can take your car seat [<http://recycleyourcarseat.org/where-do-i-recycle-my-seat/>]. There are no car seat recycling programs in my state of Virginia. But there are two counties in Maryland - kudos to Frederick County and Howard County!

I found info on the Montgomery County website that suggests you contact Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service's car seat program, which gives car seats to needy families or uses car seats for training purposes. I wonder if other fire and rescue services do this but don't advertise it because they might get overwhelmed with car seats.

In all the cases I reviewed, you first need to remove all the fabric and metal components of the car seat – so they are recycling specifically the plastic part.

It is really not easy to recycle car seats. Some manufacturers embed steel into the plastic to make the car seat stronger – but that makes it extremely difficult to recycle because then plastic and metal are mixed together. The folks who make that website Recycle Your Car Seat have put up a white paper with ideas on how manufacturers could make car seats easier to recycle, as well as models for governments to recover the cost of recycling. I couldn't find any websites with campaigns currently to lobby car seat manufacturers – let me know if you find some.

Can I Give My Car Seat to Another Family?

It is possible that your car seat is still useful. Every car seat should have an expiration date stamped on it [<https://www.verywell.com/the-facts-about-car-seat-expiration-284382>]. Generally car seats expire six years after they were manufactured. This is because car seats are typically stored in cars that get very hot and very cold, which causes the parts to break down after a while.

If you want to use a car seat from another family, make sure that the car seat has not expired and that it has not been in a crash. Get the original paperwork to ensure you are installing it correctly and take advantage of local programs offered by your fire station or police station where they will make sure the seats are installed properly.

So Thanks for Listening!

As a reminder, you can always download notes about each Trashmagination podcast episode at the website.

Car seats are just one example of items that are very difficult to creatively reuse – but Trashmagination is up for the challenge! I really want to hear about what items you are struggling to reuse so I can find solutions for you. Or of course, I'm also very keen to hear about items that you have creatively reused in interesting ways!

I hope to see you at KIDfest this Sunday in Silver Spring, Maryland! If you review the podcast and come to booth 54, I'll have a special creative reuse prize for you!

Also, it would mean so much to hear from you. If you have been enjoying this podcast, please drop me a note at trashmagination@gmail.com with thoughts on what is helpful so far in these first 25 episodes or you have enjoyed! It would keep inspiring me to make the next 25 episodes to hear from you.

Until next time – may you see trash as just another source of art in your life.