



## Trashmagination Podcast #113 – Yoga Mats

Welcome to Trashmagination, a podcast about reimagining trash. I'm Carla Brown. In today's episode, we'll talk about how to creatively reuse yoga mats. I'll share stories about yoga mats that are made from recycled materials, and then products made from recycled yoga mats. Finally, I'll share ideas for how you can creatively reuse yoga mats at home.

### Yoga Mats Made from Recycled Materials

First let's talk about yoga mats made from recycled materials. In the past, most yoga mats were made from PVC or polyvinyl chloride but there is a long list of problems with this type of material. The most common plastic yoga mat today is made from EVA or ethylene vinyl acetate. These mats are popular because they are "sticky" and keep you from sliding around. Unfortunately neither PVC nor EVA yoga mats are recycled by most municipal programs.

Increasingly there are alternatives made from rubber, cork, jute or woven mats from cotton. Some yoga mats are even made from recycled materials and since that's an example of creative reuse, that's what I'll focus on now.

The Sugamat is made from recycled wet suits [<https://www.sugamats.com/>]. Wetsuits often last only a few years with regular use and very few ways to creative reuse them. Sugamat gather wetsuits from surf shops, chop them up and make yoga mats. I read one review from someone who had pets which kept destroying her previous yoga mats, but their claws did not damage the Sugamat because it is a much sturdier construction. The appearance is mostly black with speckles of other colors [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00QJ2J3Dehc>]. These mats are heavier than most other mats which is a consideration if you take your mat with you, and they are more expensive than many mats. However you can purchase a lifetime warranty version for \$100 so you can just keep replacing the mat as it wears out.

Another company which makes yoga mats from creatively reused materials is Yoga Design Lab, which makes yoga mats from recycled plastic bottles [<https://www.yogadesignlab.com.>]

There are also companies which take old yoga mats and make them into new products. For example, Sanuk [<https://www.sanuk.com/>] and Nahlo [<https://nalho.com/>] use recycled yoga mats in the insoles for their sandals. Manduka has a program called LiveOn where they take old mats and recycle them in a variety of ways [<https://www.manduka.com/pages/live-on>].

### Yoga Mats as Liners, Mouse Pads and Puzzle Mats

Next let's talk about ways that people take an old yoga mat to reuse it around their home. The most common reuse idea is to use it as a liner or mat. Pet owners and animal shelters use yoga mats for all sorts of tasks such as:

1. lining pet crates
2. protecting the floor under pet dishes of their pets for when they spill food or water
3. protecting the floor under a kitty litter pan
4. protecting their trunk (or boot) of their car when transporting pets

In the kitchen, you can line drawers with them or make placemats. You can put them under your dish drying rack. You can cut them into circles to make a gripper to open jars, or you can protect your furniture by making coasters.

Gardeners use them to protect their knees when working on the ground. Campers make a door mat for their tent so they can take off their shoes before entering the tent and avoid tracking dirt in there. People take yoga mats to the

beach instead of a towel or to sports games to insulate the seat. As an example of a very tiny mat, you can cut down a yoga mat to make a mouse pad.

Our family has used a small yoga mat as a bath mat for when you step out of the shower. They don't absorb moisture so they are not great in that respect, but they don't slip so that's handy.

If you love putting together puzzles but can't leave them out all the time, some people do their puzzles on a yoga mat and then roll them up to put them aside for later.

Yoga mats are great for padding. Some people put their guitar or other musical instruments on a yoga mat so it doesn't slide off a table or get dinged. They might wrap breakables in yoga mats when moving.

## Crafts from Old Yoga Mats

Next let's talk about how people creatively reuse yoga mats to make crafty things.

Yoga mats are a great material for making educational items. For example, you can use an exacto-knife to cut out shapes, letters or numbers for hands-on activities. Some people cut them into shapes and make stamps from them by dipping them in paint or ink.

The next idea is to make a sensory mat or sensory rug. This is a mat where you attach items with many textures and it's like a flat playground on the floor for babies. Or you put multiple mats along a path and it's called a sensory walk [<https://www.hellowonderful.co/post/12-creative-sensory-walk-activities-for-kids/>]. The idea is for kids to walk along the path with bare feet. People say they both stimulate the senses and also have a calming effect. The items attached to the mat could be sponges, pompoms, scrubbies, plastic checkers, artificial grass, corks, smooth glass beads, aluminum foil or rope. You could even cut out shapes from a yoga mat and glue it on a yoga mat to make new textures.

- <https://www.instagram.com/p/BRYaQ-RgYaU/>
- <https://www.montessorinature.com/diy-sensory-rugs-for-kids/>

Yoga mats can be great for making active games for your family.

1. One family made a hopscotch on their yoga mat [<https://ilovemykidsblog.net/2015/02/indoor-hopscotch-mat.html>].
2. Another made a bowling alley by putting pool noodles along the edges of their yoga mat, and then standing bottles at the end. They used a beach ball for the bowling [<https://www.polkadotchair.com/coke-bottle-diy-outdoor-bowling-game/>].
3. Another family cut up their yoga mat to make bases for playing baseball.

I read an article by a physical therapist who travels to visit patients, and they need to bring materials with them on the visits. They make a variety of activities on yoga mats because they are easy to transport [<https://beyondbasicplay.wordpress.com/2014/08/18/5-ways-to-use-a-yoga-mat-in-pediatric-pt-other-than-for-yoga-or-pilates/>]. Even if you are not a physical therapist, but a parent who is looking for sensory activities for your child, there are some great ideas in this article. Some people with autism find it calming to be wrapped up like a burrito, and you can use a yoga mat to do that.

Yoga mats are also a popular material for making Halloween and cosplay costumes. Many cosplay designers actually use the thicker foam that you find in the floor mats that snap together – I think they are sometimes called puzzle tiles. That type of material will hold a shape if you heat it, but yoga mats need to be sewn to hold a shape.

I saw a pizza slice costume from a beige yoga mat where they cut a hole for their head, and then had two big triangle shapes hanging down their front and back, then they decorated it with pepperoni and other pizza toppings.

Fiona Joy made Viking hats for her son from gray and white yoga mats [<https://www.instagram.com/p/BmJI-sUnXDT/>]. He wanted to dress up as the cartoon character Asterix. She followed the pattern designed by Alicia Brown who always works with cardboard, but Fiona adapted it to work for a yoga mat.

Rhylee Passfield is a makeup artist from Australia who made an incredible Wonder Woman bustier from a yoga mat [<https://www.boredpanda.com/wonder-woman-costume-rhylee-passfield-rermakeup/>]

- <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bgnd88zlaJ3/>
- <https://www.instagram.com/p/BbBkjFODaU/>
- <https://www.instagram.com/p/BbB01Daj6-z/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-1oaUh0noY>

## Yoga Mat Bags from Recycled Materials

Another way that yoga enthusiasts can creatively reuse materials is to make a yoga mat bag from recycled materials. I found many tutorials for how to make a yoga bag from scrap fabric because it's basically a long skinny draw string bag with a handle which is a great beginner sewing project [<https://www.diyideacenter.com/DIY-Jewelry-and-Accessories/Recycled-Fabric-Yoga-Mat-Bag>]. In fact, the leg of a pair of pants or trousers makes a great yoga mat bag, especially if they have pockets that button shut. Some people crochet a long skinny bag from plarn made from recycled t-shirts or plastic bags.

## Artists who Creatively Reuse Yoga Mats

In each episode of Trashmagination, I love to talk about artists who are creatively reusing the material and in this case, it took me a long time to find even one artist who works with yoga mats. But I just learned about Alex Ebstein who works only about an hour away from me in Baltimore, Maryland. She makes abstract works from yoga mats. I read one website who described them as inspired by Matisse's cut-outs and that does seem like a good description. She takes the bright colors of yoga mats and cuts them into abstract shapes that fit together like a puzzle. These would be pieces you would display on the wall like a painting. She started working with yoga mats as her medium after a car accident in graduate school. This was a material she could work with even with an injured arm.

- <https://www.anothermag.com/art-photography/8460/artwork-fashioned-from-yoga-mats>
- <https://www.self.com/story/this-artist-transforms-yoga-mats-into-works-of-art>
- [https://www.instagram.com/alex\\_ebstein/](https://www.instagram.com/alex_ebstein/)

Alex is the only artist I found who creatively reuses yoga mats to make pieces that go in a gallery, so let me know if you have find any more!

## Thank you!

Thank you for listening! Please let me know if you have ever creatively reused yoga mats at [trashmagination@gmail.com](mailto:trashmagination@gmail.com). Until next time, may you see most yoga mats as a source of art in your life!

Pinterest board - <https://www.pinterest.com/Trashmagination/yoga-mats-neoprene-wet-suits/>