

Trash to treasure



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Trash to Treasure, Why Dumpster Diving is the way to go. For most people, the idea of rummaging through other people's garbage is distasteful and gross, yet there are a slew of people who go out looking for anything that may be of value. Dumpsters are full of things of some potential value to someone and also of things that never have much intrinsic value but are interesting (Eighner 25). The previous owner may have disregarded the value simply because the item didn't match their decor or they just didn't find a need for it any longer. People choose to dumpster dive because it is environmentally friendly, they have become curious to what people throw away, it reduces the amount of waste sent to landfills and it has become a hobby. Understanding these choices will provide the much needed knowledge to citizens in the United States of America who are opting for convenience instead of reusing.

Dumpster diving counters the wastefulness of our throw-away society by reducing the volume of trash in landfills and recycling quality merchandise. Dumpster diving is highly frowned upon in today's society. Most often dumpster divers are labeled as bums or low lives but in many instances this is not the case. Dumpster diving has become more common among financially stable people, as there are a lot of perfectly good items in the trash. Some items thrown out can cost hundreds of dollars if bought brand new such as furniture. A couple of the most common items that people commonly find plenty of are clothes and food.

Consumers throw out brand new or gently used clothes because they are either too big or too small or they just don't like them anymore. Food is discarded because the expiration date has passed, too much overstock on an

item, overly ripened food, spoiled or cosmetically imperfect and/or blemished spots on items. This leads to ??? more than 25 percent of food thrown away by Americans, which adds up to about 96 billion food waste each year??? according to the United States Department of Agriculture (Watson 29).

On the other hand, while we are throwing away outdated food the Arizona Daily Star reported, ??? The USDA concurs, noting the country has no universally accepted system for food dating. In fact, it says on its website that many products should still be safe after the sell-by date, if handled properly and kept at the recommended storage temperature of 40 degrees or below???. If this is the case, why are we throwing out such good items If food markets are not able to put the items on their shelves, why not let someone else come to reclaim and reuse the items Dumpster divers offer a healthy solution to reclaiming and reusing what most in this country would consider waste. Dumpster diving, according to the Webster dictionary, is the practice of sifting through commercial or residential trash to find items that have been discarded by their owners.

Yet, many dumpster divers like to refer to ??? diving??? as fishing because it can be relaxed or competitive depending on the location and the season. Dumpster diving sounds very negative therefore when one is explaining to others where they found such an item they find themselves using the words scavenging or scrounging which is what one often does at yard sales when looking for items. There are several different types of dumpster divers. There are ones who do it as a hobby, they like the thrill of finding good quality items for free. With these dumpster divers it is more of a last minute decision

to grab an item. An example would be if they are walking by somewhere and they happen to come across perfectly good books set out as trash or a slightly used bike. They would reclaim the item and reuse it for their own personal use or sell it.

Then there are also people who do it because it is a necessity for their survival and they search for all of the cans and bottles or anything else they can collect in order to get cash to pay rent or electricity. These are the same people who search grocery store dumpsters for canned goods that are past the expiration date. For fresher foods, many go to the local bakeries or delis to salvage items that were disposed of because they did not look perfect or the package was slightly damaged. Then you have a group of people called Feegans. Freegans dumpster dive to save money, and reduce waste in order to preserve the environment. These types of people live off of other people's waste. Lars Eighner author of ??? On Dumpster Diving??? stated ??? The necessities of daily life I began to extract from Dumpsters. Yes, we ate from them.

Except for jeans, all my clothes came from Dumpsters. Boom boxes, candles, bedding toilet paper, a virgin male love doll, medicine, books, a typewriter, dishes, furnishings, and change, sometimes amounting to many dollars??? (22). Now, there is a realization that many people do not want to have all used stuff. However, there are many good items you can find in dumpsters. It goes to show you that people as a whole are very wasteful so why not take advantage of it When you are ??? in the land of plenty so why pay??? (Conlin 56) Let it be known, dumpster diving doesn't always have its perks.

When someone chooses to dumpster dive they have to try to be discreet and use their better judgment. While dumpster diving isn't exactly illegal, choosing your dumpsters wisely may save a trip to jail because if the dumpsters are set on private premises one can get charged with trespassing. As a person continues their adventurous search it may be a good idea to make sure the proper gear is worn to prevent any injuries. A flashlight will be needed if the search is conducted during darker hours and wearing gloves is a good idea to protect the hands from being poked or stuck with any sharp objects. Getting poked with hazardous needles could possibly cause serious health issues. A good pair of old clothes such as a pair of jeans and long sleeve shirt along with some good steel toe boots that can get damaged will be beneficial. Take extreme caution when searching for items in the trash. There can be a lot of broken glass, barbed wire, nails, dirty cat litter, chemicals, and nasty molded food.

As with anything we do, there is always some form of art to go along with it. In dumpster diving there is also an art. It takes special consideration to figure out how, when, and where to find the best items you are looking for. Once a person has searched countless curbs and dumpsters and has finally found the items that they think would benefit them one dives in.

A good dumpster diver does not leave a mess, leaves good material out in plain sight for others to see. Does not make a lot of noise sifting through trash and always makes sure they leave the dumpster cleaner than when they found it. Likewise with a hobby, there is a special art to it, a specific way you should do things. An example of a person taking the hobby of dumpster diving to the extreme is Alexi Ahrens. ??? She took her

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dumpstering and turned it into a kind of business. When her computer technician job at a financial-planning firm became part-time, Ahrens went into overdrive.

She started haunting corporate loading docks. At a photo-processing factory that was closing, she found late-model processing equipment, computers, and unused office supplies. Ahrens sold them on eBay for \$2, 000??? (Conlin 56). Dumpster diving is no different than any other hobby because the sole intention is to reclaim the item thrown out or sold, reuse it and sell it for profit. However, reclaiming an item is easier said than done. Reclaiming and reusing an item sounds so much better than saying that it came out of the dumpster. More often than not a lot of people plan their weekends around shopping at all the yard sales, thrift stores, and second hand stores such as Salvation Army or Goodwill.

However, these people are not as frowned upon as much as dumpster divers are because they are actually getting the items from a place or store where money is exchanged for the items wanted. In these instances one is simply reclaiming the item and reusing. According to the (EPA) Environmental Protection Agency, if we as Americans would take it upon ourselves to be more consciences and to reuse items we would ??? stop waste at the source??? which, ??? can help reduce waste disposal and handling costs, because it avoids the costs of recycling, municipal composting, landfilling, and combustion??? (Environmental Protection Agency). Think of how much trash we would save everyday by reclaiming and reusing items. According to the U.

S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) 2006 Facts and Figures, The average American throws out more than 4 pounds of garbage every day. Add in more than 300 million people living in this country and it adds up to 250 million tons of garbage produced each year (Watson, 4). That is a lot of garbage. Americans throw so much waste out why should people go buy brand new items when they can save their money and dumpster dive and/or scrounge for items that are just as good sometimes even brand new. There has been several arguments to justify dumpster diving.

Many argue they dumpster dive in order to reuse the resources that are destined to go to the landfill thus, making dumpster diving green. Another argument is that the wastefulness of a consumer society and its throw away mentality prompts individuals to reclaim items from being destroyed. In any case, there are many environmentally friendly ways of living. One of the options that we have discussed in detail is dumpster diving; however, that is not the only option. In order to be more eco-friendly people can buy used items, eat only organic foods like home grown vegetables and fruit, use eco-friendly cleaning products such as vinegar, walk, bike or carpool to destinations that are within a reasonable distance, and they can try to conserve energy by shutting off lights when not home or when the lights are not being used.

Doing so will save approximately 82 million tons of waste being sent to landfills and recycling saves natural resources (Watson 17). A great example of people that rely on our wastefulness are Freegans. Freegans focus on buying less and use only what they need. An article from the New York Times described Freegans as scavengers of the developed

world, living off consumer waste in an effort to minimize their support of corporations and their impact on the planet, and to distance themselves from what they see as out-of-control consumerism???. However, Freegans have developed a philosophical rationale stating ??? Freegans are people who employ alternative strategies for living based on limited participation in the conventional economy and minimal consumption of resources. Freegans embrace community, generosity, social concern, freedom, cooperation, and sharing in opposition to a society based on materialism, moral apathy, competition, conformity, and greed??? (New York Times).

Americans of the United States have become a society based on consumption and convenience. Consumption is mostly second nature to us. Most of us were taught to discard the container our food came in not reuse it. There is plenty more one can buy so why reuse it if one does not have to. However, the more a person buys, the more they have to discard which in return creates more waste instead of reclaiming or reusing. Many people do this because they like how convenient it is after all who does not like convenience We create more waste by buying items in individual packages instead of just buying bulk and being able to throw all our trash in one bin instead of separating it out, again, convenience. How about the people who totally disregard the environment and toss out their wrappers and cigarette butts thinking someone else is going to pick it up for them. This type of attitude has become the norm amongst our society.

In order to make our environment a better place, programs have been implemented to get consumers to be more aware of what they are buying and how they may be able to reduce and reuse the amount of garbage that

is being taken to our landfills. Some of the programs that have been implemented and are doing well are the Material and Waste Exchange, Pay-As-You-Throw, and Dump & Run. Material and Waste Exchange are markets that are available for buying and selling reusable and recyclable commodities. These exchanges handle hazardous materials, industrial process waste and the Material exchange strictly handles material.

Advertisements for these exchanges are posted throughout printed catalogs and websites in order to connect buyers with the sellers. Pay-As-You-Throw is a logical way to get people to really pay attention to what they are tossing out. With pay-as-you-throw program residents are charged for how much trash they throw out. Communities that have this type of program are either charged per trash bag or are billed based on the weight of the trash. Lastly, Dump & Run, this program was founded due to the high junk problem at colleges. It is ??? a non profit organization that has advised more than 30 institutions on how to salvage??? (Gilbert 95) what students have left behind. Along with Dump & Run most colleges have taken on their own program in order to get rid of junk.

Specifically, ??? George Washington University, housing director Matt Trainum helps run a Green Move Out program that collects food, clothes and other goods to give to local charities. Bins are placed in the lobby of every residence hall, and student volunteers help sort through the piles??? (Gilbert 95). These 3 programs are great solutions to a never ending problem. To aid in solving the problem of waste, it is important as a society to recognize the importance of reclaiming and reusing when possible, and not frown upon those who choose to dumpster dive to get the free valuables. People should <https://assignbuster.com/trash-to-treasure/>

follow in the footsteps of people who pay attention to the environment, promoting green living. These are the people who are really frugal, living off of everyone else's waste, getting good quality items for free. Most people do not pay attention to what or how much they throw away. They are simply happy when they see their garbage disappear when the garbage truck comes.

Is it possible for us to change our habits and reduce the amount of waste Solving our waste problem will take many years. It will take imagination, money, new ideas and hard work. If you feel dumpster diving may be too gross or demeaning but you still want to save money or recycle items one could try finding discounted or free items through various websites like Freecycle or Craigslist. The sole purpose of these websites is to recycle good quality items.

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