

HOW TO: BECOME A SUSTAINABLE FASHION DESIGNER



EARTH  GUARDIANS

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At Earth Guardians, we take amplifying the voice and leadership of youth seriously. While we work intergenerationally, we honor the power of peer-to-peer connection and support. For that very reason, we have created this unique line of one-of-a-kind 'How to' Guides written by young Earth Guardian solutionaries, plus an amazing Earth Guardian teacher. The guides are all passion-driven and cover a variety of topics, ranging from ridding your school campus of plastic water bottles to becoming a sustainable fashion designer and more. They have thoughtfully been crafted with the intention of supporting you as you step forward into taking actions in ways you love. From our hearts and minds to yours, we hope they enrich your journey.

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ABOUT MAIYA

Hey everyone, my name is Maiya McMonagle, and I am a 15 year old model and eco fashion designer from Ireland. I want to share my story on how I started my sustainable fashion brand, House Of Maiya. I started designing when I was ten, and I did not know much about fashion or the industry, nor where to start. All I knew was I had passion for designing and for the environment, so I started there.

I began my career in fashion by using recycled materials because I couldn't afford to buy fabric. I continued using different types of materials as fabrics like curtains, tablecloths really anything that I could find around the house. I realized that I had a real passion for reusing and recycling crazy things and transforming them into beautiful designs. I began studying my craft, to try and better my knowledge of the fashion industry, and I then learned of the large amount of waste pollution going into our Earth from the fashion industry. The fashion industry is the 2nd largest contributor to climate change. I didn't understand why this piece of information was unknown to the masses, so I decided that I was going to change that.

From that point on, I have fused my love of the environment and passion for fashion and started creating haute couture designs using all sorts of materials, while spreading much needed awareness about the textile industry throughout the world. I have pretty much used everything in my designs that I could find...bath mats, Christmas trees...everything...even using old clothes and upcycling them, using all sorts of fabrics and materials.

Now, I have taken my designs around the world and showcased them in a lot of amazing places like New York fashion week, London fashion week and many more. My designs have been featured in all types of magazines, including Vogue. I am currently focusing on a commercial, sustainable line called Mischievous Clothing which is for all ages and can be worn to all occasions. When people wear my Mischievous Clothing, they will personally be making a difference in our environment.

I just want to inspire my fellow youth to make a difference, big or small, and know that anything is possible no matter your age, religion, sex or financial situation. I hope that my story inspires you to begin a story of your own.

For more information on me and my journey, you can follow me on all social media: [@maiymc12](#)

To specifically follow my fashion journey, follow House of Maiya: [@houseofmaiya](#)



HOW TO BECOME A SUSTAINABLE FASHION DESIGNER

Here are my 10 tips to launching your very own passion for fashion, into action, on behalf of the environment.

1. LEARN YOUR CRAFT AND GAIN SOME MORE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT YOUR PASSION

If you are passionate about both fashion and the environment, like me, then learn everything you can about it. Whether you choose commercial, high fashion, haute couture or all three, it's good to have a general knowledge and then start on your craft. Learn about sustainability, ethical fabrics, the fashion industry, pollution...everything you can. Learn about the local environmental issues in your community, and see how you can make a difference. There are a huge amount of courses you can take online, for free, that will help you gain some more knowledge about your passion and craft.

Dream, add your purpose, add your passion and start designing!

2. START SMALL

It's important to start small and not overwhelm yourself. Pick a small number of clothing pieces for your first collection, 5-6 designs. Even making one piece is a start. From there, try upcycling (reusing fabric from other pieces of clothing) all the clothing for your first collection, as it's easier and more cost effective. Make a mood board of the colours you want to use and the theme you want to use. The line I debuted at Fashion Week 2017 was based on a 'Water Protectors' theme. The story behind the designs is just as important as the designs. This is how the message is spread.

3. GET YOUR HANDS ON DIFFERENT MATERIALS

Whether your designs are commercial, high fashion or haute couture, your fabric / material are super important when starting your career. Grab anything and use it as fabric. Thrift stores were my 'go to' to get things to use as fabrics, as well as tablecloths, curtains...really anything. Like I said before, upcycling other clothes is super cool. Go buy some men's t-shirts (more fabric than female t-shirts) take them apart to create something new! Get some jeans and add some patches, rip tears, add accessories. Just get whatever you can and turn it into something new! When you get to the stage where you can afford to buy fabrics, there are a huge range of ethical fabrics and sustainable fabrics online that you can buy!! Look for places nearby you to save on shipping.

4. MAKING YOUR DESIGN

When making your design, it's good to have some basic skills, and a lot of them you will learn as you go, but it's good to have a good basis before you start. You may not be able to afford a seamstress, so try learning to sew and ask somebody to help you out. When I was starting, my mom also learned to sew along with me so that she could help. It's good to have a support like that, so maybe ask a friend or family member to learn along with you. For the catwalk, you don't have to worry about it too much because you can pin, staple, glue and sew onto the model. For sales, your design will need to be made well. So learning to sew will come in really handy, or finding somebody who will help you along the way.

5. GIVE SOME SAMPLES TO FRIENDS AND FAMILY TO TRY OUT AND HELP YOU MARKET YOUR CLOTHING

After you've made a few prototypes, get your friends and family to help you market them. Ask friends to wear your clothing and take some pictures to post on social media. The samples do not have to be made perfectly, just wearable. Your friends and family are going to be a great help so ask for their opinions, and that will help you really hone in on the best designs. If your designs are evening wear, then get your friends and family to wear them on nights out! In the beginning, my friends were super helpful. Also, wear your own clothing. Think, if you wouldn't wear your design then others won't either.

6. CHOOSING A NAME

Your name is important when starting your sustainable fashion brand. You want your name to be catchy and leave an impact. Think of a name that is special to you and that suits the style of designs you are doing. This will be on your social media and, eventually, on your swing tags, labels and maybe a website. You can create a logo on lots of free apps.

7. SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is the easiest way to spread your message. So when trying to spread a message for the environment through your clothing, creating a social media page is one of the best ways to do that. Set up a social media page on all platforms, and ask your friends to take pictures in your clothing that you can post.

8. YOUR STORY

Your story is super important, it's how people will connect with you and your designs. The story behind the design is super important also. If, like me, you are fighting for social and environmental issues, then know what's going on in the world so you have a good understanding of things. Your story and message will be conveyed through your designs and through you, so it's important to always be passionate about what you are doing and have a story people can connect with!



9. MARKETING

Now, be your story. When I was just starting out in fashion, I wore my very first design to a modeling competition I was doing, and I won because I was wearing my own design and it had a message behind it. After that, a lot of opportunities opened up for me to take my designs to different fashion shows, all because I was wearing my own design with purpose. It's important to wear your clothing and own it because if you love it everyone else will.

Other ways to market your designs are to:

- Join fashion groups on Facebook to find out what shows are on in your local area where you can showcase your clothing. Also, just go to watch and see what the fashion in your local community is like.
- Talk to new people to form contacts. People are actually super happy to help new designers.
- Do lots of photoshoots with your friends so you can post them across all social media Platforms.



10. SELLING YOUR CLOTHING

When starting to sell clothing, it's important to make it high quality. Start off by selling to your friends and family. When you are a little bit further along, you can make a portfolio and bring it into a boutique and start selling there. Sell on social media platforms and even make a little website where people can shop your clothing online. There are some great, easy and free websites you can use to sell your clothing. Just remember, it takes a lot of trial and error to get started selling, but, with time and work, you will be selling...in no time.

Always be aware of the fact that success isn't made in a day. It will take time, effort and a lot of sacrifices to succeed. Which is why it's important to love what you are doing and have the motivation to keep going! As long as you love what you are doing, it's all worth it.

I wish you all the best of luck on your journeys, and if you need any further guidance or help along the way, you can contact me on my Instagram .

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