

The Downsizer Guide to Scrimping

Contributed by Penny

From a topic introduced by Milo, these are scrimps which Downsizers have come up with to help not only the planet, but your wallet as well!

Food Scrimps When you open a tin of soup, (etc.) (if opening a tin is not in itself too profligate), always run some water (not very much) into the tin and swill it about to get out all the remaining soup, then add the result to the rest of the soup. The process provides more soup! Never use a tea bag only once. Eat the bread crusts rather than chuck 'em. How can people do that!!? Leave the ketchup bottle upside down until the sides look clean and dilute the last of the stubborn stuff with a splash or two of vinegar. Fruit and veg are hardly ever too mouldy if you cut off the bad bits. Breakfast cocktail - all the piddly bits from the bottom of various cereal packets - usually stale and only marginally better than the cardboard box, but it makes me feel strangely triumphant as I wave my spoon defiantly at the consumer society. Add vinegar to the dregs of sauce bottles. If my sister has any red wine left after opening the bottle she freezes it to put in her casseroles next time she makes one. Left over wine in this house would be a bl**dy miracle. A splash of water in a used Marmite jar will add richness to gravy. Freeze the crumbs from the biscuit tin and collect them to make a cheesecake base. Drink water for every alternate drink. Not only is it cheaper, it is also better for you. Write a menu, and shopping list. You will buy less food and waste less too. You will save money because you will not be relying on pre-packaged meals, as you will have an idea what to prepare and will get the main ingredients ready the night before. (If you follow a menu and take meat out of the freezer the night before, it won't need to be defrosted in the microwave, thereby saving power too). Odd dregs of jam can be scraped out for baking. A little blob in each fairy cake makes a nice selection. Freeze leftovers (that are too good for dogs) as homemade ready meals. If you are cooking a roast, use the water from parboiling the potatoes to cook the rest of the veg (in the same saucepan) and then add it to the carcass for stock. Half a chicken is enough to make a roast, a stir-fry, sandwiches for several days plus stock. When making jam, add a finely grated cooking apple to each panful to help it set and get one more pot per pan. Stale bread: crumble up into breadcrumbs, keep in freezer.

Household Scrimps A tip for teachers: collect up tinfoil cake cases from the staff room and use them for home baking. Worn down bars of soap: don't chuck 'em, squish one against another to make a bigger bar. (My mum once had a small plastic discus-shaped thing with a mesh of holes in it - worn out soap was put inside it and it was then used instead of a bar of soap). Leave the skins of citrus fruits to dry out next to your woodstove. The oils in them make the skins into good fire-lighting material. Add water to the end of the washing up liquid bottle. Turn shampoo/conditioner bottles upside down. Add a little water to shampoo or bubble bath bottles to get the last dregs out. Or give them to the kids to play with in the bath - not only do they get clean enough for recycling, but so do the kids!! Clean shoes when they are dirty. Use old tights to tie plants up. When you can't get any more out of a bottle of hand-cream, cut it open - you can get at least another couple of day's worth from inside. Save string. The rubber bands discarded by posties are ace, waterproof firelighters. ...they also make really good rubber bands! Toothpaste tubes are not empty until split and scoured. Use envelopes to store saved seed. Collect twigs while out and about for lighting the stove. Take the stubby bits of candles you get left with and use them as firelighters. Alternatively melt down the wax, drizzle it over pine cones and use those as firelighters. You can even roll the waxy cones in glitter and present them in a nice basket as a gift to add to a hamper for someone you know has open fires. The microwave is a useful tool for various scrimps: heat citrus fruit to get more juice out of them, melt old ends of candles to make new candles and zap crackers that have gone a bit soft - this works great, especially with matzo crackers - you do have to wait until they have cooled though. When out on a walk, pick up any pinecones you find as they are good for fire lighting (never buy firelighters) - have also just chopped up last year's Christmas tree for the same purpose since it decided not to survive. Sieve all the ash from the fire and put it on the garden. Any lumps that do not pass through the sieve can either go back on the fire or be saved for the BBQ. Why bother with the expense of hand cream? Go and stroke a sheep! Use the liquid soap that collects in the bottom of the soap dish during your shower as shampoo (if you are using home-made soap that is quite mild). It also keeps the rest of the soap cleaner.

Clothing and Fabric Scrimps Use old clothes for quilting/collage. Some time ago (about 2 years) I bought 2 pairs of jeans, even at half price they were still £10 a pair. Then they developed holes, just above the knees. I was in serious danger of being in fashion. When Tesco announced 20% off all clothing I bought a new pair of jeans (£2.40!) but the extra long ones. Chopped 2 inches off each leg: behold patches for old jeans. When my cotton dishcloths get too 'grey' I save them. When I have four I over sew them together - gives me a big handy floor cloth. When that finally becomes unusable - on the compost heap it goes. As a child my mum made me shirts from my granddads shirts whose collars & cuffs were worn & skirts from the leftover material from Gran's dresses. Am currently wearing for work the cast-off trousers my sister wore when she was pregnant (the ones that were one size up from her normal size - my mum got the ones that were 2 sizes up) - after all they didn't get worn for very long by her. Cut up and hem old cotton shirts for hankies. Use the sleeves (after felting) of an old wool cardi, soled with off cuts of sheepskin to make slippers. I have an old silk shirt somewhere that I'm keeping for making into hankies, so I can stop buying tissues. This would be good scrimping, if I got round to it! How's this for scrimping? I have a pair of cheap slippers and the soles wore off in about 2 months.... kept 'em just in case.... tonight I have sewn new soles on made from denim (cut off an old pair of jeans made into shorts) and stuffed them with cushion stuffing. Replace boot soles not boots. Dry oranges peel, etc, in the

hearth and use it under the kindling to light the fire/stove next day. (I also burn any old tin cans in the fire. When they go out with the ash they rust away leaving nothing behind to take to the landfill sites.) Scrimping on Power and Water Use Take frozen bread, etc. out of the freezer the night before you intend to use it and put it into the fridge. While it defrosts there your fridge has very little work to do in order to keep the other stuff cool / cold. If I have a pan or oven dish with oil or fat left in it, I leave it till the morning when I always get the crusts from the kids and chuck them in it. By teatime they have soaked up all the fat and I then put them out for the birds, clean dish and fat birds. What a scrimp!! When you turn on the shower and it is getting warm, leave a bucket for the water to go into, and then use the water for the loo later. Same with the bath water, when finished with, bucket to chuck it. (Metered water here) Put on a jumper, and turn the thermostat down on central heating. Turn appliances off at the wall; don't leave them on stand-by. Peg out washing, or hang it near the cooker, Aga or stove over night. It may need finishing in the tumble dryer, but for a shorter time. We have a kettle full of water, big kettle, on the Aga top at all times then pop it on for quick cuppa, as it is already nearly there Cook vegetables in a double-layered steamer over the spuds. Now that must be thrifty. Turn off the oven 15-20 minutes before the end of cooking- there's enough heat to keep things cooking. Wipe cooking fat out of pans with an old tissue to make fire lighters Bring tomorrow's wood in and keep it by the fire with today's. It burns more efficiently when bone dry and you lose less heat driving off moisture, and so make less smoke and use less wood. Garden Scrimps Shred all waste paper in the house and use for animal bedding, before finally composting. Old bicycle tyres - carefully with a Stanley-type knife cut out the wires, then cut the remainder to length and use as tree ties. Tree ties - if planting a six foot tree, don't use a 6ft post which will cause the tree to take longer to become sturdy. Use a post of such a length that there is about 1ft above soil level. This supports the new tree at root level where it's important. Always make sure that the tie is wrapped around in such a way as to leave rubber between the tree and the stake and that you can loosen the tie as the tree grows. Planting for a windbreak - plant the tree about 45 degrees into the prevailing wind direction. It's likely that it will turn and grow a straight trunk (and one day you might be able to make your own Arty Scrimps Dexion-type shelving makes ace panels to paint on Shopfitters's skips have ace display stands and materials Use PVA decorator's filler for impasto and then add colour Good drawing pastels can be made as follows: find an iron-rich spring where the bacteria are depositing red iron III oxides. Collect as much as you can, filter through a cloth and, using a cut-off plastic bottle as a separating funnel, allow the red crud to settle, siphon off the water by poking holes in the side as the solids settle, remove the cap which now contains the gritty bits and pour the red mud onto newspaper. Allow to partially dry. Put the paste onto a plate, add about 5% by volume talcum powder and about 1% dry methyl cellulose wallpaper paste granules, mix thoroughly, form into sticks and dry. These are nice to handle - adjusting the talc upwards makes them harder and smoother. Soft ones are good worked with a stump General Miscellaneous Scrimps Use tins for pencil/crayon storage, etc. Use waste paper for crafts, papier mâché, etc. Send the same card to your OH each year, adding a new message to it each year. It would build up a lovely history of a relationship to be treasured over the years (& maybe a family heirloom) with so much more meaning than a card that that is just thrown away (recycled) after the event I use old envelopes for shopping lists, notes to hubby and the larger ones for roughs of my Uni work. Then I shred them and add to the compost heap Warm old mascara tubes to get the last out, and use a lip brush to get at the last bits of lipstick in the tube - or dig them out and mix them with Vaseline for lip gloss. I recycle almost any packaging we have for eBay parcels and try to reuse normal envelopes Mend things at least twice (or ignore holes in clothing) Never buy cheap new if quality is available second-hand (as cheap or cheaper). Our recyclers won't collect windowed envelopes. I can't remember the last time I bought envelopes, years and years ago for certain. I open them carefully down a short side and re-use them with licky-sticky labels (from Free Tibet or Viva!). Windscreen wipers. Once they're worn out, don't replace the blades, just the rubbers. Punctured bicycle tyres - don't replace the tube (as the bicycle repair shop staff would do) - mend the puncture, it's not difficult. Any further scrimps added since the time of going to press can be found on this thread.