



What To Do With Mismatched & Old Socks!

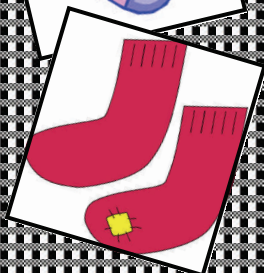
By Rebekah Wilson

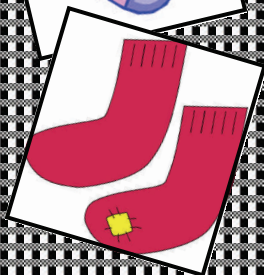
EVERYONE has mismatched socks, often called 'widowed socks.' Or they have socks that have a hole, tear or snag in them making the sock unusable as a sock. What is the frugal homemaker to do with all these excess socks that pile up in the rag box? If you have a large family, this pile can grow very quickly too!

These socks are 'too good' to throw away, and yet useless for anything but rags! Or are they...could a treasure be lurking in the rag bag?

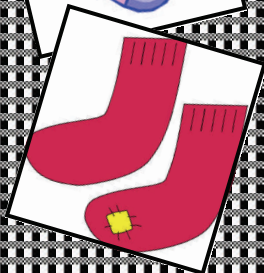
On the following pages you will find many ideas and projects using the socks found in your 'lost sock basket.' Many of these ideas were ones I grew up with as my mother was very frugal and would reuse or find a use for anything until it was completely useless. So in many ways, this lesson is dedicated to the memory of my mother—who is still very fresh in my mind and heart, especially when thinking back to childhood days and pulling forth the ideas for this lesson.

- 1) Place corn starch into the toe of a sock, tie or sew the sock closed at the ankle and use to gently tap onto a baby's bottom to help heal or prevent diaper rash. The corn starch will filter through the sock leaving a powdered layer on the baby's skin. Use a very loose weave sock for this.
- 2) Place baby powder into the toe of a sock, tie or sew the sock closed at the ankle and use to tap powder onto skin. Instant powder puff!
- 3) Turn a sports sock inside out, place your hand inside the sock and you have an instant and very effective duster! You can go over corners, into grooves and do a thorough dusting. When finished, simply toss into the washer and reuse again!
- 4) When polishing wood, turn a sports sock inside out and place your hand inside. Lightly dampen with furniture oil and rub over the furniture. You will be amazed at how easy this is and how easily you can reach any area with the oiled cloth. When finished with the oil, place another sock on your hand to buff and polish the furniture to a shining finish.
- 5) To make a heat therapy rice bag, place 1 cup of white rice into the toe of a tightly knit sock and sew the top closed. Heat in the microwave for 20-30 seconds (depending on how hot you wish it) and you have an instant portable heating pad for sore muscles, inflamed sinuses, joint pain, labor pain, back pain and more. Reuse indefinitely!
- 6) Use a clean and bleached sock to strain jelly through, when finished throw away!
- 7) Have a pair of thick stockings with one good leg left? Cut the good leg off at the crotch and stuff with old socks, dryer link or other rags. Sew the top closed and you have an instant way to prevent drafts from coming or going under doors.

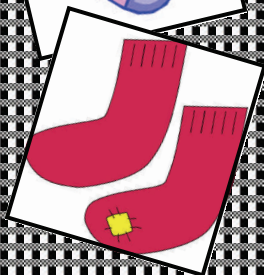




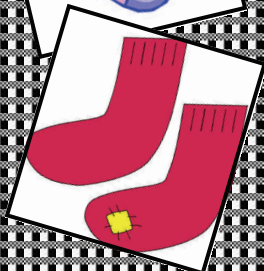
- 8) Use infant or toddler socks, fill with baking flour or baby powder, tie or sew the top closed. Make one for each child who will be playing. These are perfect for boys to throw at each other while playing Army or other games. If the sock hits someone, it leaves a telltale mark like paintball, but it is much less expensive and more fun as your child can play in their own backyard. Cleanup is easy too!
- 9) My father, who lived through the Great Depression, would tell me how his mother and sister would use old socks to make Rag Curls. This goes back even before the depression but works very well, especially after the hair has been freshly washed and is still wet. Simply cut the socks into strips $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 inch wide by 3-5 inches long. Take as much or as little hair as you like into a strand. Tie the length of cut sock to the bottom of the hair strand, roll the hair over the sock length until you reach the scalp and then tie once more. When the hair is dry, simply untie each length and allow the hair to dangle in tight curls.
- 10) If you freeze or place your water bottles in the refrigerator to get cold, try placing the bottle into a clean sock when you take it from the fridge. As the condensation appears on the bottle, the sock absorbs the moisture. Also works great for ice packs too!
- 11) My brother and I would roll up a sock, roll another one onto the first one, then take a very thin sock and place this over the roll. Twist the sock around the rolled insides, then fold back over itself again. You now have a soft type ball for indoor play or take outside. This is also a great way to teach toddlers to catch too. If they have trouble with a small ball, consider adding a few more socks to the rolled layer to make the ball larger.
- 12) Keep two pairs of mismatched socks in your emergency car kit. On cold nights you can use them like impromptu gloves if you find yourself needing to be outdoors and away from home.
- 13) My mother grew up on a cattle ranch and was raised by her pioneer grandmother. I heard how "Grannie" used to make menstrual pads by taking old socks, layering them and sewing on a soft flannel top.
- 14) Cut old socks into thin strips and use to tie garden plants to stakes.
- 15) Cut the toe off of two long socks. Place one sock over each hand and pull up the elbows when pruning roses. The thorns will snag the sock and spare you skin.
- 16) Strips cut from socks make wonderful ties for many things in your home.
- 17) Smaller socks from little feet are wonderful bean bags! These were the very first thing my mother taught me to sew on her sewing machine. We filled ours with rice.
- 18) If you make bean bags and fill them with rice, they make WONDERFUL cold weather hand warmers by placing the bag in the microwave for 20-30 seconds. Place the warmed bags into a child's hands or pockets when they go off to school, play outdoors or come in from the cold. Little hands warm up quick! (Big hands too!!! I use this trick when I need to pick up my older girls from night college classes or my husband works in the cold garage.)



- 19) Turn inside out a sports sock or another sock that is lumpy or loopy (they pick up more dust and debris this way). Slip the sock over a yardstick, tied in place. You can now reach ceiling corners, behind furniture and pianos, under refrigerators, behind bookshelves and other hard to reach places that need something long and thin to dust with.
- 20) Cut socks into strips, sew strips together to form long widths almost like thick yarn and use to create braided rugs. If you use all white socks, when finished dye your rug to match your room. If you have used multi colored socks, you will already have an unusual pattern.
- 21) Socks make wonderful dish cloths! Cut the toe off of two socks that are roughly the same size. Cut the sock across the ankle and cut off the toe section too. You will now have a 'tube' with two open ends. Cut the tube to open it into one piece. Take both pieces, put smooth sides together (bumpy sides should be out) and pin together. Sew around all four edges; then sew an X from one corner to another and you have an instant dishcloth or scrub cloth that often surpasses store-bought ones.
- 22) Have wet shoes? Place clay cat litter (not the clumping modern kind) into two socks, tie or sew the ends closed and place inside the shoes. The old fashioned cat litter made with clay will help absorb the moisture so the shoes will dry quicker.
- 23) Make sock puppets! Every child should do this at least once in their childhood. Bring out the markers, felt, scissors, glue, glitter, small pom poms, plastic wiggly eyes, pipe cleaners and any other craft type thing you have and let your children have a craft day. Use a large cardboard box to create a puppet stage and you have a day filled with old fashioned, inexpensive and fun imaginative play!
- 24) Old socks are great for cleaning up after children with the flu. Paper towels can be pricey and it takes a lot to clean up after sick children who don't make it to the bathroom in time. And what busy mother with a house full of sick children looks forward to washing towels and washcloths after being used to clean up messes? Instead, have a box filled with old socks handy and toss each sock into the trash as they are used.
- 25) Socks make excellent wet cloths to put on a feverish brow. My mother favored two specific old military socks when we were children. They were thick and part wool. They would hold quite a bit of moisture without allowing it to drip down our faces. She would keep these with the children's aspirin and Tylenol in the medicine cabinet.
- 26) Socks work very well when shining shoes with shoe black and bring a beautiful shine to shoes with buffing.
- 27) Socks make excellent and soft rags for washing cars with!
- 28) Place socks on your hands and dust your ceiling fan or window blinds.
- 29) Place catnip and dryer link into a small infant or toddler sock. Tie or sew the end closed. You can even tie yarn around one end to make a 'head' for your cat toy. Cats love to scoot and play with these. As a child, I would tie yarn around these and run through the house with my kitty chasing behind.
- 30) Cut the toe and cuff off of two socks, then cut the 'tube' that is formed down one side. Place both flat layers together, sew around edges and place under your cooking oil to prevent oily residue on your shelves.



- 31) Place mothballs inside the sock, tie closed and hang in your closet. When you no longer need the mothballs or want to replace them, simply throw out the old sock and hang a new one.
- 32) Place cedar chips inside an old sock and tie closed. Hang in your closet or place in drawers or hope chests.
- 33) If you have dry hands or feet, rub lotion liberally on them at bedtime and then place your hands or feet into old socks to protect your sheets and bedding from the oily residue. While you sleep the lotion will help heal and soften your dry skin.
- 34) If your children get the chickenpox, place ground or beaten oatmeal into socks, tie closed and allow to float in a tepid bathtub with the child. The oatmeal powder will filter out into the water, coat your child's skin, and leave a residue on the skin that helps reduce itching. When the bath is finished, simply throw the sock away. You won't have chunks of oatmeal clogging your drain and this is much less expensive than purchasing Aveeno at the store. (Do NOT use hot or warm water as the heat will create more pox to erupt!!!)
- 35) Doll clothes—old socks make wonderful pieces of fabric for children to create doll clothes with. With a little imagination and a few cuts of an old sock girls can create a variety of doll clothes.
- 36) Use old socks to tie newly planted trees to a stake.
- 37) Long socks can have the feet cut off and be used under pants as leg warmers. Simply pull the cut sock over the socks you are wearing and up to the knee. They will keep your legs doubly warm without the added bulk in your shoes.
- 38) If you are painting, place old socks over your shoes to prevent them from getting paint splatters on your shoes.
- 39) Place cold cans of soda inside of socks when packing a picnic basket. They will help insulate the drinks as well as absorbing the moisture from condensation.
- 40) If you live in the country and have livestock, keep old socks handy in the barnyard. Place one or two on your hands to take care of something yucky—then dispose of the socks.
- 41) Old socks are great for fashion doll sleeping bags, especially if they are brightly colored.
- 42) Cut the toe off of a long sock, then begin to cut a 1 inch spiral strip until you reach the cuff of the sock. Using strips like this, crochet them to make bathmats, hotplates for the table, placemats and more.
- 43) Cut a sock open and use as a wet mop behind toilets—when finished throw the sock away or rewash to use again.
- 44) Use a colorful old sock to keep extra cash on hand with. Place your bills inside the sock and place the sock in your sock drawer. Very few burglars would bother to check the socks and the bright color will let you know which sock you used.
- 45) Into a baby or toddler sock (or larger if you prefer) place sachet mix and sew or tie closed. Place in your drawers.
- 46) Slip an old sock over one hand when you wash dishes and you have a sock dishwashing glove. The same is true when washing your car too!



- 47) When we were children my mother would take the leftover soap slivers of soap and put them in a sock before sewing the end closed. We would use these when in the tub. It made an impromptu tub toy and we got clean without even trying.
- 48) Mop heads that open and allow you to place a new string type mop head in are perfect candidates for used socks. Place several used socks in instead of a mop head!
- 49) Make a sock money! Any color sock will do fine. Men's colored dress socks work well.
- 50) Use as a whiteboard eraser. Toss when filled with inky dust.

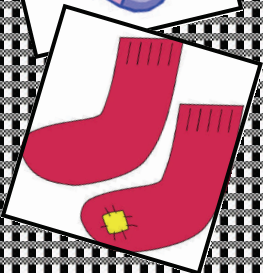
However, the most popular and probably well known use for old used socks is to make sock dolls! I have included some photos of a sock doll I made just for this lesson. The socks used were boys size 10-2½. Sock dolls are easy, inexpensive and can be sewn together quickly—which are perfect for giving as a baby shower or birthday gift or even for selling at bazaars, fund raisers and boutiques!



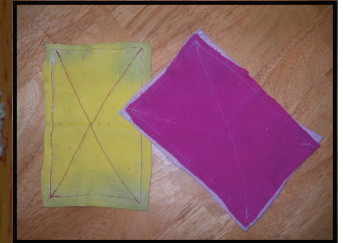
As soon as I finished “Milly” the sock doll, Constance reached out for her and snuggled Milly close. Constance carried Milly everywhere before finally falling asleep—they look like twins!

This doll was made from a boys ankle sock sized 10-2½ for the body. The arms were made from a small piece of a second sock.

Doll clothes were made with scrap fabric sized to fit a 12-14” doll and a little “cuddle-soft” fleece created the ultra soft, snuggly cap!



Here are photos of several very easy uses for old socks:



Nothing fancy here and it takes only a minute or two of quick sewing to give long term useable items. Consider making these from new socks for gifts!

Several colorful widowed women's socks, cut across the foot section (remove the toe and the heel section, which leaves you with a tube, slice one side of the tube open and lay flat—place a second cut sock on top) and sew around the edges and from corner to corner as shown.

Quick and easy dishcloths that can go through the washing machine and come out ready for more cleanup. Also thicker rags for messier scrubbing and cleanup if needed. If they get too yucky, simply throw away and make new ones!

Consider purchasing some netting material and sew the netting, doubled, onto one side of the sock cloths to make excellent low-cost scrubbies! The large photo above shows netting on one side, pretty sock fabric on the other. I used ribbing from my husbands sock beneath the netting for added strength and stretch.



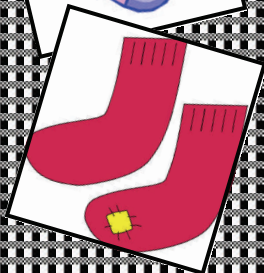
Have little ones who get cold hands? Make a few hand warmer buddies for them!

Cut the sock in half where the heel begins on the foot, cut the heel section off. This will leave you with what looks like a pouch. The toe will be intact (the head part in the photo) and the part you cut where the heel was will have the seam when you are finished sewing.

Fill with white rice, turn under the open edges and pin. Sew by hand or machine to close the opening. Tie thread around the neck.

Heat in microwave for 20-30 seconds and place in your child's pocket for warming little hands quickly!

We used permanent markers for the face.



Super simple playthings!!! Cut off socks at the heel section—cut straight across the sock. This will leave you with a pouch. Fill with white rice, sew a seam across the opening and you have an instant bean bag that can also be used as a hand-warmer when needed. Place in the microwave for 30-40 seconds and then use in pockets, to warm the inside of cold shoes, to take to bed and put your feet on or use as a small heating bag for ear aches or other areas that could use portable heat. The options are endless!

To make the striped beanbag, cut the toe section off as well and you will have a square shaped bag (shown in stripes).

Place one or two in the freezer for instant ice packs too!



Scrunchies in seconds! Cut straight across the flat foot section of your sock. Colorful socks make pretty scrunchies...

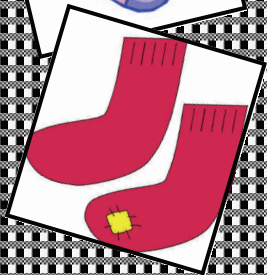
Make strips as wide as you like—they will curl when used so the edges will not really show. You can see in the photo the one closest to the text is already beginning to curl.

You will never run out of scrunchies if you use your old socks! And these scrunchies have real holding power too, they won't slip off your hair easily.

Also consider the two solid colored scrunchies in the photo. These are the ribbing from women's ankle socks that were cut BELOW the line where they were attached to the sock. Make sure you cut below this line or the ribbing will open up and unfold and not be useable.

There are many uses for strips like these. If cut open on one side so you have one long strip you can use to tie a strand of hair and then roll the hair around the strip and knot until you reach the scalp. Tie again and you have a simple, inexpensive, comfortable and very old fashioned curler! When dry simply untie and allow the hair to dangle.

Strips like this can also be used to tie up vegetables, roses or other climbing plants in your garden. They can tie trees to stakes and will not cut into the tree bark. Use as thicker, smaller rubber bands in your kitchen too!



Homework and Sharing

Necessity is the mother of invention—when you need something, see if an old sock will somehow fit the bill! Use your imagination and take pride in what you are able to create and how you are able to stretch your money by reusing what you would normally throw away.

Our ancestors knew how to pinch a penny and make things stretch—even to reusing old socks for ingenious new ideas. Nothing went to waste.

I hope to one day make a crocheted rug with some of our old socks, but for right now with eight children at home I seem to use them up too quickly to even attempt a rug! Although I have used the ideas in this lesson many times, my children have really enjoyed watching me make the sock doll for their baby sister and glean the reward of extra rice baggies to play with and heat up for bedtime or outside play.

One very nice thing I have noticed with the rice bags is when they are made with socks, they do not tear or rip apart even with FOUR active boys playing with them. The fabric stretches and gives unlike calico or muslin fabric.

I have included over 50 useful, thrifty and easy ideas for using old socks. Your homework now is to come up with TWO new ideas not listed here and share your ideas on the forum. I will combine all of the ideas and send out a free lesson for everyone!!!

From Rebekah:

I hope you have enjoyed this lesson as much as I have enjoyed writing it for you. Homemaking is a never-ending journey of ups and downs, new experiences and old, tragedies, trials and triumphs. When we walk this journey alone it can be overwhelming at times, especially if we have not been prepared or taught how to maneuver this long winding road from childhood onward.

The Homemaker's Mentor brings homemakers from around the world together to learn how to be better homemakers and help encourage each one as they learn new skills and move ever forward to creating the happy, balanced, thrifty home they desire. And don't forget—your children learn at your feet. What you learn with The Homemaker's Mentor will be passed on to future generations! *Join us for the journey!*

