I quit buying new clothes completely cold turkey. Here's how I lasted a year.

My name is Erin Rhone, and I am a recovering shopaholic. At the end of 2020, I was coming off a rather large online shopping binge, so, fuelled by shame, the muffled cries of my ever-dwindling bank balance and an urge to do my bit for the environment, I decided to go cold turkey.

According to Clean Up Australia, we dump 15 tonnes of clothing and fabric waste across the country every 10 minutes. That adds up to about 800,000 tonnes, or 31 kilograms per person, every year.

Yikes.

To start with, I wasn't planning on lasting a whole 12 months, firstly because it appeared impossible and secondly because it seemed masochistic to deprive myself of the small amount of joy it gave me, while living through a pandemic.

The thing I wasn't expecting? It was easier than I thought, and largely came down to habit.

Here are five things that helped me make it an entire year - they could help you too:

1. Do a stock take.

Do you actually know what's in your wardrobe? Neither did I. The average Australian wears just 40 per cent of their clothes, with Australia the world's second-largest consumer of textiles. Take the time to go through everything. All the hanging stuff and all the drawers (yes, even the third one down that's full of miscellaneous stuff like those cycling shorts you wore once, random Halloween costumes and the pants you hope to fit into one day).

A lot of the time we buy stuff on impulse without realising we own a similar thing (or 12) already. Once you've sorted out what you no longer want, invite a bunch of mates over for a clothes swap. One lady's trash is another's treasure!

2. Clean out your inbox.

One of my biggest weaknesses was my inbox. Getting emails of discounts, or great deals on my favourite brands was kryptonite for me. I found it really hard to go past a bargain, especially if it was just a click away. Unsubscribe to remove the temptation - and if you don't want to lose touch with your favourite label, set up a separate email just for shopping links and divert the tempting offers there instead, to be checked once a month. Out of sight, out of mind.

3. Follow second-hand sites / op shops.

Op shops have come a long way in the past decade or so. Once they were home only to grandma's old nighties and moth-eaten tweed jackets - these days they're a treasure trove of goodies. Get to know your local store and introduce yourself to the kind volunteers who staff it. They can keep an eye out for you if you're after something specific.

Don't have time to go trawling through racks?

A heap of places have moved online including SWOP, which sells second-hand gear online and through its Instagram page. Want designer goodies? Places like Label Pig sell designer second-hand threads at heavily discounted prices, and they ship globally.

And don't forget Facebook marketplace! A stack of brand new stuff ends up here thanks to people buying things online in several sizes, and then not bothering to return them.

You can search by size and location to narrow your results down. I snagged two pairs of designer jeans for $20 each, and a brand new Rockwear shorts and crop set for just 30 per cent of the RRP!

If none of that appeals, step into the world of fashion rentals. Places like One Night Stand Boutique, Glam Corner and Your Closet offer big name brands for short-term rentals - so you can look a million bucks without actually paying a million bucks.

4. Get familiar with a needle and thread.

How often have you tossed something that had a small hole or a ripped hem? Same - and my Nanna was a dressmaker, so I used to feel especially guilty about this. Familiarise yourself with a needle and thread, and if you can't be arsed doing repairs yourself, find a local tailor who will help you out.

Repairs are often cheaper than buying a whole new garment; it's better for the environment too.

5. Give it a week - and know what you're buying.

Done all of the above and you still can't stop thinking about those Bettina Liano jeans?

Give yourself time. Often the impulse to buy passes in a day or two. Give yourself a solid bit of time to think about the purchase to see if it's something you really need, or if it's just a spontaneous urge to spend cash. If you DO decide to buy something new, do a little digging to see if the company has ethical and sustainable processes.

The annual Ethical Fashion Report and Shop Ethical let you search your fave brand to see how they rate. Brands officially recognised as ethical are also listed on Ethical Clothing Australia.

Lastly, start small! I gave myself weekly goals to start with to make it seem more achievable. Over 12 months, I saved well over $2000, still had a kick-ass wardrobe and did my (teeny) bit to ease the environmental burden that fast fashion creates.

Our choices as consumers have enormous power to shape the industry. And if that's not enough to convince you, it also means more money for coffee and cocktails (or bills - I'm not here to judge) - so it really is win, win.