



Stuffed Animals For Emergencies, Inc.

SAFE Guide to Cleaning Stuffed Animals

Hello!

Thank you so much for wanting to donate your new and gently used stuffed animals!

If you are reading this guide, most likely there was not a SAFE chapter in your area and you are looking to donate your stuffed animals to an organization closer to you or you are interested in doing a stuffed animal drive. This guide is here to explain how I normally clean the stuffed animals I receive before giving them out to any organization. Hopefully, this will help guide you in cleaning up your stuffed animals before distribution.

Let me first say, it is very important for health reasons to clean up any gently used stuffed animals before giving them to children. Just think of it as if these stuffed animals were going to your own children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, cousins, etc. - you would want them as clean as possible. This may take a little more time than just packing them up in boxes and shipping them to one of our SAFE chapter members, but they are going directly to children who could really use them so they need to be in the best shape possible.

First of all, these are some items I use to clean up stuffed animals so you may wish to have these on hand before you get started:

Laundry detergent, washcloth, soap, baby wipes, small comb or brush, scissors, lint brush and some natural dryer sheets to freshen the stuffed animals in the dryer (here is what I use):

<http://www.mrsmeayers.com/product/Lavender-Dryer-Sheets/155764.uts>

If you want to, ribbons (polyester and nylon ribbons work the best) and a needle and thread can come in handy if you find a really nice stuffed animal that needs some minor repairs.

SAFE Stuffed Animal Donations We Accept

We accept new and gently used stuffed animals (any size) that are clean and free of tears, stains or odors, and that are “comforting” and not scary.

We do not accept battery-operated stuffed animals, toys, or dolls.

So let's get started....

1. Basically when I receive any stuffed animals I go through them first and distinguish what I will keep and what isn't suitable to give to a child. Just use your judgement in terms of the shape the stuffed animal is in and if there are any tears, stains or smells. Make your decision about the stuffed animals based on what you think would be suitable to give to one of your own kids, nieces, nephews, cousins, etc. Would it scare a child? Does it not look comforting? If they are torn, have stains, etc. and cannot be washed or fixed, please throw them away or you could try your local animal shelter but I would mention, a lot of stuffed animals have stuffing in them that could be ingested by animals and therefore would cause a hazard to animals so some animal shelters will not accept them anymore. If you have some though that are in really good condition but not suitable for children in traumatic situations, you can also try www.freecycle.org which is a grassroots organization that tries to encourage reusing items and attempts to keep as much as possible out of landfills. Members all over the country offer items and receive items completely free and this is a great way to reuse these particular stuffed animals so that you do not have to throw them away. They have local groups all over the country in just about every city/county in the U.S. ***SAFE has a policy that we do not sell any of our donations so Freecycle is a good alternative for donations that do not qualify for what we accept.***
2. Deciding the condition of the stuffed animal - First, any stuffed animal that is new (with or without tags) or was part of a collection and not played with by children, and doesn't have any stains, tears, spots, or smells, I usually just put these in the dryer for about 5 minutes on AIR DRY (**don't ever put them on high heat because the high temperature will melt the fur on some stuffed animals**) to clear any dust and to freshen them up before donating. Using the natural dryer sheets that I mentioned above really does a great job of freshening up the stuffed animals. **Please cut off any tags though before putting them in the dryer (by tags I mean store tags with prices listed or large manufacturing tags).** My only exception to tags is Beanie Babies; I usually try to keep those on so when I donate them people know they are actual Beanie Babies (which is a really good quality stuffed animal). When the drying is complete, please visually check over the stuffed animals for any minor things that might need done (such as strings that might need to be cut off, lint, etc.). These stuffed animals are now ready to be donated.

All the other stuffed animals that qualified for what donations we accept but were not new or had stains, odors, etc., these will need to be washed before donating. Most stuffed animals that are 24 inches or smaller can be washed in the washing machine. If you have some that are larger than 24 inches, you will need to wash these by hand. Please make sure before washing that tags are removed as above, and that if any of the stuffed animals have attachments (baskets, purses, etc.) please cut them off before washing.
3. Next, please wash these gently used stuffed animals on a gentle cycle with a mild detergent, and put them in the dryer (with some natural dryer sheets as listed above) on AIR DRY or LOW HEAT for a short period of time (5-10 minutes) and then let them air dry the rest of

the way by setting them out on a blanket or table (**again don't ever put them on high heat because the temperature gets too hot and will melt the fur on some stuffed animals - especially stuffed animals with long fur**). If you prefer, you can let them completely air dry (and not use the dryer) after the wash by setting them out to dry in the sun. After that, visually check over the stuffed animals for any minor things that might need done such as strings that might need to be cut off, lint, etc. These stuffed animals are now ready to be donated.

4. If after washing the stuffed animals you have some with stains that wouldn't come out and you cannot see any other way of getting it clean, this would be a good stuffed animal to donate to the animal shelter or throw away.
5. If you find there are some stuffed animals that are in good condition but coming apart at the seam or need other repairs, you can choose to repair it or it will have to be thrown away (if you gave it to the animal shelter the animals would most likely tear it apart).
6. If you have any large stuffed animals (anything over 24 inches in height), again you will have to clean them up by hand. Please use a wet wash cloth with a small amount of soap or baby wipes to clean the fur thoroughly and then use a brush, lint brush and scissors to finish cleaning up the stuffed animal. Some people have also had success using steam cleaners or even vacuum cleaners to clean them up and/or clear them of any dust and freshen them up. If they will fit in the dryer, you can use natural dryer sheets to freshen them up.
7. Lastly, if you could count how many stuffed animals you are going to donate (and to what places) and e-mail me at help@safe-inc.org I would really appreciate it. We keep a running tally of how many stuffed animals are donated to SAFE or are donated through SAFE's contacts, drives, or guidance. Also, if you have any pictures or videos of your stuffed animal donation, we would love to post them on our site and through social media to say thank you!

And that is it! Just organize them in boxes or garbage bags depending on how many you have and take them to the organization that needs them. **Again, if you could please provide a count of how many you donated and e-mail me we would appreciate it.**

Thank you so very much for wanting to help SAFE and the children in your community. If you have any questions at all, please e-mail me at the e-mail address below or you can call me at 937-763-0527.

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