

Leftover materials: what to keep, donate and recycle

The calculators work out your surplus. This is what to do with it — what to keep for repairs, what can be given away, and where the rest can go.

The question the calculators leave open

Every calculator on this site works out the surplus as well as the requirement — the spare packs of flooring, the two boxes of tiles, the half-bag of sand. That figure is there so a repair two years from now has a match.

What none of them used to say is what to do with the rest. This page does. It covers what to keep, what can be given away, and where leftover paint, timber, rubble and offcuts can actually go in the UK.

Every scheme named here has been checked. Where a route is not yet verified, it is listed as unverified below rather than dressed up as fact.

Start with what you will actually keep

Most materials are made in batches, and the shade shifts between them. Flooring, tiles, wallpaper, brick and paving all vary. A repair needs a match, not a similar colour, so the spares figure is worth keeping even when it looks like waste.

Store them flat and dry, and keep the label. A decanted tin with no label is neither usable nor donatable.

Give it away

Usable material almost always finds a taker locally, and it costs nothing to list. Both platforms below are free.

- **Freecycle** — UK-based, local groups. Live listings exist for bricks, rubble, hardcore, plasterboard, timber and flooring, and there are regular *wanted* posts for offcuts and topsoil. ilovefreecycle.org
- **Freecycle** — the same idea with a wider reach. freecycle.org

Small quantities are welcome — a part box of tiles is exactly what someone patching a bathroom needs.

Leftover paint: Community RePaint

Community RePaint is a UK-wide network that takes usable paint and passes it to community groups and individuals. Households drop off at participating recycling centres; traders and businesses arrange collection separately, which may carry a charge.

What it will take: paint *in its original container*, non-hazardous, and *at least half full*. Find your nearest drop-off on the Community RePaint site.

Paint is the one material with a well-established national reuse route. It is worth checking before you tip a part-tin down the drain or leave it to solidify in the shed.

Timber: Community Wood Recycling

A network of social enterprises that collects and resells reclaimed timber, with the surplus passed on to community projects. They take offcuts as well as lengths, and they exist to keep wood out of skips.

Contact your nearest enterprise directly to ask what they can take: communitywoodrecycling.org.uk.

Material by material

- **Concrete and rubble** — set concrete and hardcore are wanted locally for fill and soakaways. Offer it on Freegle rather than paying to tip it.
- **Bricks and blocks** — whole bricks go quickly, and full bricks are better than broken ones for repairs.
- **Paving and slabs** — keep a couple for later damage; offer the rest.
- **Plasterboard** — offcuts are wanted for small DIY jobs. It should not go in general waste, and we have not yet verified the rules for your local tip, so check with your council before binning it.
- **Timber and offcuts** — Community Wood Recycling, or Freegle for planters and firewood.
- **Tiles** — keep a spare box; part boxes are taken locally.
- **Flooring** — keep the unopened packs; open packs go to someone doing a patch.
- **Insulation** — whole packs move well; loose fibre does not. Offcuts are rarely reusable, as the calculator notes.
- **Topsoil and turf** — among the most-wanted things locally, for raised beds and lawn patches.
- **Gravel and aggregate** — wanted for paths, hardcore and drainage.
- **Paint** — Community RePaint.

Each calculator carries the detail for its own material, under its results.

What we do not yet name

Three routes are deliberately left out until they are checked: the plasterboard and gypsum rules at individual council household waste sites, Men's Sheds as a recipient of tools and timber, and Olio as a give-away platform. They may all be good options — we simply have not verified them, and this site does not name schemes it has not checked.

Related: working safely with these materials, and the building regs and standards library.

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Routes verified 2026-09-25. Batch and shade variation advice comes from the site's own calculators.