

# Cool Seas Explorers

## Get Involved!



### Beach Cleaning

Taking part in a Beachwatch beach clean and litter survey is a great way of helping to reduce the impact of litter on our environment. The Marine Conservation Society (MCS) have cleans all year, around the UK, or join our Great British Beach Clean on the 3rd weekend of September every year. You can join a clean or arrange your own as a family or school. Find out more at [www.mcsuk.org/coolseas/coolseas\\_beachcleans.php](http://www.mcsuk.org/coolseas/coolseas_beachcleans.php)



### Fundraising

If you want to help MCS' work to take care of our ocean and the awesome wildlife that call it home, you could raise money to donate. There's heaps of things you could do. Hosting a Big Blue Day at school is great fun. Have a look at our fundraising pages for more ideas at [www.mcsuk.org/coolseas/coolseas\\_fundraising.php](http://www.mcsuk.org/coolseas/coolseas_fundraising.php)



### Campaigns

MCS run campaigns all the time to reduce the impact of litter on our seas and beaches. Visit [www.mcsuk.org/clean-seas/straws](http://www.mcsuk.org/clean-seas/straws) to find out more about our #TheLastStrawChallenge.

More information on MCS campaigns can be found at [www.mcsuk.org/campaigns](http://www.mcsuk.org/campaigns).

### Discover our Cool Seas

Visit [www.mcsuk.org/coolseas](http://www.mcsuk.org/coolseas) to find out more about our cool UK seas.

- ★ Games
- ★ Quizzes
- ★ Information
- ★ Picture Gallery
- ★ Lessons

And more!

# The Plastics Challenge!

Subject/Topic:

Human impacts, litter, materials, environmental issues

Suitable for ages: All Years

## 1 Background

Litter not only makes the marine environment look unpleasant – it kills thousands of marine animals every year, usually by ingestion, entanglement or smothering. Plastic is the most commonly found material and it does not biodegrade, rather it breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces which are mistaken for plankton or other food sources. Single-use plastic items, like carrier bags and bottles, are a particular problem as they are used once and thrown away, but last forever in our environment. The only real answer to this is for us all to reduce the number of single use items, particularly plastic, that we use, so we are all 'doing our bit' to reduce our impact on the environment.



## 2 Set the Scene

In an open space, lay out the **Litter Timeline** cards in order with the litter items in a rubbish pile in front. Use the paper as an example, discuss its properties and encourage children to think about what they know about paper. Match the paper to 'months/year'. Emphasise that these are scientists' best predictions, as we haven't had materials like plastic for long enough to truly know. Invite one child at a time to choose an item and guess how long it is estimated to take to biodegrade. Remind each student to use the paper as a guide. Once each item has been matched to a time, starting with months/year, children should turn over the time card to reveal the answers.

## 3 Resources

(download)  
Plastic Challenge Planning Sheet, Plastic Ocean, Plastic Challenge Letter, Litter Timeline (printed back to back), one of each of the litter items from the timeline.

## 4 Investigate

Discuss the timeline. Was anyone surprised by the answers? Which items could be recycled? Reused? Could any of the items be avoided? How? Visit the Plastic Challenge website at [www.mcsuk.org/plastic-challenge](http://www.mcsuk.org/plastic-challenge). Read through the introductory information. Children to identify what the challenge is about and how they can get involved. Invite children to take part in the challenge. Explain that you will be doing the Plastic Challenge in school and encourage children to take part at home too. Give out the **Plastic Challenge Letter** to explain the challenge to parents.

## 6 Extend

Find out about the North Pacific Garbage Patch. Start by reading through the information in **Plastic Ocean**. Identify key words to help with the search and then use Google safe search to find more useful websites. Use the information to record a short (2 min) Newsround-style report on the issue to inform others. Remember to share your videos with on social media @mcsuk or to [education@mcsuk.org](mailto:education@mcsuk.org).

## 5 Apply

As a group, brainstorm all the plastic items that the class use in a day. In small groups of 3/4, children should use the Plastic Challenge Planning Sheet to list the items that they personally use, identify those that are single-use plastic and identify an alternative to use during the Plastic Challenge. Each child should also decide if they are going to complete the challenge for a day, week or a full month.

## 7 Reflect

Review how children are finding the Plastic Challenge. Discuss challenges and successes. Ask children to write a paragraph about their experiences and send to us @mcsuk or to [education@mcsuk.org](mailto:education@mcsuk.org).



Visit [www.mcsuk.org/coolseas](http://www.mcsuk.org/coolseas) for more free teaching resources

marine conservation society