

End Plastic Pollution

Our Planet

Our planet is incredibly important to us and, as it is the only one we have, we must ensure we look after it and care for everything in it. There are many national and international initiatives aimed at raising awareness for the protection of our planet including Earth Days, Environment Days and Recycling Weeks. These projects all aim to tell people the importance of looking after the earth and how we can do our bit to protect it. One of the many focuses that these initiatives have been looking at is the use of plastics and how we all have a responsibility to help prevent plastic pollution. Even the Government is working with national agencies to help combat this global problem.



What Is Plastic Pollution?

The biggest problem with unwanted plastic is the damage it causes to the environment.

Because plastic is cheap and easy to make, humans buy and use a lot of it.



They then throw this away.



But, plastic is strong and hard-wearing because it was made to last. So when it is thrown away, it takes hundreds of years to rot away.



It breaks into tiny pieces, which then get blown around by the wind and the rain. Lots of the plastic ends up in our streams, rivers and the ocean.

The amount of plastic on the planet is increasing more and more rapidly, meaning it is threatening our planet through poisoning and injuring sea life, littering beaches and landscapes, clogging rubbish landfills and making humans (and other animals) ill.

Did You Know...?

- 160,000 plastic bags are used across the world every second!
- 5 trillion plastic bags are produced each year.
- Side by side, they could go around the world 7 times!



What Can You Do to 'End Plastic Pollution'?

There are lots of things we can all do to help end plastic pollution. Most importantly, we need to remember the three Rs in order: reduce, reuse, recycle. We should first try to 'reduce' our use of plastics, then 'reuse' where possible. The last resort is to 'recycle' as this still has a negative impact on the environment.

Reduce: Avoid single-use plastics, such as straws and takeaway cups, instead choosing to use alternatives, such as bamboo. Avoid buying plastic toys unless they are second-hand. You can't do this alone, so it is important to talk to your family, headteacher or school council about how your school and family can use less plastic.



Reuse: If you have plastic items, ensure that you use them multiple times. For example, refill and reuse water bottles and lunch bags. Also avoid using plastic bags for shopping, using strong, long-lasting fabric bags instead. When you no longer enjoy a toy, make sure you take it to a charity shop so that someone else can enjoy it.



Recycle: Check for the recycling symbol before you buy plastic and make sure that you always recycle plastic when you can, instead of throwing it away with the normal rubbish. Currently, less than half of all plastic bottles bought in the UK are recycled, however, the new plastic bottle return scheme should hopefully increase this amount.



Vocabulary Work Activity

Read the text carefully and write a definition of the meaning of the following words which could be used as a glossary.

International

Initiatives

Clogging

Global

Recycle

Impact

Pollution

Use the skills of skimming and scanning to answer the questions below.

Questions

1. 'Most importantly, we need to remember the three Rs in order: reduce, reuse, recycle.' What does **reduce** mean? Tick one.

- increase
- lessen
- use again
- recover

2. Match the question to the correct answer.

How many plastic bags are made every year?

5 trillion

How many plastic bags are used every second across the world?

7

How many times could the plastic bags in the world reach around the Earth?

160,000

3. Name two issues created by plastic.

4. What alternative could you use rather than plastic?

5. Find and copy a word or phrase which tells you that plastic is **long-lasting**.

6. Why should you use fabric shopping bags?

Do you think it is possible to help solve the problem of plastic pollution?

Explain your answer.
