

# Plastic Pollution in the Ocean

## Plastic Pollution



Plastics, and especially single-use plastics, are a big problem for **marine** life. It is thought that over eight million tonnes of plastic finds its way into the ocean every year. This can be anything from plastic bags to food wrappers and even glitter. Across the world, coastal and deep-sea areas are being affected.

Scientific researchers have found plastic appearing in the most remote parts of the world. In the Arctic, near the North Pole, **microplastics** have been discovered on beaches, within sea ice and floating on the surface waters. The Great Barrier Reef, located off the coast of Australia, suffers from **coral bleaching** partly caused by pollution.

The Mariana Trench, near Japan, is the deepest area of the Pacific Ocean. Recently, a plastic bag (like the kind you would find in a supermarket) was found here, nearly seven miles below the surface. It is thought to be the deepest ever recorded piece of plastic pollution.

### How Does It Get into the Ocean?

Plastic which is **discarded** on the ground eventually gets blown into rivers and streams, which carry it to the sea. If plastic is disposed of properly but is not recyclable, it ends up on a landfill and, from there, it can be blown away by the wind. Worst of all, if plastic is flushed away down drains, it goes straight into the water.

Plastics are cheap to make and are common in everyday life. As such, humans are mostly responsible for the impact of plastic upon our oceans.

### Did You Know...?

- Plastic is a very strong and **durable** material. It can take up to one thousand years for plastic to **decompose** in the water.
- Plastic in the oceans can be mistaken for food by different sea creatures. Floating in the ocean, a plastic carrier bag can look a lot like a jellyfish, which is food for a leatherback turtle.



Plastic can look a lot like a jellyfish and could be eaten.

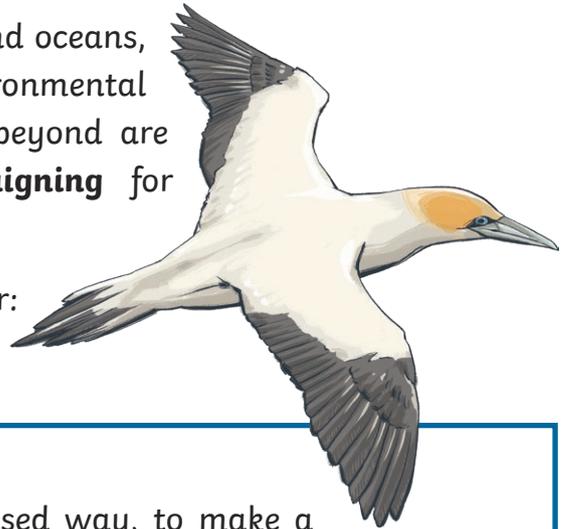
### How Can We Help?

More people than ever are aware of the damage that plastic is doing to the environment. There is good news about what is being done and what you can do to help.

- Say 'no' to plastic bags – reuse old bags or carry a backpack.
- Refill and reuse – instead of buying bottled drinks, fill up your own bottles at home.
- Sort your rubbish – use recycling bins, don't put plastic down drains and never leave litter on the ground.

Although plastic is a threat to our world and oceans, there are good things happening. Environmental groups around the United Kingdom and beyond are organising beach clean-ups and **campaigning** for changes in how and why plastics are used.

When faced with single-use plastic, remember: think, reuse and recycle.



### Glossary

**campaigning** – Work hard, in an organised way, to make a large change happen.

**coral bleaching** – A sign that coral is unhealthy due to rising sea temperatures.

**decompose** – Break down and disappear naturally over time.

**discarded** – Dropped or left behind on purpose.

**durable** – Long-lasting and strong.

**marine** – Living in the ocean.

To find out more about ocean pollution, read the eBook 'A Place for Plastic' [here!](#)

# Questions

1. How much plastic enters the ocean every year? Tick **one**.

- eight tonnes
- eight kilograms
- eight million tonnes
- eight million pieces

2. Draw three lines to match the location to its region.

**Great Barrier Reef**

**Pacific Ocean**

**Mariana Trench**

**Arctic**

**North Pole**

**Australia**

3. What is meant by the term 'microplastics'?

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4. Complete the sentence.

Plastic which is discarded on the ground \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Find and copy a caption from the text.

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6. Describe the recent discovery in the Mariana Trench.

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7. Give two reasons why plastic is a useful material.

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8. What good things are environmental groups doing to reduce the impact of plastic pollution?

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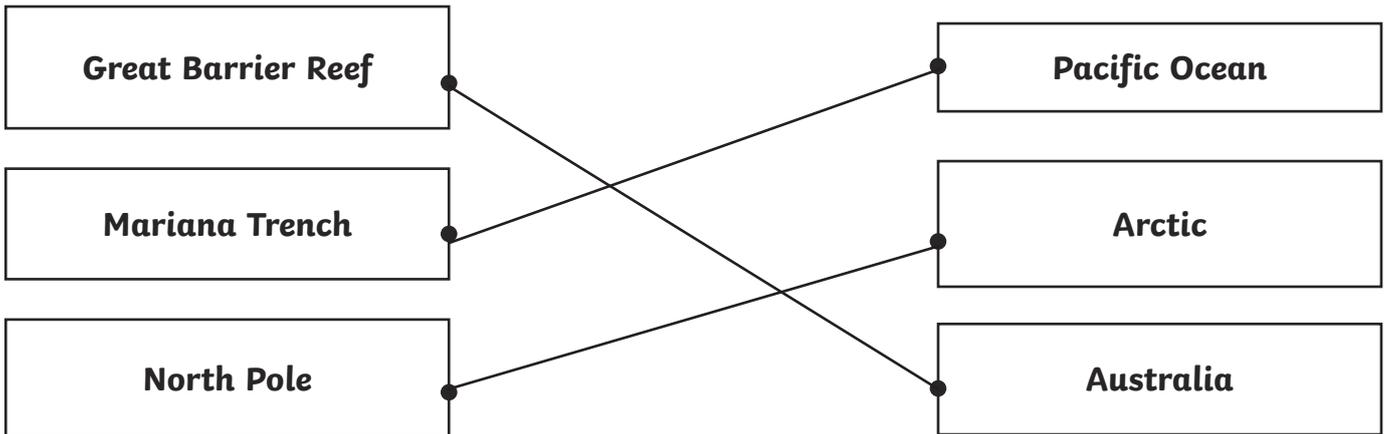
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# Answers

1. How much plastic enters the ocean every year? Tick **one**.

- eight tonnes
- eight kilograms
- eight million tonnes**
- eight million pieces

2. Draw three lines to match the location to its region.



3. What is meant by the term 'microplastics'?

**Tiny pieces of plastic that are smaller than 5mm.**

4. Complete the sentence.

**Plastic which is discarded on the ground eventually gets blown into rivers and streams, which carry it to the sea.**

5. Find and copy a **caption** from the text.

**'Plastic can look a lot like a jellyfish and could be eaten.'**

6. Describe the recent discovery in the Mariana Trench.

**In the Mariana Trench, a plastic carrier bag was found nearly seven miles down. It is thought to be the deepest ever recording of plastic found in the ocean.**

7. Give two reasons why plastic is a useful material.

**Plastics are cheap to make; plastic is a very strong (and durable) material.**

8. What good things are environmental groups doing to reduce the impact of plastic pollution?

**Environmental groups (around the United Kingdom and beyond) are organising beach clean-ups and campaigning for changes in how and why plastics are used.**