

Plastic Pollution in the Ocean

Plastic Pollution



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

Researchers have found plastic appearing in the most remote parts of the world, such as:

- in the Arctic near the North Pole;
- on the Great Barrier Reef, located off the coast of Australia;
- in the Mariana Trench (the deepest area of the Pacific Ocean).

The deepest recorded piece of plastic pollution ever found was a shopping bag nearly seven miles below the surface.

How Does It Get into the Ocean?

Plastic finds its way into the ocean in many different ways. Humans are mostly responsible for not disposing of plastic correctly.

Plastic which is dropped on the ground eventually gets blown into rivers and streams, which carry it to the sea. If plastic is thrown away properly but is not recyclable, it ends up on a **landfill**. From here, it can be blown into rivers, too. Worst of all, if plastic is flushed away down drains, it goes straight into the water.

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. It's important to think, reuse and recycle.

Glossary

decompose – Break down and disappear naturally over time.

durable – Long-lasting and strong.

landfill – A place where non-recyclable rubbish is piled up and buried.

tonnes – A measurement that is about the mass of a small car.

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

Questions

1. Which of the following are types of plastic pollution? Tick **two**.

- food wrappers
- tin foil
- glitter
- cereal boxes

2. How long can plastic take to break down in the water? Tick **one**.

- up to one thousand hours
- up to one thousand days
- up to one thousand months
- up to one thousand years

3. What is the meaning of the word 'durable'?

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

Great Barrier Reef ●

● Pacific Ocean

Mariana Trench ●

● Arctic

North Pole ●

● Australia

5. Find and copy a caption from the text.

6. Fill in the missing words.

Floating in the ocean, a plastic _____ can look a lot like a _____, which is food for a leatherback _____.

7. How is plastic pollution affecting ocean life?

8. What three things can people do to reduce their plastic usage?

Answers

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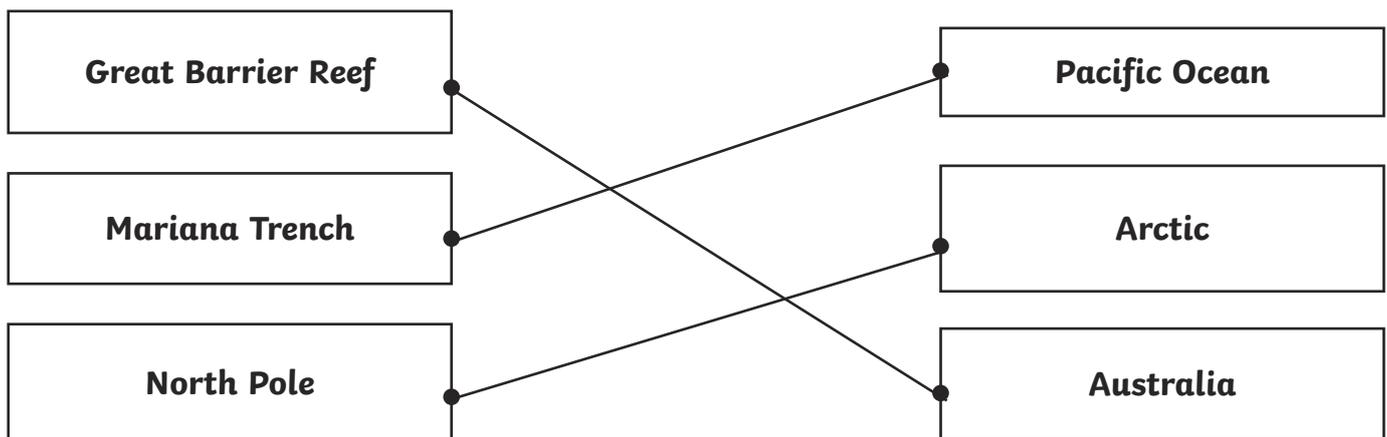
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'Plastic can look a lot like a jellyfish and could be eaten.'

6. Fill in the missing words.

Floating in the ocean, a plastic **carrier bag** can look a lot like a **jellyfish**, which is food for a leatherback **turtle**.

7. How is plastic pollution affecting ocean life?

Pupils' own responses, referring to plastic being mistaken for food by sea creatures.

8. What three things can people do to reduce their plastic usage?

Pupils' own responses referring to:

- **reusing old carrier bags or backpacks;**
- **refilling their water bottles at home;**
- **disposing of/sorting rubbish properly.**