

# Beauty and the beach



45 mins

Guides

## About this activity

Skincare, make up and toiletries are often packaged in single-use plastic, creating tons of waste that often ends up in the ocean. Can you help by creating a zero-waste beauty routine?

## Outcomes:

- Consider the potential environmental impact of product choices
- Find alternatives to products in single-use plastic and non-recyclable packaging

## You will need:

*For the session, each person will need:*

- A pen and paper or a copy of the [Beauty audit sheet](#)
- Access to the internet, on a phone or computer

*To make lip scrub, each person will need:*

- Brown sugar
- Granulated sugar
- Olive oil
- Honey
- Bowl
- Tablespoon

# Beauty and the beach

**Skincare and beauty routines affect the ocean.** It's the norm for cosmetics and toiletries to be packaged in single-use plastic containers. We can help the planet by reducing the amount of plastic packaging we consume.

## Part 1 Beauty audit

Carry out a **beauty audit**. Think about an average day. List the beauty, skincare and toiletries products you use. For each item, note the packaging material.

## Part 2 Can you reduce?

In small groups, review your beauty audits.

Are there lower-waste alternatives? Can you learn from each other and think of ways to reduce the waste you're creating? For example, could you switch from shower gel to soap, use face cloths rather than face wipes, buy larger packs, or avoid pumps that can't be recycled?

## Part 3 Recycle more?

Up to 60% of the rubbish that ends up in the bin could be recycled if it was disposed of correctly, and bathroom waste is the least recycled waste in UK homes. Can you recycle more of your packaging?

1. On your Beauty audit, note whether the packaging for each product can be recycled in the local council (at home) collection. If you don't know what you can recycle at home, you can type your postcode into the Recycle Now website and find out:

- [www.recyclenow.com/local-recycling](http://www.recyclenow.com/local-recycling) (England)
- [www.recycleforscotland.com/recycling-locator](http://www.recycleforscotland.com/recycling-locator) (Scotland)
- [www.recycleforwales.org.uk/local-recycling](http://www.recycleforwales.org.uk/local-recycling) (Wales)
- [www.recyclenow.com/local-recycling](http://www.recyclenow.com/local-recycling) (Northern Ireland)

Now look at the remaining items. Can they be recycled elsewhere e.g. with the TerraCycle scheme? Check at [terracycle.com](http://terracycle.com)

## Part 4 Zero-waste beauty

1. Look at the products left on your audit sheets. Are there any other changes you can make to reduce the waste you send to landfill?
2. Make notes so that when you need more products, you can buy the most 'ocean-friendly' items.

## Part 5 Beauty hacks

Some homemade items can be as good as shop bought and be better for the environment as they create less waste.

- Instead of using face wipes, you could make your own make-up remover pads by cutting up old towels, cotton T-shirts or face cloths and hemming the edges.
- You could make your own lip scrub by mixing together 1 tablespoon each of brown sugar, granulated sugar and honey, and then adding half a tablespoon of olive or coconut oil.



A photograph of a rugged, light-colored rock cliffside overlooking a deep blue ocean. The water is clear and vibrant, with some darker patches visible beneath the surface. The sky is a pale blue with a few wispy clouds.

# Blue mindfulness

Credit: Rowan Heuvel

15 mins

Guides

## About this activity

Be transported to another place with this simple mindfulness activity based on blue spaces like the ocean, rivers or lakes. A great wind-down exercise for the end of a session.

## Outcomes:

- Learn a breathing technique to relax
- Improve your sense of wellbeing
- Understand how our ocean or other blue spaces, like rivers and lakes, can help our wellbeing wherever we live

## You will need:

- A space to stretch out in
- A little bit of imagination

# Blue mindfulness

## Part 1

### Breathing

1. Put one hand on your stomach and the other on your chest. Feel your heart beating.
2. Breathe in, slowly and deeply, through your nose. Feel your tummy rise.
3. Now breathe out, slowly and steadily, through your nose until there is no air left in your lungs.
4. Breathe in for 1, 2, 3, 4. Breathe out, 1, 2, 3, 4.
5. Breathe in 1, 2, 3, 4. Breathe out, 1, 2, 3, 4.
6. And one more time. Breathe in 1, 2, 3, 4, and out 1, 2, 3, 4.
7. Let your breath go back to normal.

This sort of breathing slows down your heart rate and helps you to feel calmer. Freedivers do this so they can dive deeper and longer without an oxygen tank.

## Part 2

### Mindfulness

1. Imagine a **blue space**, such as the ocean, a river, canal or lake.
2. Close your eyes. Breathe as you did before, long and slow in through your nose, and long and slow out through your nose.
3. Picture your blue space. What can you see? Are there other people there? Perhaps you can see animals? What are they doing?
4. What does the water look like? Is it a sunny day? Can you see reflections on the water?
5. Listen carefully, what can you hear? Can you hear the sound of water? Is there a dog barking, a child playing or a seagull?
6. Go and sit down near the water. How do you think the water would feel on your skin? If it's safe, touch it but be careful not to fall in! How does it feel? Is it cold, warm?
7. What else can you touch, hear and see near to where you are sitting?
8. How do you feel in your blue space? Think of words to describe your feelings. Hold onto that feeling as we slowly come back to the room. Open your eyes and let your breathing go back to normal.

## Part 3

### Reflection

How do you feel now? You have just experienced **blue mind** – the wellbeing that we get from the ocean.

Being near water can help our mental health. Research shows that most of us feel calmer and happier when we are near blue space – places with water. If you can't get to near water, mindfully imagining the blue space can help us too.

# Conservation careers

20 mins

Guides

## About this activity

Learn about careers in marine conservation. You might be surprised by the different ways people work to protect the ocean and life within it.

## Outcomes:

- Identify personal strengths, weaknesses and goals
- Learn about jobs in the conservation sector

## You will need:

- [Who am I? worksheet](#)
- [Conservation careers game board](#) and set of [job cards](#) for pairs or groups
- [Conservation careers profile worksheets](#)

Note: If you have access to a laminator, you could laminate the boards and cards for future games.

# Conservation careers

## Marine conservation involves protecting or improving the marine environment.

Thousands of people around the world are working towards a cleaner, better-protected and healthier ocean that's full of life. The marine conservation sector is growing as people realise the importance of the ocean to the future health of our planet, and the number and types of jobs are increasing.



## Part 1

### Who are you?

1. What are you good at and what do you enjoy?
2. Think about your strengths, weaknesses, values and goals. You could use the [Who am I? sheet](#) to note your answers. You might find it helpful to complete this exercise in pairs or small groups because sometimes other people can see things in us that we can't.

## Part 2

### Match maker

1. In pairs or small groups, play the [Conservation careers game](#). Can you match the job title to the job description?
2. Once you've matched all the jobs to the descriptions, talk about the roles. Are you surprised by any of these jobs? Do any of these jobs match your skills or interests?

## Part 3

### Take it further

You could research conservation careers opportunities at home.

Check out our website for some career profiles of our team:

<https://www.mcsuk.org/work-for-us/meet-the-people-in-the-jobs/>

The Scottish Seabird Centre has written profiles on a range of marine jobs:

[https://www.seabird.org/uploads/store/mediaupload/1324/file/SSC%20Dive%20In\\_Marine%20Careers%202022.pdf](https://www.seabird.org/uploads/store/mediaupload/1324/file/SSC%20Dive%20In_Marine%20Careers%202022.pdf)

You can find interesting stories of women in conservation at:

<https://oceanconservancy.org/blog/2021/03/08/celebrating-women-ocean-conservation-science/>

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/empowering-women-to-protect-our-oceans>

# Who am I? worksheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**1. What are your strengths?** *Think about what you're good at*

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**2. What do you dislike?** *Think about tasks, subjects, ways of working you don't enjoy*

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**3. What are your interests, goals, passions and dreams?**

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# Conservation careers job descriptions

I help marine animals in danger

I tell people about the problems animals face and how they can help

I help people take action to help the ocean emergency

I help people experience the marine environment

I teach people about animals and nature

I raise money to help save nature

I make films and tell stories about nature and the problems it faces

I persuade governments to change laws

I protect animals and the places they live

I study the behavior of marine animals

I farm in the sea and water

I carry out research

# Conservation careers job cards

Cut out these cards and match up the job to the correct description

**Education  
Officer**



**Marine Animal  
Conservation  
Officer**



**Filmmaker**



**Marketing  
Officer**



**Scuba  
Instructor**



**Marine  
Research  
Officer**



**Community  
Volunteer  
Manager**



**Conservation  
Warden**



**Campaigns  
Officer**



**Fundraising  
Officer**



**Marine  
Biologist**



**Aquaculturist**



# Conservation careers game answers

I help marine animals in danger

**Marine Animal Conservation Officer**

I tell people about the problems animals face and how they can help

**Marketing Officer**

I help people take action to help the ocean emergency

**Community Volunteer Manager**

I help people experience the marine environment

**Scuba Instructor**

I teach people about animals and nature

**Education Officer**

I raise money to help save nature

**Fundraising Officer**

I make films and tell stories about nature and the problems it faces

**Filmmaker**

I persuade governments to change laws

**Campaigns Officer**

I protect animals and the places they live

**Conservation Warden**

I study the behavior of marine animals

**Marine Biologist**

I farm in the sea and water

**Aquaculturist**

I carry out research

**Marine Research Officer**

# Ethically conscious cook

45 mins

Guides

## About this activity

Too many fish are being taken out of the ocean. Learn about overfishing through fun games, then find out how to make sustainable fish choices for ethically conscious cooking.

## Outcomes:

- Learn about the link between food choices and the environment
- Learn more about where food comes from
- Learn how to make sustainable fish choices

## You will need:

*For the Let's go fishing game:*

- 2 large sheets of fabric

*For Top 5 fish:*

- Selection of menus from local takeaways or restaurants
- [Fish dish recording sheet](#)
- [Fish switch sheet](#)

*For the Catch it if you can game:*

- A spoon, pot and [Fishing catch sheet](#) for every person (or piece of paper)
- Bowl for each six filled with 30 dried peas, 30 popcorn kernels, 30 beads. You can use any items as long as they're sufficiently different.
- Extra peas, kernels and beads for refills. There are 2 refills (max 60) of each type for each group needed if none were taken out.

**Overfishing means catching fish faster than they can reproduce.** Nearly all the world's fish stocks are fully or over-exploited from fishing – too many fish are being taken out of the ocean.

## Part 1 Let's go fishing

If you have time you could warm up with this game. Otherwise, skip this and go straight to Part 2.

1. Mark out a playing area and line everyone up on one side. These are the 'fish' who must run to the other side without being caught. Choose a 'fisher'. Their job is to catch fish by tapping them on the arm. Once a fish is caught, they're out of the game. Ask the group to run across the playing area. How many fish are caught?
2. Now change the rules. Fish who are caught turn into fishers. How many fish are caught?
3. Finally give large sheets to two pairs. How many fish can they catch in the sheets?
4. Talk about how many fish were caught by the different fishing methods. Link this to overfishing and the problems with too many fish being taken from the ocean.

## Part 2 Catch it if you can

1. This game shows the effect of catching too many of one type of fish:
  - Give each six a bowl containing 30 dried peas (cod), 30 popcorn kernels (porpoise) and 30 beads (turtles)
  - Give each person a spoon (net) and pot (boat)
  - You'll fish 3 times for 20 seconds each time. The aim is to use the spoon to catch as many 'cod' as possible. Try to avoid porpoise or turtles, but if you catch them, put them in the pot too. The six that catches the most cod will win
  - Fish for 20 seconds, stop and record how many of each species each girl caught on the [Fishing catch sheet](#)
  - Top up the bowls by adding one new pea, kernel or bead for each one remaining in the bowl
  - Repeat this twice
2. When fishing is finished, add up the totals. Which group caught the most cod? What strategy did they use? What did everyone think about how quickly the number of cod could decrease, and what does this tell us about fishing?

## Part 3 Top 5 fish

1. In small groups, look at a selection of takeaway or restaurant menus and record the fish used on the [Fish dish recording sheet](#).
2. What are the most common fish and seafood used in the dishes in the menus? 80% of the seafood we eat in the UK is made up of five species: cod, haddock, salmon, tuna, prawns. Is this the same in the restaurant menus? Talk about the problems this could create.

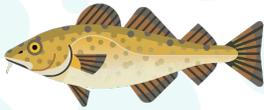
## Part 4 Make a fish switch

The reliance on the same species is putting those fish populations at risk. What could we do to help the problem of overfishing? Take a look at the [Fish switch sheet](#) for ideas. Can you plan a menu using alternative fish?

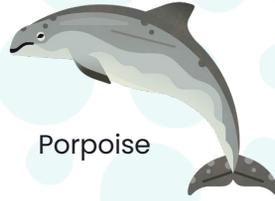
If you have time, you could make a [Fishy fridge magnet](#) and give it to someone who likes cooking. They could put the magnet on their fridge to encourage them to switch fish.

# Fishing catch

Names in your group:



Cod



Porpoise



Turtle

## Catch 1

|               | Cod | Porpoise | Turtles |
|---------------|-----|----------|---------|
| Number caught |     |          |         |

## Catch 2

|               | Cod | Porpoise | Turtles |
|---------------|-----|----------|---------|
| Number caught |     |          |         |

## Catch 3

|               | Cod | Porpoise | Turtles |
|---------------|-----|----------|---------|
| Number caught |     |          |         |

## Overall

|                    | Cod | Porpoise | Turtles |
|--------------------|-----|----------|---------|
| Total caught       |     |          |         |
| Total left in bowl |     |          |         |



# Can you switch fish?



## The problem

93% of the world's fish stocks are fully or over-exploited from fishing. Some fish are as endangered as the Bengal tiger!

- > 80% of the seafood we eat in the UK is made up of five species: **cod, haddock, salmon, tuna and prawns.**
- > Some fishing methods like trawling and dredging can cause lasting damage to the seabed and marine habitats. Longlines and gill nets can accidentally catch vulnerable species like turtles and sharks.



## What you can do

Seafood has a much smaller carbon footprint than most land-based proteins. If fish farming is well managed, it will play an important role in supplying future populations with food.

- > **Avoid red rated fish**, as they could be endangered, caught using damaging methods of fishing or farming, or there could be illegal activity involved in catching or farming it.
- > **Use the Good Fish Guide** when choosing fish and seafood. It has all the advice you need to choose sustainable seafood. You can find it at [mcsuk.org/goodfishguide](http://mcsuk.org/goodfishguide).
- > **Buy fish with eco labels:**



## Try new fish!

| Instead of...  | Why not try...   |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|
| <br>Cod     | <br>European Hake | <br>Coley                | <br>Plaice        |
| <br>Haddock | <br>European Hake | <br>Coley                | <br>Farmed turbot |
| <br>Salmon  | <br>Rainbow trout | <br>Plaice               |   |
| <br>Prawns  | <br>Langoustine   | <br>Brown crab           |   |
| <br>Tuna    | <br>Mackerel      | <br>Wild-caught sardines |   |

# Find the Best Choice seafood near you

MARINE CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Buy local, Support local



## Langoustines

West of Scotland

Pot/Creel



## Dover sole

Bristol Channel

Demersal otter trawl



## Hake

Cornwall

Gill or fixed net



## King scallop

Lyme Bay Hand-dived



## European lobster

Jersey Pot/Creel



## Brown crab

Shetland

Pot/creel



## Megrin

North Sea (north)

Demersal otter trawl



## Haddock

North Sea

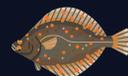
Demersal otter trawl/ Demersal seine net/ Longline



## Dab

North Sea

Demersal otter trawl/ Demersal seine net



## Plaice

English Channel (east) & North Sea

Demersal otter trawl

### Best Choice

### UK farmed seafood



## Mussels

Suspended Rope Culture / Bottom Culture



## King & Queen scallops

Suspended Rope Culture / Bottom Culture



## Rainbow trout

Freshwater ponds



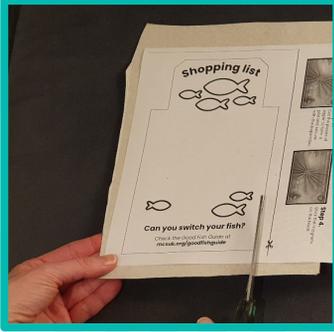
## Atlantic halibut

Onshore open-circuit system

# Make a fishy fridge magnet

## You will need:

- A copy of this template
- Piece of card e.g. cereal box
- Small magnets
- Pens or pencils
- Two paperclips
- Sheets of paper
- Glue
- Scissors



## Step 1

Place this template on a piece of card and cut out the shape.



## Step 2

Stick the card to the paper and colour in the fish.



## Step 3

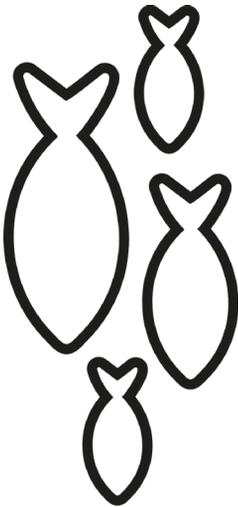
Stick the magnet to the card on the back.



## Step 4

Decorate the magnet. Cut the pieces of paper to form a pad and secure with the paperclips.

shopping list



Can you switch your fish?

Check the Good Fish Guide at  
[mcsuk.org/goodfishguide](http://mcsuk.org/goodfishguide)

# Fashion challenge

Credit: Zenzeta

45 mins

Guides

## About this activity

The fashion industry is polluting our rivers and ocean. Investigate the invisible pollution released by clothes, learn how to choose ocean-friendly fashion, and upstyle a T-shirt.

## Outcomes:

- Carry out an experiment into microfibres
- Find simple ways to reduce microfibre pollution
- Take part in a fashion challenge to restyle a piece of old clothing

## You will need:

### *For Microfibre experiment:*

- A large bottle with a lid, three-quarters full of water
- Piece of brightly coloured synthetic material (fleece, nylon, polyester). The material should be new, or nearly new, as new fabric releases the most microfibres
- Sieve and a bowl to catch drained water
- Filter paper or a piece of thick kitchen roll
- Magnifying glass

### *For Ocean-friendly fashion:*

- Copies of [Fashion and the ocean Fact File](#)

### *For Fashion challenge:*

- Fabric scissors, needles, thread, ribbons, broaches
- Old T-shirts. If you don't have T-shirts, you could use other unwanted clothing, including men's pieces or items that are too big. Don't buy new clothes – the purpose is to show how old clothes can be revived!
- [Restyle challenge inspiration](#)

# Fashion challenge

## Every time clothes are washed, they release thousands of microfibres.

Wastewater treatment plants can't filter out microfibres, which means they're washed into our rivers and seas. Every day, the equivalent of two rubbish trucks of microfibres are released into European waters where they can be eaten by, and harm, marine animals.

## Part 1 Microfibre experiment

1. In small groups, put a piece of fabric into a bottle three-quarters full of water. Screw the lid on tightly. Take it in turns to shake the bottle for 30 seconds for a total of 2 minutes.
2. Line the sieve with the filter paper or kitchen roll and carefully pour the water through the filter/paper.
3. Take it in turns to look at the paper through the magnifying glass. The tiny fibres are microfibres.

Most washing machines don't have filters to catch microfibres, which means they're released into wastewater. The fibres can't be removed at sewage works, and they're then released into rivers and the ocean.

## Part 2 Ocean-friendly fashion

It's thought that a single load of washing could release thousands of microfibres. New clothes are the worst for shedding these fibres, as the first few washes release the highest levels of them.

These microfibres end up in our rivers and eventually the ocean. Some fibres contain harmful chemicals or become harmful when they combine with toxins in seawater. Marine life - including the fish we eat - accidentally eat these fibres. Add to this that the fashion industry accounts for 10% of global carbon emissions each year (more than all flights and shipping activity combined), and you can see the scale of the problem.

1. Look at the [Fashion and the ocean Fact File](#) and talk about the problems associated with fashion choices. List the things you could do to make your fashion choices more ocean friendly. What can you:
  - Reduce?
  - Refuse?
  - Reuse?
  - Recycle?

## Part 3 Restyle challenge

1. Hold a T-shirt restyling challenge. Don't be afraid to be bold! Cut it up to create a new neckline or a crop top, make an oversized T-shirt into a dress, or add accessories.
2. The [Restyle challenge inspiration sheet](#) provides lots of ideas. If you'd like more guidance, there are 'How to restyle an old T-shirt' tutorials on YouTube.

If a T-shirt restyle isn't possible, you could have a clothes swap instead. After everyone has been 'shopping,' you could hold a fashion show of the new-to-you outfits.

## Badge link

You could create a fashion collection based on reducing microfibre pollution for your Conscious Consumer interest badge.



# Fashion and the ocean



## Plastic pollution

Our clothes are made of millions of tiny microfibres. With every wash, these fibres shed from our clothes.

- 60% of the material used in making clothes worldwide is a form of plastic, such as polyester, nylon and acrylic. This means microfibres from these fabrics are tiny pieces of plastic
- A single wash can release over 700,000 microfibres. Every week in the UK about 9.4 trillion fibres are released from washing clothes
- The fibres are too small to be filtered at sewerage plants and many are released into rivers and ultimately our ocean
- Once in the ocean, animals can ingest microfibres and they build up in the food chain over time. Microplastics have been found in many types of seafood we eat, including mussels, fish and shrimp
- New clothes release the highest levels of fibres when first washed



## Climate change and the ocean

Climate change is impacting our ocean. Rising ocean temperatures are affecting many plant and animal species, and rising carbon dioxide levels are causing ocean acidification, which is killing coral and other species. Additionally, rising air temperatures are causing extreme weather events and melting ice in polar regions, impacting fragile coastal communities and habitats.

- The fashion industry accounts for 10% of global carbon emissions – more than all flights and shipping activity combined
- In the UK, an estimated 350,000 tonnes of clothes end up in landfill every year. That's over 15,000 rubbish trucks!
- It's estimated that we bought 60% more clothes in 2021 than in 2000. According to the World Bank, 40% of clothing purchased is never worn
- Returning items bought online can double the transport emissions. It can be cheaper for some online retailers and brands to dump or burn unwanted returns rather than repackaging and reselling
- Less than 1% of material in unwanted clothing is recycled into new clothing

# Restyle challenge inspiration

## What will you make?

Here are some ideas to inspire your T-shirt restyling. Use one of these or try your own!



**Crop the T-shirt**



**Make a new neck shape**



**Create a fun cut-out shoulder design**



**Cut lots of lines up from the bottom to make a fringe**



**Cut one line into the front then tie into a knot**

### Tips!

- Be brave! Don't be afraid to cut into the material
- Don't cut the T-shirt when anyone's wearing it
- Start cutting away small pieces first. You can always take more away later!

# My link to the ocean

25 mins

Guides

## About this activity

Learn about the amazing marine life that lives in the seas around the UK and how you can tackle the problems created by humans.

## Outcomes:

- Learn about the problem of litter in the ocean
- Find the shortest route to the ocean
- Take action in the local area to tackle the ocean litter problem

## You will need:

*For each group or person:*

- [Life in the UK seas image](#) with a pen and paper to note answers or [answer sheet](#)
- [Our dirty beaches image](#)
- Map or atlas of the UK or access to [Google Earth](#)

# My link to the ocean

**In the UK we're never more than 70 miles away from the sea.** Our actions on land impact the ocean and the life within it.

## Part 1 Life in UK seas

What do you think of when you hear the word 'ocean'? Are there particular colours, sounds, smells? Does anyone have a favourite marine animal? Do you have a favourite place by the sea?

1. In small groups or individually, look at the [Life in UK seas image](#). How many of the 15 species can you name in 5 minutes?
2. Who named the most? Were there any surprises?
3. How do you feel when you look at this image?

## 'Life in the UK seas' answers

1. Painted top shell, 2. Short-snouted seahorse, 3. Hedgehog sponge, 4. Long-clawed squat lobster, 5. Great (king) scallop, 6. Common (edible) sea urchin, 7. Plumose anemone, 8. Thornback ray, 9. Compass jellyfish, 10. Basking shark, 11. Sea slug, 12. Common starfish, 13. Edible crab, 14. Pink and white sea fans, 15. Common cuttlefish

## Part 2 Our dirty beaches

Look at the [Our dirty beaches image](#). How do you feel when you look at this image? What do you think the impact of the litter might be on the ocean and the animals that live there?

## Part 3 My link to the ocean

80% of litter enters the ocean from the land. It is washed into rivers and drains and from there into the ocean. Find your link to the ocean:

1. Using [Google Earth](#) or a map, find your location.
2. Find your nearest river.
3. If you're using a map, follow the river until you get the mouth of river (the estuary) and reach the sea.
4. If you're using Google Earth, type the name of your nearest river into the search bar. Click 'more information' to find the mouth of the river, where it enters the ocean. Type this into the search bar to see the location on the map.

## Part 4 Pollution solutions

Wherever you live, you can help to save our seas. What could you do to make a difference?

1. Can you carry out a litter pick or beach clean? [Visit our website](#) for guidance on organising a pick.

OR

2. 70% of litter in the ocean is made of plastic. Could you reduce the amount of plastic you use? Our [Beauty and the beach activity](#) will help you reduce the waste you create.

OR

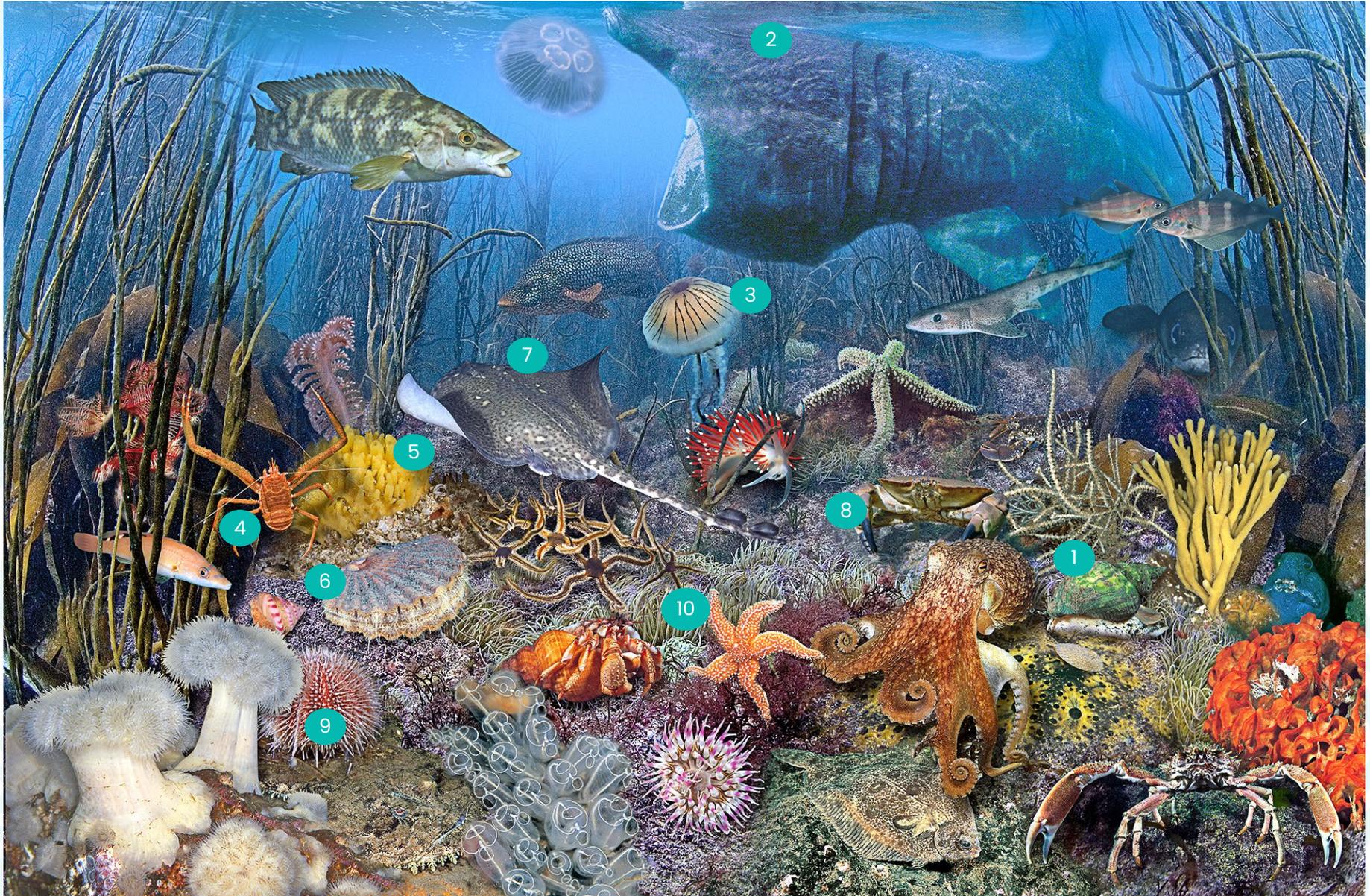
3. Wet wipes and sanitary items made up nearly 9% of the litter found on UK beaches in 2020. Our [Unflushables activity](#) will help you tackle this problem.

OR

3. Every time clothes are washed they release thousands of microfibres. These end up in rivers and seas. Could you take the [Fashion challenge](#) and reduce microfibre release?

# Life in UK seas

Can you name these living things found in the seas around the UK?



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Life in UK seas

Write down the names of the creatures you know

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

# Our dirty beaches with Steve



Credit: Natasha Ewins

# The unflushables

45 mins

Guides

## About this activity

What we flush down the loo can make its way to our beaches and ocean, harming animals and making our beaches look unpleasant. Find out how to take simple steps in your bathroom to help the ocean.

## Outcomes:

- Learn about the pollution caused by items flushed down the toilet and identify ways to reduce it
- Consider alternatives to single-use period products

## You will need:

*For each group or person:*

- A baby wipe
- A piece of toilet paper
- Two 1 litre bottles, three-quarters full with water
- [Unflushables Fact File](#)
- [Social media template](#)

# The unflushables

**When sanitary items like wipes, tampons and nappies are flushed down the loo, they can create blockages in sewers.** In a blockage, to stop sewage 'backing up' and flooding people's homes, emergency valves are triggered and sewage is released into local rivers and the sea.

## Part 1 Wipe-out

1. In groups of four, add a piece of toilet paper to one of the bottles of water and screw the lid on tightly. Ask one person in the group to shake the bottle for 30 seconds, then pass it around until everyone has shaken it for 30 seconds.
2. Now do the same thing again with the wet wipe. What's different?
3. Talk about the difference between the bottles. What would this mean if the wipe and paper were in the sea?

Thousands of wipes are found on our beaches every year because people flush them down the toilet instead of putting them in the bin. They escape from sewage works or are released into rivers and the sea when drains overflow in heavy rain. What might happen to marine wildlife if they ingest a wet wipe?

## Part 2 Unflushables

1. Wet wipes are one of the 5 items that cause problems when flushed down the loo. These are called 'The Unflushables'. In small groups or as a unit, use the [Unflushables Fact File](#) to find out more about the problem.
2. Discuss what could be done to encourage people to put only the three Ps (pee, poo, paper) down the loo.

## Part 3 Plastic-free periods

Period products were the fifth most commonly found item on European beaches, according to a study by the European Parliament in 2018. These products also contain plastic. It's thought that some tampons contain around 5% of plastic and a pack of 14 menstrual pads can contain as much plastic as five carrier bags.

As a unit, you could research alternatives to single-use period products and how to go plastic free. What could be the environmental and financial benefits of reusable and plastic-free products?

## Part 4 Spread the word

1. Can you come up with ideas for things your family or friends could do? For example, could you make posters for the toilets at your unit meeting place and other places in your local area, such as cafes, restaurants, your school? Could you encourage people to share information on their social media accounts? You could use our [social media template](#) when creating your message.
2. Could you make up a song, poem, short play or advert to tell people about the unflushables problem and what they can do to help?

# Unflushables Fact File



## What are 'unflushable' items?



Baby wipes



Cotton buds



Contact lenses



Cleaning wipes



Sanitary towels



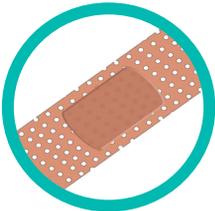
Tampons and applicators



Medicine



Nappies



Plasters



Cigarette butts



## What's the problem?



### **Unflushables build up into fatbergs and block sewers**

When flushed down the loo, items like wet wipes, nappies, tampons and sanitary towels combine with fat, oil and grease to create massive fatbergs. These can grow so large that they block whole sewer pipes, causing sewage to back up in toilets and flood people's houses.



### **The items are released into rivers when drains overflow**

In heavy rainstorms, our drainage systems become overwhelmed by the large volumes of water. To prevent houses and towns flooding, overflow pipes are opened so that water can leave the system quickly. Unfortunately, these overflow pipes put untreated water straight into rivers and any unflushables in the pipes will be discharged into the river.



### **Once they reach the sea, unflushable items can harm wildlife**

Unflushables are made largely of plastic and break up into thousands of tiny plastic fibres. Marine life can ingest these fibres, along with the attached toxic chemicals and bacteria, causing them harm.

# Unflushables Fact File



## 10 things you need to know about unflushable marine litter

- 1** 5.9% of all beach litter items in the UK are items that were flushed down the toilet when they should've gone in the bin.
- 2** Wet wipes were the third most-common item found on UK beaches in 2020.
- 3** Period products were the fifth most-common item found on European beaches in 2018.
- 4** Wipes labelled as 'flushable' don't always meet the [Fine to Flush](#) standard and can cause blockages.
- 5** Some tampons are made up of around 6% plastic, and sanitary pads can be as much as 90% plastic. This means that a pack of 14 pads can contain as much plastic as five carrier bags!
- 6** If you piled up skips full of all the unflushables found in our sewers, it would reach the height of Everest.
- 7** Unflushables are made of plastic and never fully break down. They remain in the ocean, collecting toxic chemicals and bacteria. This is a severe threat to marine animals that ingest them.
- 8** Around 2.5 million tampons, 1.4 million pads and 700,000 panty liners are flushed down toilets in the UK. It has been estimated that over 1.5 billion period products are flushed in the UK every year!
- 9** Menstrual products and their packaging generate 200,000 tonnes of waste per year in the UK.
- 10** Around 2 million people in the UK wear daily disposable contact lenses, which are a form of plastic. Each year, as many as 750 million contact lenses are flushed down the loo or end up in landfill. Many get washed down the plughole as they dry out on the side of the sink. Many opticians run recycling collection schemes, but take-up is still low.

# How does our waste reach the sea?

## Sewerage System

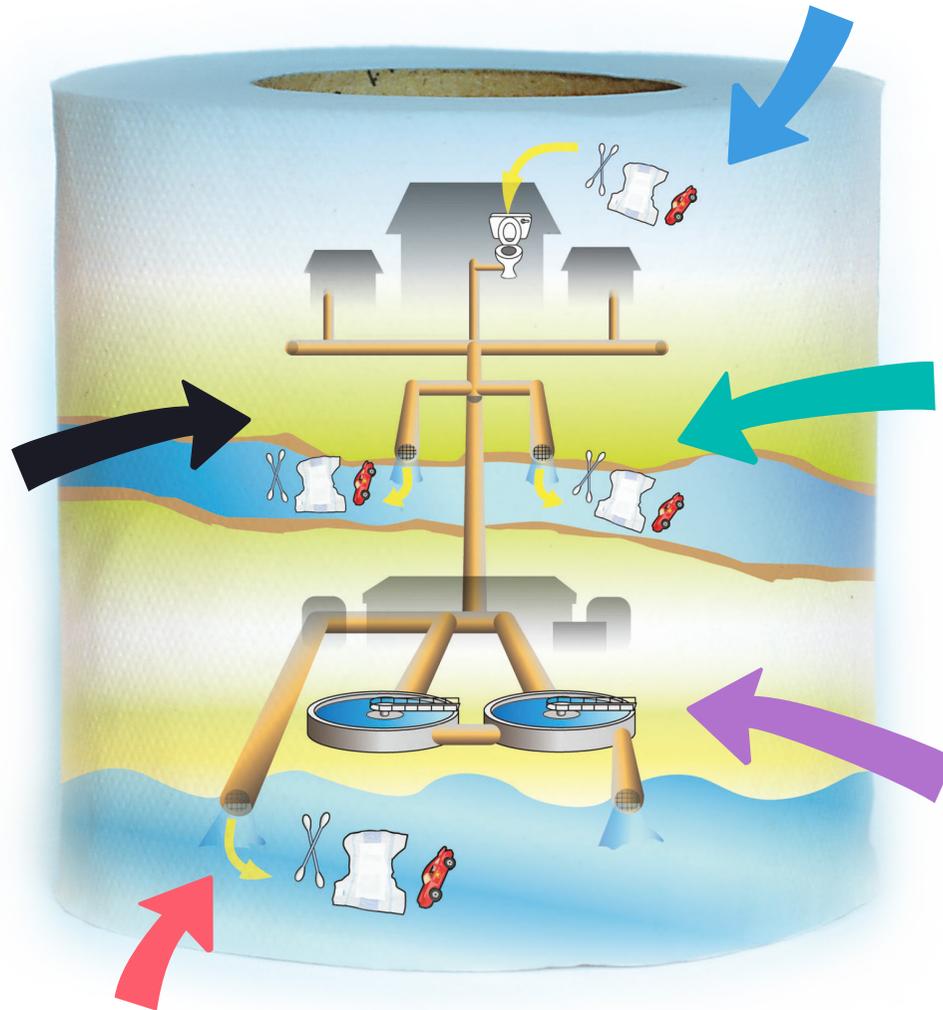
Our homes, schools and other buildings are connected to our sewerage system. This is a network of pipes designed to take human waste after it has been flushed down the toilet, to the sewerage treatment works where it is processed, made safe to humans and animals and then returned to sea. Our sewerage system also collects rainwater from drains and directs this to the sea, to prevent our towns from flooding.

## Overflows

These are the sewerage networks emergency release valves. During heavy rain, or if the pipes become blocked with items that should not be flushed down the toilet, there is not enough room in the pipes and they have to release into local streams and rivers. This is so that the waste does not back up and flood people's homes!

## Overflows

There are grills over the end of outflow pipes but smaller items, like cotton buds and bits of plastic that have been flushed down the toilet still get through, and can end up in the ocean and on our beaches.



## Misconnections

This is when household drains are plumbed into the wrong external drain. Sewage water that should be transported to wastewater treatment plants is instead drained directly into rivers.

## Sewerage Treatment Works

This is where our waste water and sewage is treated to a series of processes to make sure that it is safe to be released into the sea and back into the water cycle. Water from here is no longer harmful to us.



# Stop the Unflushables!

Write and draw your message for people in the square below.

Think about:

- What do you want people to know about 'unflushables'?
- What can people do?
- How can you grab people's attention?

A large, empty square with a teal border, intended for students to draw and write their message.

## Share the message

Take a photo of your picture and ask people you know with social media to post it on their accounts, or post on your own if you have one.

# Fun fishy games

## About this activity

Burn off some energy and have fun with our marine-themed games. These are the perfect warm ups for any of our activities.

## Outcomes:

- Work as a team
- Practise listening skills

## You will need:

- Space to run around in
- Lots of energy!

# Fun fishy games

## Anemone attack

1. Make a small circle with one person (the anemone) in the middle.
2. Throw a beanbag or ball (the shrimp) from person to person, across the circle.
3. The anemone must try to catch the shrimp. The anemone can reach out but cannot move their feet.
4. When the anemone catches the shrimp, the person who threw the bag is 'eaten' by the anemone and becomes part of the anemone in the middle
5. Continue until all the shrimp are eaten.

## Marine animal charades

1. Choose a player to start.
2. Ask them to think of a creature that lives in the ocean and to act out the name of the creature. They can do this until someone guesses the creature or until a set time limit has expired.
3. Continue until everyone has had a go or until time runs out.

## Sharks and minnows

1. Nominate one person the 'shark' and mark out a 'safe area'.
2. The shark stands in the middle and says, 'fishy, fishy, come out to play.'
3. The minnows walk slowly towards the shark.
4. Whenever the shark decides, they should shout 'shark attack!' and runs towards the minnows to 'tag' them while the minnows run to the safe area. Any tagged minnows now become sharks.
5. The game restarts with the sharks in the middle of the remaining minnows. Keep playing until all minnows are tagged.

## Dead fish

1. The leader stands in the middle of the room. Ask everyone to walk slowly around the room.
2. The leader shouts 'dead fish!' and everyone drops to the ground and keeps as still as possible. Anyone who moves sits 'out' and the game continues until one person is left.

## Animal theatre

1. Split the group up into smaller groups.
2. Ask them to work together to create a 3D sea creature. They could stand up and move around or create a giant creature by lying, kneeling or standing.
3. Each group should then take it in turns to act out their animals to each other.

## Fish tag

1. Split everyone into four groups.
2. Give each group the name of a fish or marine creature.
3. Play a game of tag. When someone is tagged, they become the same creature as the person who tagged them.
4. Continue playing until everyone is the same creature.