

Beachwatch - Briefing to volunteers

Introductions

Hello, my name is **xxxx**. Thank you for coming today. Before we get started I need to run through a few things.

The issue

Beach litter is unsightly, bad for tourism, damaging to fishing gear, dangerous for marine creatures which can eat it or get tangled in it. Plastics are a particular problem and consistently make up over 60% of what's found on beaches. Plastic never disappears, it just gets smaller and smaller – and easier to eat.

Background about Beachwatch

Beachwatch is a beach clean and litter recording programme coordinated by the Marine Conservation Society to address this problem. It's been running for over 20 years and there are over 300 beaches all around the UK taking part. Surveys happen all year round, but especially on the 3rd weekend of September as part of the Great British Beach Clean. GBBC is part of the International Coastal Cleanup and Beachwatch data represents the UK entry to the Global Trash Tally – litter knows no boundaries so we're part of global action to address the issue.

The data goes into MCS national database, and they use it to raise awareness and run campaigns. They also use it to talk to manufacturers and governments to change policies and practices and stop litter from ever reaching the sea.

Health & Safety bits

Firstly, make sure you're wrapped up and have some sturdy shoes on to protect your feet. You might also need sun cream! The tides today are [\[list high tide\]](#).

Please don't touch anything that looks like it might be dangerous or full of something nasty (containers, drums, unexploded shells or syringes). If you're unsure, ask me. Be careful about lifting heavy or semi-buried objects that could cause a strain injury - if in doubt don't lift!

Sharp items **must not** go in bin bags as they can rip the bags and cut your legs. Medical sharps go in a sharps box (*if one is available*). All other sharps go in this container which I will carry [*e.g. a bucket, milk bottle with the top cut off etc*].

I have undertaken a risk assessment and I'd like to point out the following hazards [\[refer to risk assessment\]](#).

Explain the survey

The survey form is split into the different materials, and the categories are listed alphabetically.

DO:

- Pick up **every piece** of litter you can find over 100m between the strandline (seaweed / high tide mark) and the back of the beach ([indicate the survey area](#))

- Record **every bit** on your survey form using the tally system (| |||)
- Record it based on what the item is mostly made of
- If you don't know what it is or can't find it on the form, ask or record under 'Other' - include what it is and how many.
- Note foreign / unusual items and take photos if possible
- Add it all up at the end and fill in the 'total' column.

DON'T:

- Pick up any litter you're unsure of
- Pick up any natural stuff

Some slightly trickier items to identify:

- Cotton buds vs. lolly sticks: cotton bud sticks are thinner with notches at the ends
- String vs. fishing net: net is green

Round Off

If available: The toilets can be located at **xxxx**. There will also be refreshments at **xxxx**.

Does anyone have any questions?

Now, get into groups of three to five people, and put your team name at the top of your survey form. In your groups, designate 1 person to scribe, 1 to hold the bag and the others to collect the litter – rotate tasks if you want to. Each group needs a survey form, a pen, and a bag. Everyone needs a pair of gloves - don't pick up anything with bare hands. **(If you have litter pickers mention these too).**

We'll plan to finish at **[state time]** so meet back here by then – when we can weigh in and tally up. If you need to leave sooner, just let me know and bring me your bag and recording form.

You may want to run a competition, e.g. for the most items collected, or the weirdest thing found – if so don't forget to mention it at your briefing!