

Beach clean resource pack for primary

Ages 7–11



Introduction

Always wanted to become a citizen scientist? Taking part in a beach clean or litter survey helps you do just that. Whether you live inland or near the coast, all the data you collect on the beach, your street, local park or school grounds helps support campaigns for change.

The data collected by volunteers has been used to make the case for the single-use carrier bag charges across the UK, and more recently in campaigns for Deposit Return Schemes for all types of drinks containers.



Taking part

Taking part in a litter survey is simple – download your survey form, grab some gloves or litter pickers and head outside. Running a litter survey gives students an opportunity to see the impact of litter in the environment first-hand, while helping your school meet its sustainability goals and supporting students to develop a sense of social responsibility for their local environment.

The [Great British Beach Clean](#) is a great time to get involved, with thousands of people heading to the coast to clear litter and record what they find during a week in September. If you can't make it to the beach, no problem! That's where the [Source to Sea Litter Survey](#) comes in. All the data you collect on the beach, on your street or in a local park, helps us campaign for change.



UN Sustainable Development Goals:



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About this pack

The activities in this pack link to learning in Geography, Science, English, ICT, Citizenship and Maths. They've been designed to teach young people about the marine litter problem and how we can all have an impact on it.

The activities have been split across 5 days, with each section focusing on a different theme. You could complete the lesson plans in order or even work through them during a school week to celebrate the Great British Beach Clean:

Day 1 – Explore the problems caused by marine litter

Day 2 – Follow litter on a journey from source to sea

Day 3 – It's time to go outside and collect litter data!

Day 4 – Analyse the data collected and compare it to UK-wide results

Day 5 – Discover how you can reduce litter in the environment



What's included?

We've included all you need to get started. Click the links below to download each resource:

- [Marine Litter Fact File](#)
- [Beach clean survey form](#)
- [Source to Sea Fact File](#)
- [Source to Sea survey form](#)
- [Your school and the ocean worksheet](#)
- [Plastic ocean poster](#)
- [Waste Funnel activity](#)
- [Litter Timeline activity](#)

If you have any questions, please get in touch at education@mcsuk.org.

Day 1 – What’s the problem?

Learning Objectives

- To understand how litter in the ocean can harm wildlife
- To learn about how different materials degrade at different timescales

Resources provided:

- [Marine Litter Fact File](#)
- [Marine Litter image reel](#)
- [Litter Timeline](#)

You will need:

The following litter items and a double-sided copy of the Litter Timeline: paper, cardboard, balloon, crisp packet, plastic carrier bag, drinks can, disposable nappy, plastic drinks bottle.

Activities

Activity 1

Encourage pupils to develop and share their own opinions around the topic of marine litter in the natural environment.

Use the image reel and notes from the fact file to explore how litter affects marine animals.

Activity 2

In an open space, lay out the Litter Timeline cards in order from shortest to longest degradation time, printed double-sided, with the litter items in a pile in front. As an example, discuss the properties of paper and encourage children to think about what they know about this material. Match paper to its degradation time. Emphasise that these are scientists' best predictions, as materials like plastic haven't been around long enough to truly know their degradation times. Invite one person at a time to choose an item and guess how long it's estimated to take to break down. Remind each person to use paper as a guide. Once each item has been matched to a length of time, turn over the timeline cards to reveal the answers.

Discuss the timeline. Was anyone surprised by the answers? Which items could be recycled or reused? Could any of the items be avoided and how? How could these items harm wildlife?

Extension

Develop and enhance reading skills by reading a story with an environmental message. A great book to read as a class is *Tuamor the Turtle* by Jo Earlam.

Day 2 – Source to sea

Learning Objectives

- To develop map reading skills by studying how your location connects to the ocean

Resources provided:

- [Marine Litter Fact File](#)
- [Your school and the ocean worksheet](#)
- [Plastic Ocean poster](#)

You will need:

- Computers
- [Google Earth](#) or another digital map

Activities

Activity 1

Use maps of your local area to explore the environment around you, looking into how local factors could contribute to the amount of litter you might find on your survey. For example, local businesses and facilities that might sell single-use items.

Activity 2

Explain that 80% of the litter that we find on beaches comes from inland. Discuss possible routes for litter from your local area to reach the ocean. Common sources are highlighted in the fact file.

Activity 3

Find out how your local area is connected to the ocean. First use Google Earth to find your school building. From there, locate the nearest river and follow it along its journey to where it meets the sea. At each stage, fill in the Your school and the ocean worksheet.

Extension

To investigate how plastic can travel around the world once it reaches the ocean, challenge students to find out about the North Pacific Garbage Patch. Start by reading through the information on the Plastic Ocean poster and identify key words. Students should then work in pairs to research the topic further. Students could perform a short (2-minute) Newsround-style report on the issue to inform others, or create a news article for your school's website.

Day 3 – Community clean-up

Learning Objectives

- To learn a basic survey technique to collect data and to evaluate the methodology
- To experience fieldwork and participate in a community activity

Resources provided:

- [Beach clean survey form](#)
- [Beach clean advice](#)
- [Source to Sea Fact File](#)
- [Source to Sea survey form](#)
- [Litter ID guide](#)

You will need:

- Gloves
- Litter pickers or metal tongs
- Bin bags
- Clipboards

Activities

It's time to head out on a litter pick and survey your local area!

Use our beach clean information if you're by the coast, or our Source to Sea information if you're inland.

Beach clean

Use our beach clean survey form to record litter and download our beach clean advice for guidance on how to run a beach clean and health and safety information. If you have any questions about leading a beach clean, please contact beachwatch@mcsuk.org.

Source to Sea

Head out to your local river, street, park or even school grounds. Collect litter and tally it up or tick it off on the Source to Sea survey form. This data can then be added to our national dataset via our website. Head to our Source to Sea page for risk assessments and other advice.

Alternative activity

If you're unable to take your school or group out into the local area, you could discuss the litter items included on the survey forms and which ones learners have seen in the local area, or items they have in their homes that could end up as litter. Discussion could then centre around which items are 'new' types of litter (e.g. Covid-related items), how items end up as litter, and which items could be recycled or cut out completely. Older learners could debate whether single-use items should be banned.

Your litter survey

Before your litter survey

Choose the location for your litter pick and survey to suit the age and ability of your group. Work away from roads and with direct adult supervision.

- Equipment list:
 - Sturdy shoes
 - Gloves – ideally thick gardening-style gloves. For the youngest groups this may be tricky, and it may be necessary for the children to spot the litter and an adult wearing gloves to pick it up
 - Litter pickers or metal tongs, which make good improvised pickers. Cover up any cuts and sanitise equipment after use.
 - Bin bags
 - Hand sanitiser
 - Waterproofs or sunscreen – whichever is needed!
 - Check and update your risk assessment on the day, run through the safety guidelines and set clear expectations for behaviour. Have a rule regarding alerting an adult if anything sharp, dangerous or nasty is found.
- Use either the [beach clean form](#) or [Source to Sea form](#) to record the litter. Run through the survey forms before you start to ensure everyone knows how to record the litter data.

If you're heading out on a beach clean, ensure everyone understands the different categories and explain how this data is used. If you're running a Source to Sea clean, learners should use the fact file to understand why we're asking them to record these items and follow this up with a group discussion.

During your litter survey

Head out on your litter pick and record the items you find.

- Remind learners not to touch their faces when litter picking and use hand sanitiser often
- Put any sharp items in a separate bucket or container and not in your bin bag whilst litter picking
- Make sure you take lots of photos!

After your litter survey

- Wash your hands with soap for at least 20 seconds as soon as possible
- Clean your litter picking kit thoroughly
- Share photos from your litter pick or an image of your survey form on social media or via email at education@mcsuk.org.

Upload your Source to Sea data to our [national database](#) or your beach clean data via the [beach clean pages](#) of our website. Explain to your group that the data they collected will be analysed and used to inform our campaigns.

Day 4 – Dive into data

Learning Objectives

- To analyse and manipulate data
- To present data using IT skills and applications

Resources provided:

- [Annual Beachwatch report](#)
- [Source to Sea webpage](#)
- [2019 GBBC UK-wide dataset](#)

You will need:

Computers (optional)

Activities

Activity 1

Using the litter data you collected, you could practise simple manipulation of numbers on a real-life dataset. Simple manipulation could include addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, fractions and percentages.

Activity 2

Present your data using graphs, tables and charts. These could then be used as part of the Day 5 activities to share your work and raise awareness of the impacts of littering in your wider community.

Activity 3

Compare your data to last year's data using our annual Beachwatch report or scrolling to our Source to Sea data.

Extension

For older learners we've created a dataset showing the top 10 litter items found on beaches in 2019. You could use this dataset to explore and compare findings across the UK. You could then produce charts and graphs to show variation across the UK.

Day 5 – Taking action

Learning Objectives

- To work in small groups to solve problems and share ideas
- To generate a community-focused campaign to raise awareness and promote environmentally responsible behaviour

Resources provided:

- [Waste Funnel](#)
- [7 Rs worksheet](#)
- [Marine Litter Fact File](#)

You will need:

Poster paper
Computers (optional)

Activities

Activity 1

Encourage learners to identify ways we can stop litter reaching the sea.

Use the Waste Funnel diagram to look at the 7 Rs and emphasise we need to do more than Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. Use the information in the fact file to help explain the order of importance in the pyramid. Students should then cut out and match up the 7 Rs terms with their definitions. It's important to emphasise that waste can become litter unintentionally and reducing the amount of waste we produce is key.

Activity 2

Split learners into small groups and challenge them to generate ideas for a campaign to raise awareness of litter in the local area.

Pupils should use knowledge gained throughout the week to shape their campaign, thinking about why litter in the environment is bad, the different local litter sources there might be and how it can travel to the sea. Learners should use their litter pick results or the datasets to help shape their campaign. Encourage learners to think of ideas for raising awareness *and* reducing litter in their local community.

Each group should present their campaign ideas and vote on one to take forward, or decide on a way to best combine everyone's ideas. As a group, decide how you will work on the campaign and how your whole school or group could help to implement it in the community.

Extension

Explore and develop creative writing skills using the learners' knowledge of marine litter to create a short story or poem.

Follow up



Reflect

After the week's activities, take time to reflect on what students have learned by asking the following reflective questions:

- Why is it important that we all reduce the amount of plastic being produced?
- How does collecting data help create positive change?
- Thinking about the waste hierarchy, what is the most impactful change you could personally make?
- Are there any changes you are going to make to your life to reduce your impact on the environment?



Follow up

For more activity ideas and lesson plans, have a look at our [Marine Litter](#) series. You could challenge your learners to reduce their single-use plastic use or test their knowledge with a plastics quiz.

Check out our [Artivism](#) lesson which looks at various artists using their work to raise awareness of environmental issues and be inspired to create your own activism piece.



Keep in touch

If you have any questions about the activity suggestions or resources provided, please don't hesitate to contact the learning team.

We'd love to see photos of your learners out and about collecting litter – you can share these with us on social media or using the email address below.

Contact details

Learning Team: education@mcsuk.org

[f mcsuk](#) [@mcs_uk](#)

Marine Litter Fact File



From source to sea

It is estimated that 11 million tonnes of plastic ends up in the sea worldwide each year (1), and that 80% of litter found in the sea is from inland sources (2).

Sources on land can include intentional and accidental littering, items flushed down toilets, sinks and drains, windblown litter from bins and landfills, and litter carried by rainwater into drains, rivers and eventually the sea. Litter is also a problem at sea, with sources like fishing, sailing, speed boats, commercial ships and container spills causing litter pollution.



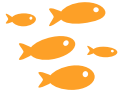
Litter timeline

Litter in the ocean takes longer to degrade than litter on land, but will eventually start to break up due to wave action, currents, saltwater and sunlight. Degradation time varies greatly depending on the properties of the litter.

Microplastics are a serious environmental issue. They are plastics that have broken up into pieces less than 5mm. However, some plastics enter the environment this size already – like microfibres and plastic nurdles. Nurdles are the small plastic pellets used in the production of plastic products.

1. Pew, 2020
2. Europa, 2016

Marine Litter Fact File



Marine life and litter

Litter items can cause harm to all sorts of marine life, from tiny plankton to huge whales.

Animals can become entangled in litter, causing injury, reduced mobility and even death. Ingestion of litter, particularly plastic, is very problematic for marine life as they are unable to digest it. Large amounts of plastic ingestion can lead to starvation, as there is no room left for food. One study found 100% of turtles sampled to have plastic in their stomach (3). In some areas, the extreme amount of plastic on the sea floor can suffocate the animals and plants living there.

Invasive species

Ocean currents can move plastics around the world. Small animals and plants can hitch a ride on the surface of plastic and travel with the currents, introducing non-native species to new areas. The introduction of non-native species could cause harm to the ecosystem.

Plastic chemicals

Several chemicals used in the production of plastic materials are carcinogenic. Toxic contaminants can also accumulate on the surface of plastic materials that have broken up and been underwater for a long time. When marine animals ingest plastic accidentally, these toxic contaminants enter their digestive systems and could build up in the food web over time.



Gannet carrying fishing rope
📷 JHS Archer-Thomson



Microplastic pieces within seaweed
📷 Natasha Ewins

Marine Litter Fact File



Litter surveys

Litter surveys are not only important for clearing rubbish, but also for gathering data on the types of litter polluting our environment. [Beachwatch](#) is our national beach clean and survey initiative, and has been running for nearly 30 years. Our brilliant volunteers head out to beaches across the UK to clean and survey our coastline, collecting and recording the rubbish they find within a 100m stretch of beach. This litter data helps inform our campaigns and lobby government, and has led to influential changes like the UK-wide carrier bag charge, microbead bans and changes to wet wipe packaging.

We also use the data to determine the sources of litter. For example, if a significant amount of sewage-related debris (SRD) is found in an area, we work with local sewage treatment companies to try to improve treatment plants, and with communities to raise awareness of what should and shouldn't be flushed down the toilet.



Reducing litter

We all need to do our bit to reduce litter in the environment. By rethinking how we shop and what we use in our daily lives, we can all make a difference. Refusing unnecessary plastic and other materials, reducing the amount of products we consume, and repairing rather than replacing are all important actions we can take. Through education, we can help raise awareness, encourage positive consumer behaviour, and campaign for change from businesses and the government.



© Natasha Ewins



© Aled Ilywelyn

Marine Litter Fact File



Recycling

Even if we reduce the number of items we use, we will still need to throw some away. This is where efficient recycling is key. Download a guide from your local council to help students understand what can be recycled at home and at school. Many items can be recycled, but if your local council has limited recycling options check out [Terracycle's website](#) for local drop-off points.

Plastics can only be recycled at best 2-3 times before they lose their strength, so we still need to move away from plastics to materials that can be recycled time and time again. We need to change how products are recycled, and how we incentivise best practice to ensure materials and resources are valued. This could include redesigning products or calling for economic incentives like Deposit Return Schemes (DRS), where a small deposit is paid when consumers buy a single-use drinks container and is refunded when they return it to a store or dedicated recycling point.



Circular economy

We currently have an economy which is linear, which means we make, use and dispose of products using up finite resources. It's estimated that only 9% of all plastic ever made has been recycled (4), so we know that recycling alone isn't the solution. Instead we need to move towards a circular economy, where products are designed to be used time and again, repairable, or re-purposed as new products. The whole life cycle of the product has been considered, so very little ends up in landfill.



Litter collected at a beach clean
📷 Natasha Ewins



Single-use plastic straws
📷 Natasha Ewins

4. Geyer *et al.*, 2017

Beach clean volunteer survey

Beach name: _____

Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Your name & email: _____

No. of volunteers in group: _____

**MARINE
CONSERVATION
SOCIETY**

Keep a running tally as you collect IIII || • Add up your tally and enter your final total • Please enter actual values only - 'lots', 'many', 'bags full', '100s' can't be used

1 Plastic / polystyrene		tally	total
4/6 pack yokes			
Bag ends			
Bagged dog faeces			
Bags (e.g. shopping)			
Bags: Mesh (e.g. vegetable)			
Bags: Small (e.g. freezer / vegetable)			
Biobeads			
Biofilm support media			
Bottles / containers / drums: Other			
Bottles / containers: cleaner			
Bottles / containers: drinks			
Bottles / containers: toiletries / cosmetics			
Buckets			
Caps / lids			
Car parts			
Cigarette lighters / tobacco pouches			
Cigarette stubs			
Combs / hair brushes / sunglasses			
Crates			
Cups - foamed polystyrene			
Cups - plastic			
Cutlery / trays / straws			
Fertiliser / animal feed bags			
Fibreglass			
2 Rubber		tally	total
Balloons (inc string, valves, ribbons)			
Boots			
Tyres & engine belts			
Tyres used as fenders			
Other (please specify)			
3 Cloth		tally	total
Clothing / shoes / towels			
Furnishings			
Sacking			
Shoes (leather)			
Other (please specify)			
4 Paper / cardboard		tally	total
Bags			
Cardboard			
Cartons (purepak e.g. milk)			
Cartons (tetrapak e.g. juice)			
Cigarette packets			
Cups			
Newspapers / magazines			
Other (please specify)			
5 Wood (machined)		tally	total
Corks			
Crab / lobster pots & tops			
Crates			
Fish boxes			
Lolly sticks / chip forks			
Paint brushes			
Pallets			
Other 0-50cm (please specify)			
Other 50cm+ (please specify)			

6 Metal		tally	total
Fish boxes - foamed polystyrene			
Fish boxes - plastic			
Fishing line (angling)			
Fishing net & net pieces: 0-50cm			
Fishing net & net pieces: 50cm+			
Floats / Buoys			
Foam / sponge / insulation			
Foamed polystyrene fragments: 0-2.5cm			
Foamed polystyrene fragments: 2.5-50cm			
Foamed polystyrene fragments: > 50cm			
Food containers (inc fast food) - foamed polystyrene			
Food containers (inc fast food) - plastic			
Gloves (e.g. washing up)			
Gloves (industrial/professional)			
Hard hats			
Injection gun cartridge (e.g. sealant)			
Jerry cans			
Light / glow sticks (tubes with fluid)			
Lobster & fish tags			
Lobster / crab pots & tops			
Nurdles			
Octopus pots			
7 Glass		tally	total
Aerosol / spray cans			
Appliances			
BBQs (disposable)			
Cans (drink)			
Cans (food)			
Caps / lids			
Fishing weights / hooks / lures			
Foil wrappers			
Lobster / crab pots & tops			
Oil drums			
Paint tins			
Scrap			
Wire / mesh / barbed wire			
Other 0-50cm (please specify)			
Other 50cm+ (please specify)			
8 Pottery / ceramics		tally	total
Construction material (e.g. tiles)			
Octopus pots			
Other (please specify)			

9 Sanitary		tally	total
Oil containers / drums: 0-50cm			
Oil containers / drums: 50cm+			
Oyster nets / round plastic stoppers			
Oyster trays (round from oyster cultures)			
Packaging / plastic sheeting (industrial)			
Packets: Crisp / sweet / lolly (inc sticks) / sandwich			
Pens & pen lids			
Plastic fragments: 0 - 2.5cm			
Plastic fragments: 2.5 - 50cm			
Plastic fragments: > 50cm			
Sheeting from mussel culture (Tahitians)			
Shoes / sandals			
Shotgun cartridges			
Strapping bands			
String & cord (diameter <1cm) not from dolly ropes or unidentified			
String / cord / rope: thickness 1cm+			
String & filaments exclusively from dolly ropes			
Tangled dolly rope			
Tangled nets/cord/rope/string without dolly rope or mixed with dolly rope			
Toys / party poppers / fireworks / dummies			
Other (please specify)			
10 Medical		tally	total
Condoms			
Cotton bud sticks - cardboard			
Cotton bud sticks - plastic			
T			

Reg. charity in England and Wales 1004005 and in Scotland SC037480.
VCE-002-2021

Plastic/polystyrene

All items on this side of the sheet are identified as plastic or polystyrene



4/6 pack yokes

Four or six-pack rings/yokes are connected and hold together multi-packs of drinks cans



Bag ends

The part that remains after tearing-off single-use carrier bags in supermarkets



Biobeads

Tiny plastic pellets used in filtration process in wastewater treatment plants. Usually wrinkled, knobby or ridged



Biofilm support media

The plastic material upon which microorganisms grow, typically used in waste water treatment



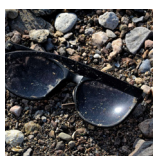
Caps/lids

Plastic caps and lids from bottles/containers, used to seal drinks. Includes plastic to which they are tethered



Cigarette stubs

The remaining part of a cigarette, commonly made from synthetic plastic cellulose



Combs/hair brushes/sunglasses

Plastic items used for untangling hair, as well as plastic glasses



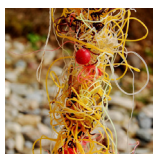
Cutlery/trays/straws

Single-use plastic knives, forks, take-away trays and straws



Fishboxes (polystyrene)

Used for packaging fish or other seafood. There's also a place on your form for wooden and plastic



Fishing line (angling)

Colourful, thin and wiry nylon thread, sometimes attached to a bait hook, used for catching fish



Fishing net/net pieces: 0-50cm

Plastic twine, cord, or something similar, used typically for catching fish



Fishing net/net pieces: 50cm+

Plastic twine, cord, or something similar, used typically for catching fish



Foamed polystyrene fragments

Unidentifiable polystyrene items. Use the ruler at the bottom of the form to record the size



Food container - foamed polystyrene

Containers storing food, such as fast food containers, lunchboxes, etc



Food container - plastic

Plastic containers used for carrying or storing food, such as fast-food containers, Tupperware, lunchboxes, etc



Injection gun cartridge (e.g. sealant)

Cartridge made of plastic for devices used to inject grease, silicone, or other fluids. Includes their nozzles



Jerry cans

Containers with a handle used for storing or transporting liquids, typically petrol or water



Lobster & fish tags

Used to mark fish and shellfish such as lobsters, often with a serial number



Lobster/crab pots & traps

Used to catch crustaceans. Most feature a net covering and a cone-shaped entrance tunnel



Nurdles

Small, colourful plastic pellets, about the size of a lentil - 'virgin' plastic from which nearly all plastic goods are formed



Octopus pot

Pots made of plastic or PVC tubing, weighted with concrete, and typically having a volume of 4 litres



Oyster nets/mussel bags

Plastic net sack for growing (underwater) shellfish. These bags can have different sizes and shapes



Oyster trays

Tray made of square mesh for growing oysters. Sometimes stacked, with or without feet, doors, v-braces and hooks



Packaging/plastic sheeting

Large plastic packaging or sheeting used for the protection/covering/wrapping of cargo objects



Packets: crisp/sweet/lolly (incl. sticks)/sandwich

Plastic food packets and wrappers in various styles and shapes



Plastic fragments (range of sizes)

Unidentifiable plastic items. Use the ruler at the bottom of the form to record the size



Sheeting from mussel culture (Tahitians)

Plastic sheeting which is cut on one side into strips. Used to protect mussel farms from animals



Shoes/sandals

Various types of footwear such as shoes and sandals made of plastic



Shotgun Cartridges

These consist of a plastic tube mounted on a brass base and can come in a range of colours



Strapping bands

Used for fastening any type of package. Usually made of quite hard plastic. Comes in a range of colours



String & cord (diameter <1cm)

Threads made of plastic twisted together into a length. Not to be confused with fishing net pieces.



Tangled dolly rope

Tangles of blue, black or orange rope that are used to protect bottom trawling nets against wear and tear



Tangled nets/cord/rope/string

Tangled pieces of plastic open-meshed material made of twine, cord etc. Typically used for fishing



Toys/party poppers/fireworks/dummies

Any plastic object that children play with, as well as toys used on the beach

Rubber



Tyres used as fenders
Rubber tyres used as boat or dock bumpers will often be pierced with rope or metal chains

Glass



Glass (other)
Fragments of glass items that cannot be identified should go in other and be recorded as 'pieces'

Medical



Containers/tubes (inc. pill packages)
Any packaging of pharmaceutical solids and liquids e.g. pain killer packets or blister packs

Cloth



Clothing/shoes/towels
Any type of clothes, garments and headwear made of natural or artificial materials



Furnishings
Fabric used for furniture, fittings, and other decorative house accessories such as curtains



Sacking
Sacks and other packaging items that are made of a strong, coarse fabric

Metal



Caps/lids
Metallic caps and lids from bottles and containers, including the pull tabs from cans



Fishing weights/hooks/lines
Weights increase sink rate of lures/hooks. Lures are metal hooks with bright mounts



Loose/crab pots & tops
Wire or metal and netting with opening for lobster or crab entry into tunnel

Sanitary



Condoms
A thin rubber sheath. Within this category also any packaging should also be recorded



Cotton bud sticks (plastic or cardboard)
Short stick with parallel notches at each end where cotton wool would have been attached



Tampons & applicators
Tampons and plastic applicators that have been incorrectly flushed down the toilet



Toilet fresheners
Attached inside toilet bowls to keep it smelling fresh. Usually made of plastic



Towels/panty liners/backing strips
Can be found on beaches when being incorrectly flushed down the toilet



Wet wipes
Disposable synthetic cloth, often found on beaches when incorrectly flushed down the toilet

Paper/ cardboard



Cartons (Purepak e.g. milk)
Containers made of carton with a plastic-lining used for food products. Check for logo

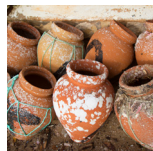


Cartons (Tetrapak e.g. juice)
Similar container made of paperboard with a plastic-lining used for food products. Check for logo

Pottery/ ceramics

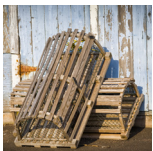


Construction material (e.g. tiles)
Ceramic materials used in construction, such as bricks, roof tiles, floor tiles, and cement



Octopus pots
Pots made of pottery, weighted with concrete, and typically having a volume of 4 litres. Used to trap octopus

Wood



Crab/lobster pots and tops
Stationary wooden traps used to catch crustaceans such as lobsters and crabs. Usually covered in a net



Fishboxes
Boxes used for packaging fish or other seafood. There's separate options for plastic and polystyrene



Lolly stick/chip fork
Includes sticks from ice-creams, small wooden forks from fast food suppliers (chip forks), chopsticks and toothpicks

We know some items are hard to categorise - here is a photo guide to some common tricky items and where to put them on your form



Disposable vape
Plastic - other



Dental floss stick
Sanitary - other



Receipts
Paper - other



Tissues
Paper - other



Hair bands & bobbles
Cloth - clothing



Goggles, arm bands, snorkels
Plastic - toys



Balls & sports equipment
Plastic - toys



Metal nails
Metal - other (0-50cm)



Dog poo bags (empty)
Plastic - bags (small)



Nitrous oxide
Metal - other (0-50cm)

Source to Sea Fact File

Why your help matters

We know that litter from towns, parks and even the remotest country lanes often make their way into our ocean. **Every item dropped in the street has the potential to pollute our seas** by travelling down rivers and streams, being washed down drains or by being blown onto our beaches.

As part of our litter cleans, we collect data to track rubbish back to its source – our survey results are then used to find solutions to ocean pollution, and to campaign for measures to bring positive change.

We've used data collected in previous years to make the case for carrier bag charges across the UK, and are campaigning for Deposit Return Schemes for all types of drinks containers.

Great British Beach Clean

Takes place annually in September

Take part in a Source to Sea Litter Survey as part of the Great British Beach Clean. This September, there's something for everyone, everywhere. No matter where you live across the UK, you can help keep our seas clean.



Source to Sea Fact File

The Litter Quest items

We've chosen **14 items** to find out more about. By taking part in inland cleans, we can work together to keep our seas safe and healthy – for us all to enjoy.

What we're looking for – **Food & drink containers**

1. **Plastic drink bottles** – 9 billion drink containers are wasted each year by not being recycled, with many ending up in the ocean.



2. **Loose plastic cases/lids** – In the UK there is currently no legislation for lids to be tethered to bottles. We believe this small change could help reduce litter.



3. **Plastic drink cups** – An estimated 500 billion plastic cups are used each year around the world. They make their way from land sources into our ocean and harm marine life.



4. **Glass bottles** – Glass can easily be recycled back into glass. In the environment it can get broken and become pieces which can harm us and wildlife.



5. **Metal drink can** – Scotland will introduce a deposit return scheme in 2025 on glass, metal and plastic (PET) bottles – we want all UK governments to continue taking urgent action and bring in their own schemes.



Source to Sea Fact File

6. **Polystyrene fast food container** –

Polystyrene is a type of plastic. These containers break up into small pieces which are easily carried by the wind. Polystyrene can float at the surface and be eaten by marine wildlife.



7. **Polystyrene cups** – Polystyrene is very difficult to recycle and we want to see it banned across the UK.



8. **Paper cups** – It is estimated that the UK uses over 7 million disposable coffee cups every day. Lots of paper cups have an inner plastic lining and can be difficult to recycle.



In 2022, we found an average of 14 drinks-related litter items for every 100m of beach, and all these items were also found on 97% of inland cleans.

We want to see **Deposit Return Schemes** (DRS) introduced across the UK. A DRS works by charging consumers a small deposit on drinks-related items when they buy them. Customers then receive their money back when they return them for recycling, essentially giving these common litter items a value.

Scotland was due to introduce a DRS in 2024, but this has now been delayed and we hope to see compatible deposit return schemes implemented across the UK by 2025.



Source to Sea Fact File

What we're looking for – Plastic bags

- 9. Single-use plastic bags** – Since carrier bag charges were introduced, there has been an over 50% drop in the amount we find on our beaches.



- 10. Plastic bags for life** – Bags for life are made from thicker plastic and are designed to be used multiple times. However, we think some are still being disposed of, and could find their way into the sea.



Since charges were introduced across the UK, we've seen an over 50% drop in single-use plastic carrier bags on our beaches. We want to know if this drop can also be seen inland. Although there's been a charge on single-use plastic carrier bags for at least 5 years (Wales introduced it in 2011, Northern Ireland 2013, Scotland in 2014, England in 2015), 'bags for life' have been encouraged as a reusable alternative. But we suspect that these may still be used as a single-use item, and so still harming our environment.

What we're looking for – Wet wipes

- 11. Wet wipes** – Wet wipes are often found on beaches after being flushed down the toilet and finding their way to our ocean through drains. But they're also used and found around towns and cities.



In 2022, we found wet wipes on 61% of beach cleans and 44% of inland cleans. By tracking them back through the sewage system and their journey from our streets and parks, we can help put a stop to pollution.

Source to Sea Fact File

What we're looking for – **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

12. Single-use face masks – We didn't see many people wearing these in everyday life before the pandemic, but now it's common place. Since the pandemic began there has been an increase in the amount of PPE found in our public spaces.



13. Single-use plastic gloves – Like face masks, we rarely saw these being used outside of medical settings and specialist jobs until 2020, when lots of people started wearing them.



PPE was really important during the pandemic, but unfortunately it wasn't always disposed of properly. In 2020, PPE was found on almost 70% of inland cleans. Thankfully, this has reduced to 27% in 2022 as PPE guidance has eased.

What we're looking for – **Balloons**

14. Balloons – In 2022, balloons were found on 29% of inland clean and 50% of beach cleans. Let us know how many you find.



Even balloons marketed as 'biodegradable' can last up to 4 years in the marine environment. Marine animals can ingest balloons or get tangled in balloon ribbons, restricting their movement and ability to eat. To reduce this threat, we want to get outdoor balloon and sky lantern releases stopped. Over 80 local authorities in the UK have banned balloon or sky releases on their land.

Source to Sea Litter Quest

80% of the litter we find in our ocean comes from inland sources.
Your survey will help track litter items from source to sea.



About your survey

Where did you clean?

- | | | | |
|-------------|--------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Town | ☐ | River | ☐ |
| Countryside | ☐ | Playground | ☐ |
| Park | ☐ | Office grounds | ☐ |
| Street | ☐ | School grounds | ☐ |

First half of your postcode:

How many bags of litter did you fill?

Weight of litter (kg):

About your group

How many people are in your group?

Is your group taking part as a:

School group? ☐ Youth group? ☐

What is the age range of those taking part?

Are you taking part as part of an organisation?

What is the weirdest thing you found?

Try to recycle the litter you collect if you can, but always keep yourself safe!

What to do – Spot the litter, write down what you found, then pick it up.
 You can use a tally to keep track as you go along. ||||

Plastic drink bottles



How many?

Loose plastic
bottle caps/lids



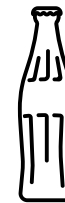
How many?

Plastic drink cups



How many?

Glass bottles



How many?

Metal drink cans



How many?

Polystyrene fast
food container



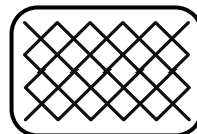
How many?

Paper cups



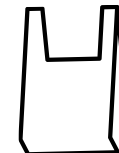
How many?

Disposable
BBQs



How many?

Single-use
plastic bags



How many?

Polystyrene cups



How many?

Plastic bags for life



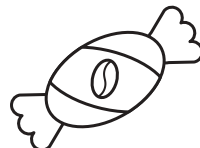
How many?

Wet wipes



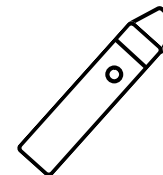
How many?

Packets e.g.
crisps, sweets



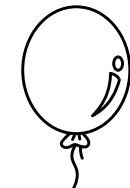
How many?

Vapes



How many?

Balloons



How many?

Your school and the ocean

Name:

Our school's name is:

The coordinates for
our school are:

The village or town our
school is in is called:

Our nearest river is
called:

The mouth of the
river is:

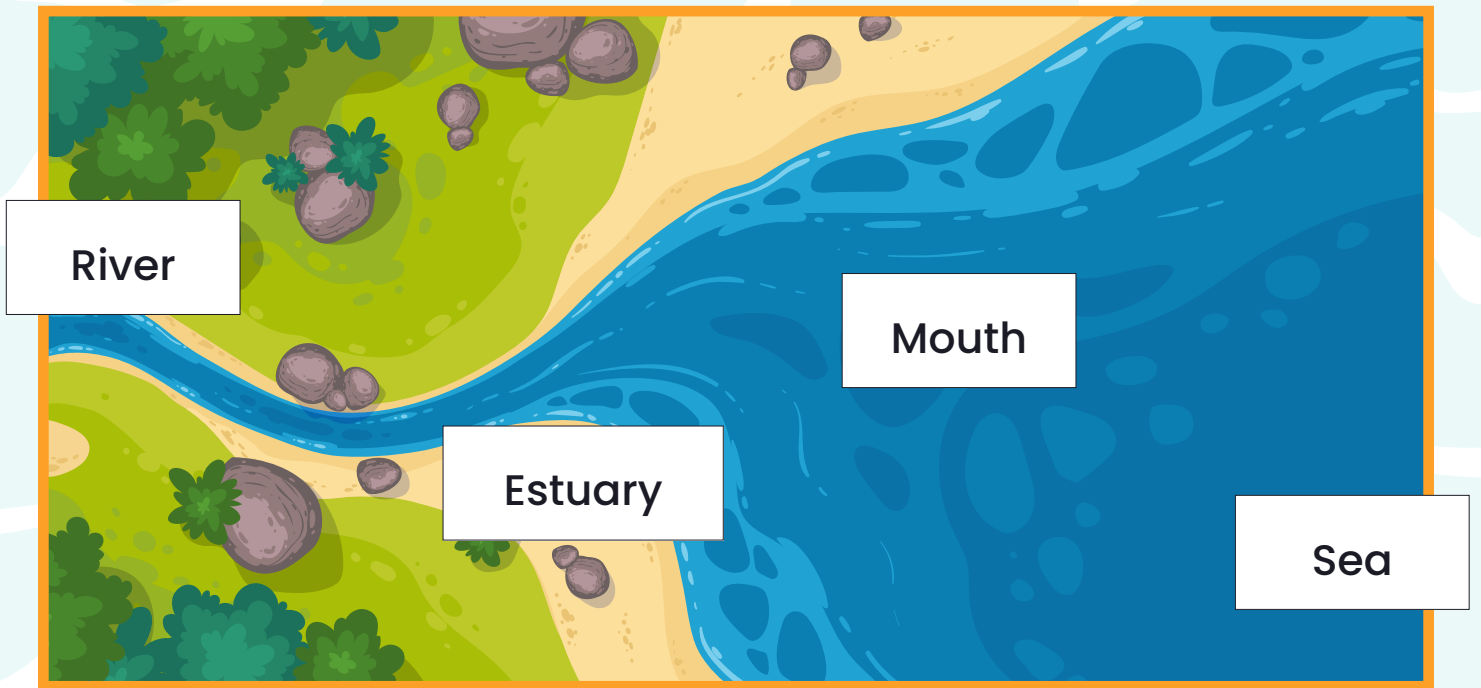
What is the name of
the estuary?

What is the name of
the nearest town to
the estuary?

How far is your school to the
mouth of the estuary?

What is the name of
the sea in this area?

What is the section of ocean
nearest to you called:



**On the map mark roughly
where your school is
and where your nearest
river meets the sea.**



Plastic Ocean

Our ocean has no boundaries, and when it comes to rubbish in the sea, that means it's everyone's problem.

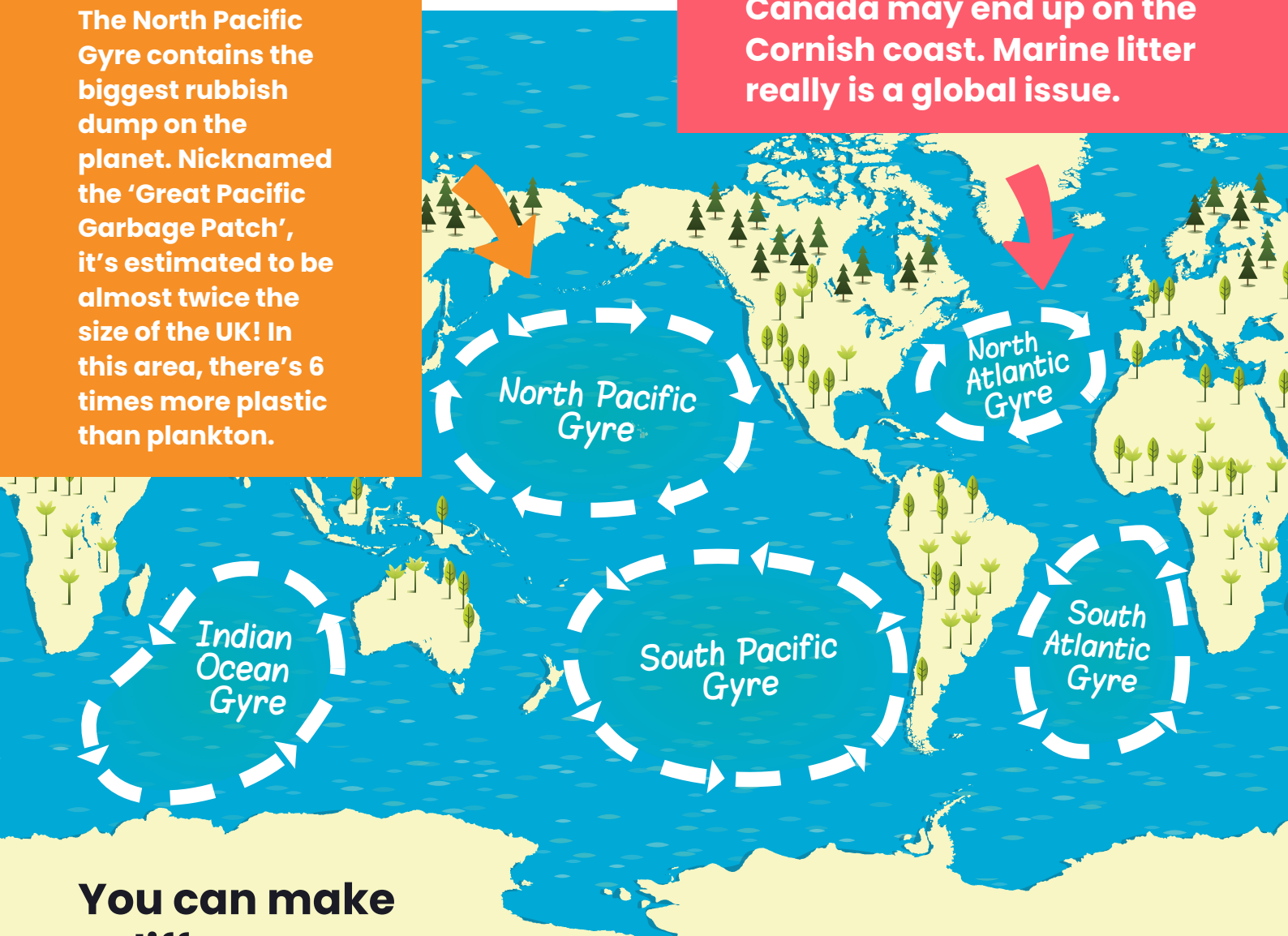
All caught up

Gyres are large rotating currents in our ocean where water spirals around. It's where much of the litter that is floating in the sea collects. The five main gyres across the globe collect man-made debris, especially plastic objects.

Floating rubbish dumps

The North Pacific Gyre contains the biggest rubbish dump on the planet. Nicknamed the 'Great Pacific Garbage Patch', it's estimated to be almost twice the size of the UK! In this area, there's 6 times more plastic than plankton.

A plastic bottle dropped in Canada may end up on the Cornish coast. Marine litter really is a global issue.



You can make a difference

Never drop litter, reduce the amount of plastic you use and recycle more.

Waste Funnel

Reducing our waste means less landfill/incineration and less litter



MARINE
CONSERVATION
SOCIETY



Cut boxes along dotted lines

Rethink

Always question the choices you make. Could you do things differently in your life so that you use less resources and create less waste?

Refuse

Identify single-use items that you can refuse, like straws and water bottles. Keep looking for new items to refuse.

Reduce

Cut down on the things you buy and the energy you use. By using less, we can cut down the amount of waste sent to landfill and stop it from becoming litter.

Repair

When something breaks see if it can be repaired and used again instead of buying a new one. This stops the old item becoming waste and means energy and resources don't need to be used to make a new one. Win, win.

Reuse

Can the product be used again for another purpose? By reusing what you already have or finding a new use for it, like using a tin can as a pencil pot, you stop the item becoming waste. It also means you don't have to buy something new.

Recycle

By recycling products whenever possible something new can be made from the materials and you stop them going to landfill.

Rot

If you can't repair, reuse or recycle the item, use a bin. Depending on where you live, this may then be sent to landfill or incinerated. Plastic, remember, will never rot away.

Paper





Weeks

Cardboard





Months

Balloons



4 years

Plastic carrier bag





20 years

Crisp packet



75 years

Drinks can

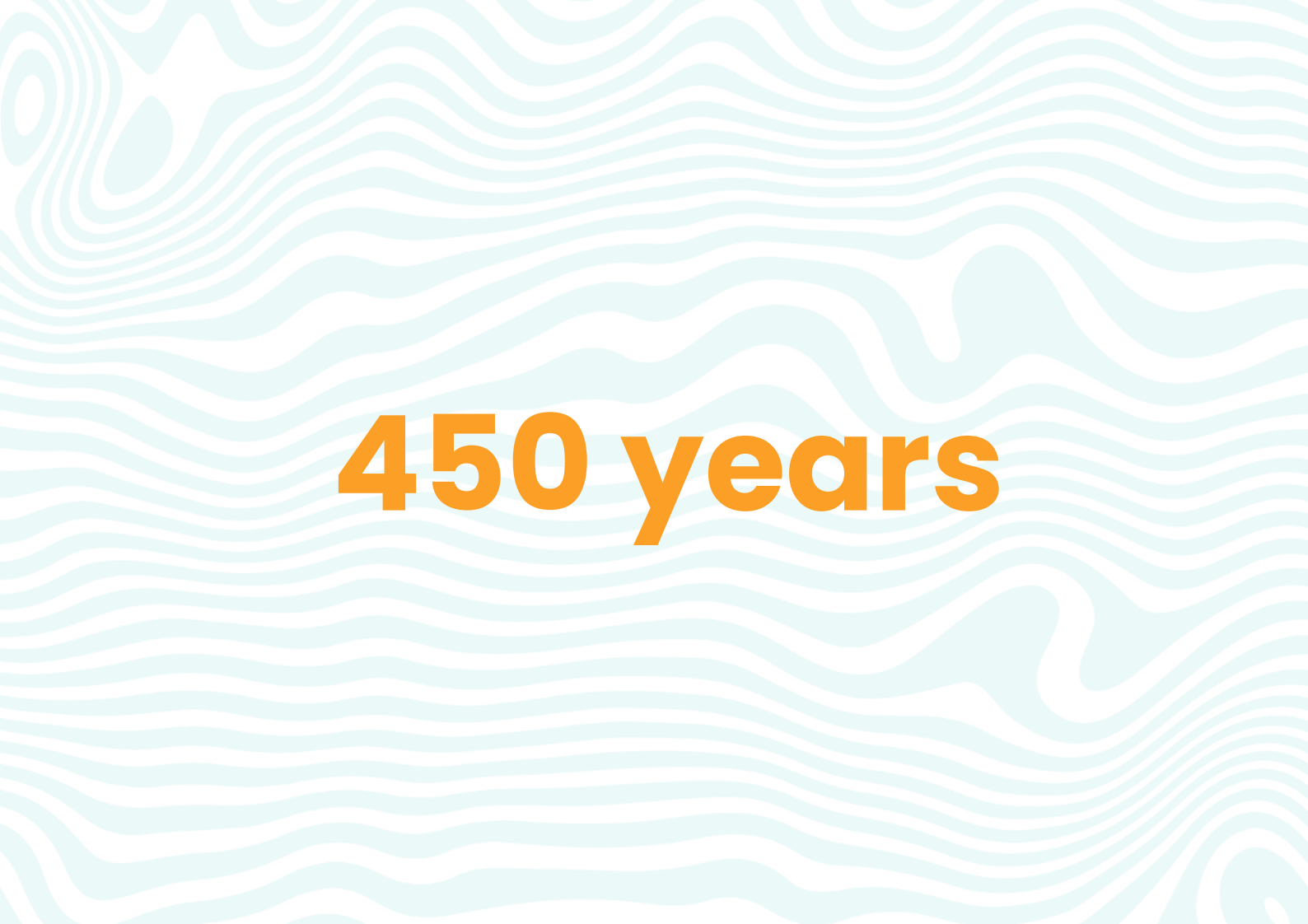




200 years

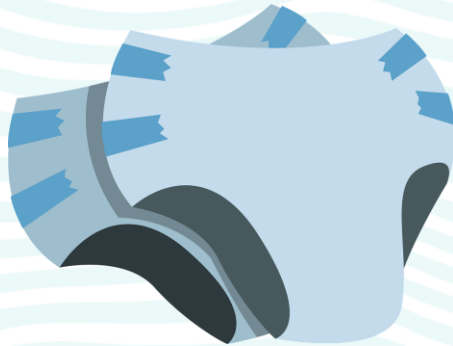
Plastic drinks bottle

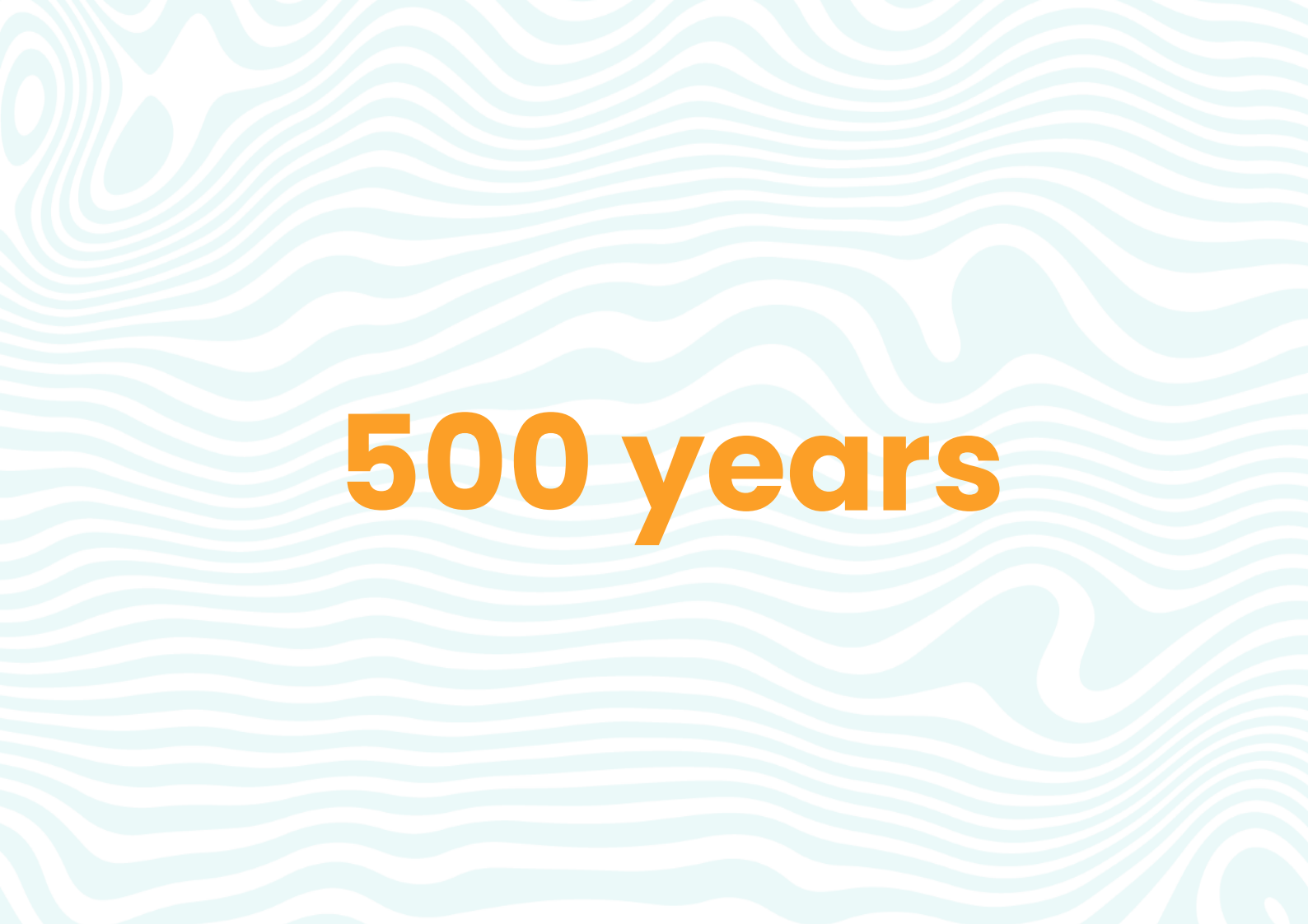




450 years

Disposable nappy





500 years

Glass





Forever?