Activity: Litter pick

Most of the litter in the ocean comes from inland sources. In this activity, pupils carry out a litter pick and assess how the items they collected could impact our seas.

You will need:

- The following items (or pictures of them): paper, cardboard, balloon, crisp packet, aluminium can, disposable nappy, plastic drinks bottle, glass
- Litter Timeline cards
- Marine Litter Image Reel
- Source to Sea survey forms and tally sheets
- Equipment e.g. sturdy shoes, litter pickers, gloves, bin bags, hand sanitiser, sunblock, waterproof clothing
- Risk assessment – you could use our form as part of your school risk assessment.

Did you know that 80% of litter in the ocean comes from the land?

What to do

How long does it stick around?

1. In an open space, lay out the timeline cards in order, with the litter items in a pile in front. As an example, discuss the properties of paper. Match paper to its degradation time. *Note:* the litter items and degradation times are in order e.g. paper = months/years
2. Invite one pupil at a time to choose an item and guess how long it is estimated to take to break down. Once each item has been matched to a length of time, turn over the time cards to reveal the answers.
3. 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?

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How does litter affect marine life?

1. Discuss how the litter items could harm wildlife. Look at the image reel to see images of animals affected.
2. Display the slide titled 'Sources' in the image reel. Ask pupils to share their ideas of how each symbol is connected to litter.
3. Discuss how litter items could travel from source to the sea using the icons as inspiration.

Carry out a litter pick

1. Following your school's risk assessment and health and safety procedures, carry out a litter pick. This could be of your school grounds, or an area known for litter. If you pick elsewhere, you will need permission from the landowner.
2. Put pupils into pairs for the pick. One pupil can pick the litter (using appropriate safety equipment), while the other records what was found on the Source to Sea survey form.

How much litter?

1. Collate the results using the tally sheets and then bring everything together into a class spreadsheet of findings.
2. Ask pupils to work together to present the findings as charts and graphs and discuss what they show. What were the most common types of litter?
3. Revisit the litter timeline and consider how long the most common items found will stay in the environment.
4. Discuss why people litter. Why don't people put their rubbish in a bin? Are there barriers to using bins? Do people know the impact of litter?

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Preparing for Step 3

In Step 3 you'll take action to help clean up our seas. You could choose to tackle the *source* of the litter you found.

If you decide to do this, prepare by taking each commonly found type of litter and discussing possible sources with the class e.g. a fast food shop, overflowing bins, lack of bins in the area.

Next, list ideas for ways the litter could be reduced. Could alternative packaging be used that would reduce waste? Are more bins needed? Could people refuse this sort of packaging?

Litter item	Possible sources	Ways to reduce this type of litter

Once you have lots of ideas for how to tackle the sources of the litter you found, pupils can move on to Step 3.

You can carry out the project in the way that best suits your school's circumstances. One possible approach is to use our Workbook for tackling the source of litter.

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Why is single-use plastic a problem?

Plastic is incredibly useful – flexible, lightweight, durable and hygienic – but it lasts forever.

It doesn't biodegrade, but breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces. Too much plastic has short-term uses but long-term impacts on the planet. Did you know that 80% of the litter in the ocean is plastic?

How does plastic reach the ocean from the land?

- Littered – When people drop litter it can be washed or blown into drains and rivers and from there, travel to the sea.
- Left on beaches – Rubbish that is left on a beach can be washed directly into the sea and items placed into an overflowing bin can be blown into the sea.
- Blown from refuse trucks or off landfill sites – Plastic put in the bin ends up in landfill. Because it's light it can be blown into drains and rivers and into the sea.

What about recycling?

The government's statistics on waste in 2020 showed that only 47% of household plastic packaging was recycled.

Not everyone recycles (only about half of UK households), not all plastics can be recycled, and even plastic put into recycling bins may not be recycled due to problems experienced in the recycling process.

Solutions

No matter where you live, the plastic you throw away could end up in the sea.

Reducing plastic use is the only way to prevent it from ending up in our ocean.

Paper

Months/years

Cardboard

2–5 years

Balloons

4 years

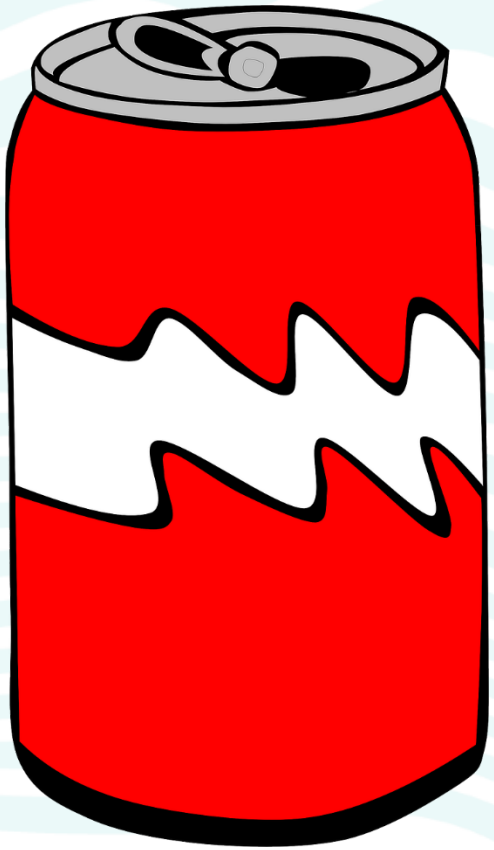
Crisp packet

75 years

Plastic carrier bag

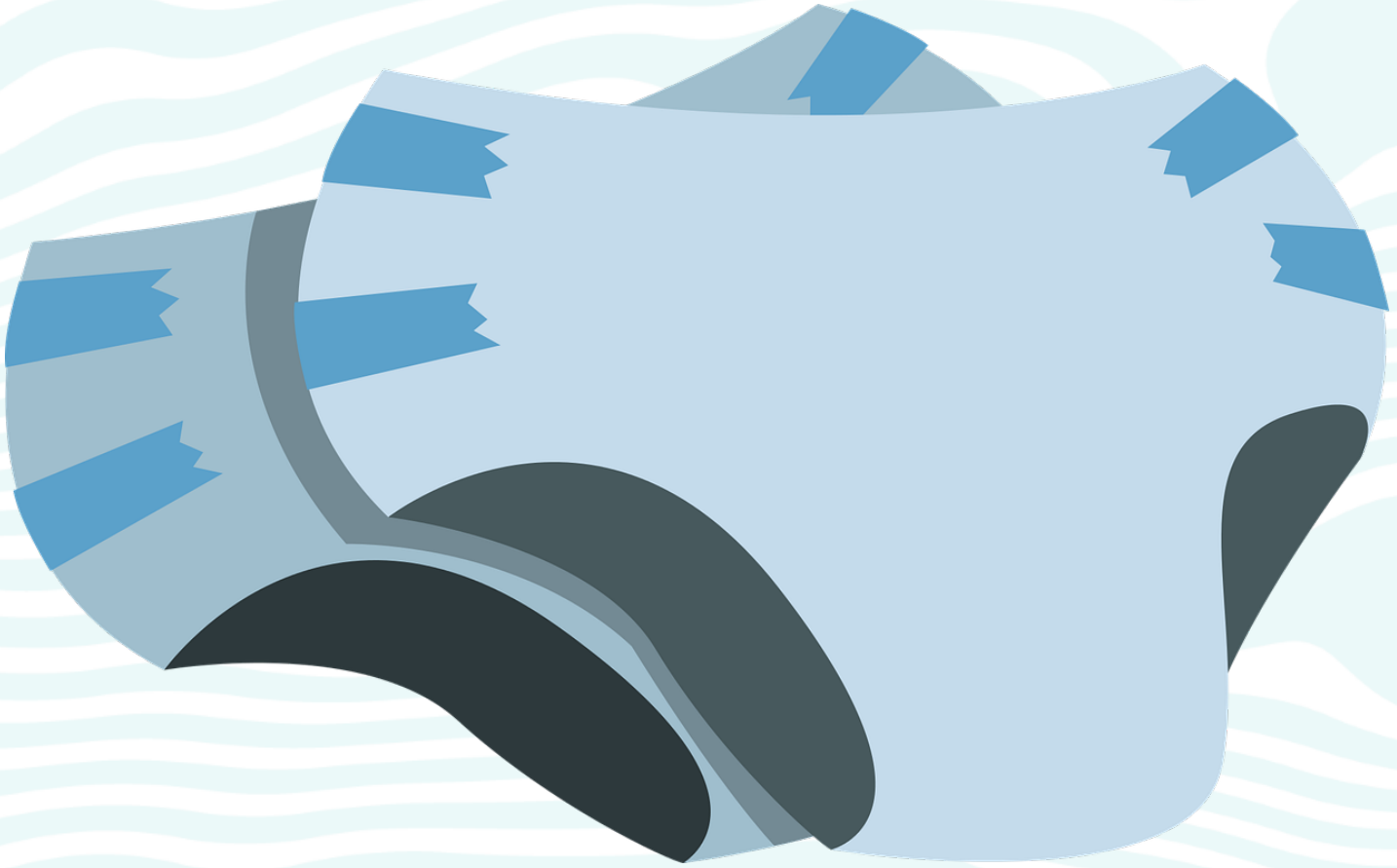
250 years

Drinks can



450 years

Disposable nappy



450 years

Plastic drink bottle

800 years

Glass

Forever?

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Stopping litter from land to sea

Total participants:

Weight of litter:

Number of bags filled:

Weirdest item found?

Where did you clean? (please circle)

Town | Countryside | Park | Street | River
Playground | Office grounds | Other

☐ School group? ☐ Youth group? Age range:

First half of your postcode:

The litter you record on your local clean-up will help us identify and create a snapshot of the litter that is still plaguing our environment, including single-use items such as PPE.

80% of the litter we find in our ocean comes from inland. Spot the litter, note what you found, then pick it up.

1. Plastic drink bottles

Tally:

2. Loose plastic bottle caps/lids

Tally:

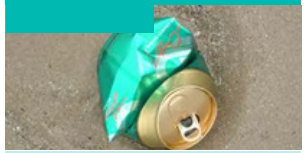
3. Plastic drink cups

Tally:

4. Glass bottles

Tally:

5. Metal drink cans



Tally:

6. Polystyrene fast food containers

Tally:

7. Polystyrene cups

Tally:

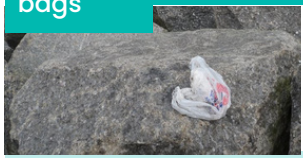
8. Paper cups

Tally:

9. Disposable BBQs

Tally:

10. Single-use plastic bags



Tally:

11. Plastic bags for life

Tally:

12. Wet wipes

Tally:

13. Single-use face masks

Tally:

14. Single-use plastic gloves

Tally:

15. Balloons

Tally:

Litter Survey Results

Now you completed the survey, fill out the boxes below to analyse your results **(1)** for material **(2)** types of items and **(3)** recycled items

(1) What was the most common material?	**(2) How many individual items of litter did you find?**	**What was the most common type of item?**	**(3) Were most items recyclable/ non recylable or unknown?**

Complete this table for three items you found

Name of item *e.g balloon, drinks can, newspaper*	*What material is it?* *e.g. plastic, metal, paper*	*Source?* *e.g. blown by wind, accidentally dropped, littered on purpose*	*Could it be recycled?* *Yes/ No/ Don't know*	*How could it harm wildlife?* *they could eat it, they could get trapped in it*

Home survey recording form

Name:

Use this form to record how many of each type of single-use plastic item you throw away or recycle each day.

Item	*Day 1*	*Day 2*	*Day 3*	*Day 4*	*Day 5*
Plastic bottle					
Plastic pot					
Plastic tray/punnet					
TetraPak carton					
Crisp/snack packets					
Plastic bags (all sizes)					
Bubble wrap					
Plastic film/lids					
Blister packs					
Plastic pouches/sachets					
Frozen food bags					
Cheese wrap					
Plastic gloves or mask					
Foam or polystyrene					
Plastic tubes, sprays					
Other					

Waste Funnel

Reducing our waste means less landfill/ incineration and less litter

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