

Beach Clean Guide

Your guide to coastal
litter picking



THANK YOU FOR PROTECTING OUR OCEANS!

By picking up litter on your local beach or coastline, you're stopping it before it can pollute our oceans. Once rubbish gets into the water, it can travel huge distances via ocean currents, spreading pollution far from where it started. This damages delicate marine habitats and makes it much harder to restore them.

Ocean litter is dangerous for wildlife. Sea creatures can get trapped in it, or mistake it for food. Eating plastic can block their stomachs, starve them or release harmful chemicals into their bodies. Seabirds, turtles, fish and dolphins are all at risk.



**MOST LITTER FOUND ON BEACHES
IS PLASTIC AND PLASTIC NEVER
TRULY DISAPPEARS.**

Over time, plastic breaks into smaller pieces called microplastics, which are almost impossible to clean up.

These tiny fragments end up in the food chain, harming everything from plankton to large predators—including humans.





THESE TINY FRAGMENTS OF PLASTIC DON'T JUST HARM WILDLIFE – THEY ALSO AFFECT THE VERY FOUNDATIONS OF OCEAN LIFE.

Plastic can harm phytoplankton – the microscopic plants in the sea that absorb huge amounts of CO₂ from the air. When these plants are damaged the ocean can't remove as much CO₂, making it harder to keep our Earth's climate in balance.

That's why protecting our waterways is so important. Rivers, estuaries and coasts are rich in wildlife and are directly connected to the sea, meaning pollution in one place can quickly spread around the globe.

Every piece of litter you stop from reaching the ocean helps protect wildlife, keeps our food safe, and supports the health of our planet.



Water pollution also affects people. Plastics and other waste can break down and release chemicals into the water, which can end up in seafood, drinking supplies and the wider environment. By keeping litter out of our waterways, we protect not just marine life, but our own health and the health of future generations.

Every action matters – each piece of litter you remove is one less piece of litter that can cause harm.



WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

PLAN A BEACH CLEAN! LOCATION AND TIMING

- Pick a safe and accessible beach – check for tides, currents and any local restrictions
- Make sure that you get permission from whoever owns the beach – check with your local council
- Avoid high tide – plan for 1–2 hours after high tide when most debris is visible and accessible. You can check the timings of tides here: www.tidetimes.org.uk
- Check weather conditions – avoid very windy or rainy days for safety
- Identify a stretch of the beach to focus on
- Find out where the nearest toilets are and all the ways in which people can exit the beach – and share this with your group
- Let your local council's waste team know that you're organising a litter pick and ask them where to leave the rubbish and how to report it

BRING THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT

- Litter pickers!
- Thick gloves – to protect from sharp items, glass, cans etc.
- Sturdy bin bags and plastic bag hoops which will keep the bags open even if it's windy
- High Vis Vests – help identify your group
- Good footwear – non-slip shoes or wellies / walking boots if it's rocky or muddy
- Hand sanitiser & first aid kit
- Suncream and water to drink

MAKE WAVES! PROMOTE YOUR PICK

Think of all the ways that you can let people know about your litter picking event. Here are a few ideas:

- Create an event on Facebook or share the details in community Facebook groups related to your local area
- Create a poster to put up in shops, community centres and on local noticeboards
- Contact local community groups to see if anyone else would like to join you!



SAFETY

Visit the beach before the pick and think about the potential risks that are worth mentioning to your group.

RISK ASSESSMENT

You can download a template risk assessment by scanning the QR Code



Things to consider:

Sharps, such as metal or glass should only be picked up by an adult who can do so safely and be placed in a "sharps bucket" as these could easily pierce a bag and injure someone.

Ask the group not to pick up hazardous waste such as needles or syringes – these should be reported to the council as soon as possible.

Large and heavy items such as fishing gear or drums should also be reported to the local council waste team.

Explain to your group if any areas are out of bounds.

Ask people not to pick alone, especially on remote beaches. Litter picking in pairs is better.

Set an end time – we suggest for a nice cuppa now and possibly some cake!

Set up a base where someone helpful will be at all times, along with a first aid kit.

Watch out for wildlife – if it's alive, leave it where you found it.

If you come across any injured animals, contact the relevant group.

For example you might want to contact British Divers Marine Life Rescue (BDMLR) on 01825 765546.

For other wildlife contact the local RSPCA: www.rspca.org.uk



ON THE DAY & AFTER THE PICK

THE RIPPLE EFFECT – SHOUT ABOUT IT!

Celebrate what you achieve – even a small haul makes a big difference!

Take pictures of your litter pick and share on local social media – a happy group picture with lots of bags is a great way to celebrate!

Did you know you can register your litter picking group on our website?

By setting up a group profile you can:

- Log your litter picking activity
- Share photos of your efforts
- Earn badges for your group's achievements
- Help new members find and join your group
- Get access to loads of info and resources

If your group isn't already linked to a Cleanup Hub, you can register it with CleanupUK and start tracking your progress here:

www.cleanupuk.org.uk/get-involved/groups

No matter where you're based, it's important to let your local council or the relevant landowner know where you've left the litter you've picked, so that they can arrange for it to be collected.

YOU COULD ALSO...

Help to identify pollution sources!

If you'd like to do more to protect our oceans, logging what you've found with the Marine Conservation Society can help to identify pollution sources and support national data on marine litter:

Marine debris tracker:

www.debristracker.org

Marine Conservation Society

[Beachwatch survey](#)

Treasure Collectors!

Beachcombing can be fun – but remember to leave natural materials where you found them: removing shells, pebbles and other natural materials from beaches can harm coastal ecosystems.

Enjoy beachcombing without taking anything home – leave nature where it belongs and just remove the litter!

[Don't make waves: how to be an ethical beachcomber](#) | [Coastlines](#) | [The Guardian](#)

LOG THE LITTER

If your group has borrowed kit from a Cleanup Hub – You can find the hub and log your litter here:



www.cleanupuk.org.uk/log

Check recycling of larger items

Check if any of today's catch, such as fishing lines or equipment could be recycled by the Anglers National Line Recycling Scheme – www.anglers-nlrs.co.uk

Make it fun!

You might like to turn your litter pick into a game and play our [Beach Clean Bingo!](#)

**THERE'S NO
PLANET B**



GET OUT THERE AND MAKE A SPLASH!

Beach cleaning isn't just good for the planet, it's actually a lot of fun. Whether you're heading out with mates, your family or flying solo it's a great way to get fresh air, explore the coast and do something that really makes a difference.

Every sweet wrapper, bottle cap or soggy crisp packet you collect helps protect wildlife and keep our beaches beautiful.

So grab your gloves, bring your best beach playlist and make some waves for a cleaner, greener seaside!

Happy Beach Cleaning!!

GET IN TOUCH



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