



World Oceans Day

# Plastic Pollution Lesson and Action Plan

8 June | [WorldOceansDay.org](https://WorldOceansDay.org)

# Introduction

Thank you for supporting the ocean by celebrating World Oceans Day! This is a time for people around our blue planet to celebrate and honor the ocean, which connects us all. TOGETHER WE CAN and WILL protect our shared ocean.

This lesson was designed with youth in mind and we hope that young people will use this resource to teach their peers and community members about plastic pollution, inspire them with solutions, and empower them by doing an activity. It is easy to follow and can be done from anywhere!



## Let's Get Started!

1. Start by reading through the steps and viewing the resources. All of the resources and sample narratives are optional. You are encouraged to bring in a local perspective and choose resources that work best for you. Get creative and make it your own! You can search based on "Resource Type" to find the resources that go along with the step you are on.

All resources can be found on the World Oceans Day website at: [www.worldoceansday.org/lesson-plan-resources](http://www.worldoceansday.org/lesson-plan-resources).

2. Do some research. Find out what is being done in your community to solve plastic pollution and see if there is a way you can use the lesson to enhance those initiatives.

3. Choose a space to teach your lesson and work with local partners. Example venues include your school, aquarium, museum, zoo, park, government building, theatre, club meeting, and more! Start by reaching out to some of these groups and finding out who is interested in helping you plan the logistics. You may need to get permission to use the space and can use their help in setting up and promoting your lesson.

4. Think about your audience. This lesson works best if you teach directly to your peers or kids that are a little younger than you. Ages 11-18 will work best but there are resources you can choose for both younger and older groups. Make sure you consider your audience when choosing your resources and thinking about the narrative. Also consider the size of your group and make sure you are prepared with enough materials if you are handing anything out to the group.

5. Consider timing. The lesson will vary in time requirements depending on which resources and activities you choose to use. However, it should be completed in under an hour unless you choose to do a cleanup or other activity that is more time consuming.

6. Consider your space. Although videos and photos can be a powerful tool to enhance your lesson, they are not required. However, if you would like to use them make sure you have a screen and computer set up and test it ahead of time.





## Lesson Plan Outline

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## Learning Objective

The goal of this lesson is to provide an introduction to plastic pollution, discuss solutions, and inspire action. By the end of the lesson the group should understand how plastic pollution is harming the ocean and what they can do to be part of the solution. But more than that, they should be inspired to make changes in their lifestyle and actively contribute towards solutions.

If you have any questions or concerns be sure to visit the Q&A on page 12. Thank you for your dedication to helping our ocean and have fun empowering your peers!

## Step 1:

**Estimated time 3-5 minutes**

### Start with a success story

Start by introducing the topic and explaining why the ocean is so important. Then, share a story about how you or a young person you know has worked on this in your community. You can also choose a story from the World Oceans Day Youth Advisory Council to show what young people are doing around the world to combat plastic pollution! It's important to start on a positive note before getting into the problem.

### Sample Narrative

"Welcome, my name is (insert your name.) Today I'm going to talk to you about plastic pollution. This has become a major threat in our environment and is taking over our ocean. The ocean is home to a large diversity of life, including a variety of animals and plants, and we rely on it for oxygen and food. Did you know every other breath you take comes from the ocean? Thankfully, there are a lot of people working to stop plastic pollution from harming the ocean - and many of them are our age or even younger!

I'd like to introduce you to (insert Council member name) from (insert Council member country). He/she is (insert age of Council member) years old and is already doing great things to create a healthy ocean. (Insert Council member story). This means we don't have to wait until we're adults and we don't have to become scientists to



## Resources

Success Stories

- Short stories from Council members

Youth Advisory Council Photos

- Photos of Council members





## Step 2:

**Estimated time 8-10 minutes**

### Address the problem

Choose a few facts to share with the group from the fact sheet to highlight the urgency and scope of the problem. If you are speaking to younger kids the survey is a great activity to use. The plastic jellyfish activity can be used to show how plastic bags can easily look like jellyfish in the water which is why sea turtles can accidentally eat them. This is something you will want to have prepared ahead of time as a visual aid. The rubber band hand activity is also great for younger kids. The videos, photos, and infographics can help explain the problem but do not need to be used. If you do show a video, choose just one.

### Sample Narrative

“Raise your hand if you used some plastic today. See? We all use plastic. It can be durable, cheap, easy to transport, and keeps food fresh. However, we have become far too dependent on this material. What types of plastic do you use every day? (Record responses on a board.) And we’ve all seen those plastic items in the environment. Whether in our city, in the ocean, on a beach, in a river, on the side of the road, or even around our schools and homes. This plastic eventually ends up in one place: the ocean. Rain and wind carry these plastic pieces to city storm drains, streams, and rivers where it can travel to the ocean. Once it is in the ocean it can harm marine life like fish, birds, seals, sea turtles - even whales! Many animals are eating plastic because it looks like food. (Pass around the Plastic Jellyfish & make sure you properly recycle everything when done.)

To make matters worse, once plastic is in the environment it never really goes away. The equivalent of one dump truck full of plastic enters our ocean every minute! If we don’t do something about this, there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish, by weight, in about 30 years from now. We can’t let it get to this point and we can help stop it!”

## Resources

### Survey

-Plastic Pollution Survey & Answer Key

### Videos

-Plastic Ocean, Algalita Marine Research, Throw Away Culture

### Activities

-Plastic Jellyfish activity  
-Rubber Band Hand activity

### Photos

-Photos of plastic pollution on beaches/ocean & affecting animals

### Facts

-List of top plastic pollution facts

### Infographics

-Infographics about plastic pollution

## Step 3:

**Estimated time 3-5 minutes**

### Share some solutions

No matter where we live, we can each be part of the solution. The list of solutions has a few ideas for you to highlight to get the group thinking. These videos are a great way to show some creative solutions. The next step will be for the group to come up with some of their own solutions!

### Sample Narrative

“Thankfully, there are so many ways we can help be part of the solution. We can work together to come up with solutions and try to avoid using so many single-use plastics like bags, bottles, and straws. One way we can do this is by asking local restaurants and businesses to use less plastic or, ideally, be “plastic-free” and not use disposable plastic in the first place. By participating in community and aquatic cleanups, we can raise awareness about this issue, clean our communities, and help keep plastic out of the ocean. It’s important that we set an example for others by saying “no thanks” to plastic bags at stores and straws at restaurants. Here are some reusable alternatives to common plastic items. (Show photos or discuss alternatives to popular single-use plastic items.)”

### Resources

Plastic Pollution Solutions  
-List of solutions

Videos  
-Tasini Bags, UN Environment,  
Plastic Free July

Reusable Alternatives  
-List of reusable items

## Step 4:

**Estimated time 8-10 minutes**

### Time for open discussion

It’s time to hear from the group! Use the sample discussion questions in the worksheet or discussion starter to get people thinking. Either hand out the worksheet or notecards so everyone can have some quiet working time before sharing. If you don’t have access to a printer just start the discussion right away by asking the questions out loud and calling on group members to respond. It might be helpful to split the room into small groups if you are speaking to a larger audience. You can also choose to write the responses on a board or collect the notecards afterwards.



### Sample narrative

“Now I want to hear from you! What ideas do you have to help our ocean and solve plastic pollution? Let’s start with things we can do as individuals. Think about what you would need to accomplish this. (Record responses on a board.) How about things that our community or schools can do? (Record responses on a board.) What about things that businesses or restaurants can do? (Record responses on a board.)”

### Resources

Solutions Worksheet  
-Worksheet to hand out or discuss

Discussion Starter  
-Notecard activity

## Step 5:

**Estimated time 15-30 minutes**

### Take action!

This might be the most important step. Choose one or two of the activities listed below, or one you come up with, to do with your group. You can also focus on one of the solutions your group came up with. If you can't pick just one, don't worry, you can do the rest as follow-up activities during Step 6. This may take some planning ahead of time so think about what materials you may need and reach out to local groups or event organizers in your community that can help you prepare for your activity.

### Sample narrative

"Let's put those words into action by doing a group activity! (Explain the activity to the group.)"

### Activities

Lunch Time

-Participate in Zero Plastic Lunch

Get Creative

-Love Letters to the Sea activity

-Make reusable bags from old t-shirts

Aquatic Cleanup

-Use the Aquatic Cleanup Guide

Take Home Worksheet

-Single-Use Plastic Daily Log & Alternatives take home worksheets

## Step 6:

**Estimated time 30 minutes - 1 hour**

### Follow up on progress

Plan to do a follow-up activity with your group within a month of your lesson. It is important that you continue to inspire your peers to keep up the good work! Be sure to collect the names and contact information from your group before they leave. You can choose one of the activities from Step 5 or any of the ideas below. This is also a good opportunity to try out one of the solutions that your group came up with during the discussion in Step 4.

If you really want to stay involved, start a committee at your school where you can work together on projects throughout the year. Join Youth for the Ocean (Y4O) to connect with youth around the world and learn about exciting opportunities to join global initiatives!

Stay Involved

-Plastic Free July resources

-Join Youth for the Ocean

Film Screening

-Host a film screening and panel discussion (Smog of the Sea, Straws, Bag It, It's Everybody's Ocean, Blue)

Get Creative

-Get creative by entering the Marine Debris Creative Advocacy Competition

Policy

-Support a plastic ban with the Rise Above Plastics Activist Toolkit



## Bonus Step!

### Submit your lesson to the World

#### Oceans Day website

By adding your lesson to the World Oceans Day website, it will be visible on the global map of events. This will help others find out about your lesson.

Submit it at:

[www.worldoceansday.org/events/community/add](http://www.worldoceansday.org/events/community/add).

You can also find free resources like posters and logos to promote your event.

Find them at:

[www.worldoceansday.org/resources](http://www.worldoceansday.org/resources).

### Share your feedback

Please consider taking some time to tell us how it went and let us know if you have any suggestions. This will help us improve the lesson for future users. We send out a feedback survey and post it on the website at: [www.worldoceansday.org/plastic-pollution-lesson-plan](http://www.worldoceansday.org/plastic-pollution-lesson-plan).

### Share with the World Oceans Day network on social media

We'd love to hear about how it went and see photos from your lesson that we can share with the world! Share them with us by using #WorldOceansDay and tagging @WorldOceansDay on Facebook, Instagram, & Twitter.

## Questions & Answers

Where should I host my lesson?

- Anywhere! Some options include: school classroom, aquarium, zoo, museum, park, business, club meeting, or perhaps you can join a World Oceans Day event near you:  
[www.worldoceansday.org/events\\_list](http://www.worldoceansday.org/events_list).
- Contact the location you choose ahead of time to get their permission and ask for their help in planning the logistics.

When can I teach my lesson?

- You can use this lesson any time of the year, but we encourage you to plan for around World Oceans Day, which is held on 8 June each year.
- If you are planning an outdoor event, make sure you consider the weather!

What if I don't have access to a computer or screen?

- Videos and photos are an additional resource but not required to teach the lesson. Simply pick and choose the resources that work best for you!

How can I get people to attend my lesson?

- Join forces with your school, sports team, community group, or World Oceans Day event going on near you that can help you plan and promote your lesson.
- Call government officials and local media to invite them to attend your lesson.
- Post flyers around your school and community or make a virtual flyer to share on social media.

Who can I contact if I still have questions?

- The World Oceans Day Youth Advisory Council is here to help! Several members have posted instructional videos to help walk you through the lesson. Videos can be found at:  
[www.worldoceansday.org/plastic-pollution-lesson-plan](http://www.worldoceansday.org/plastic-pollution-lesson-plan).

It's important to remember that this is just one part of the solution. In order to achieve a plastic-free future we must go to the source of the problem and stop the production of unnecessary single-use plastic items and packaging by opting for sustainable alternatives. It is going to take all of us working together in all sectors including corporate, political, and public to see the change that's needed to stop plastic pollution for good. By downloading this lesson, you have proven that you take this problem seriously and are ready to be part of the solution!



## Resources

### Plastic Pollution Survey and Answer Key

- o Adapted from NOAA Talking Trash
- o [marinedebris.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/publications-files/talking-trash-educational.pdf](https://marinedebris.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/publications-files/talking-trash-educational.pdf)

### Plastic Jellyfish activity

- o Bhoomplay
- o [bhoomplay.wordpress.com/2011/09/09/diy\\_jellyfish\\_eng/](https://bhoomplay.wordpress.com/2011/09/09/diy_jellyfish_eng/)

### Rubber Band Hand activity

- o NOAA
- o [marinedebris.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/publications-files/talking-trash-educational.pdf](https://marinedebris.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/publications-files/talking-trash-educational.pdf)

### Zero Plastic Lunch

- o CNN
- o [www.cnn.com/2018/04/23/world/zero-plastic-lunch-day/index.html](https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/23/world/zero-plastic-lunch-day/index.html)

### Love Letters to the Sea

- o Sondra Weiss
- o [www.143figureit.com/lesson-plan-love-letter-to-the-sea/](https://www.143figureit.com/lesson-plan-love-letter-to-the-sea/)

### Reusable Bags out of old T-shirts

- o Rebecca Murillo
- o [www.blueoceansociety.org/blog/reusable-bags-made-of-old-t-shirts-tiptuesday/](https://www.blueoceansociety.org/blog/reusable-bags-made-of-old-t-shirts-tiptuesday/)

### Single-Use Plastic Daily Log & Alternatives take home worksheet

- o Algalita Marine Research Foundation
- o [www.algalita.org/youth-education/](https://www.algalita.org/youth-education/)

### Plastic Free July

- o [www.plasticfreejuly.org/](https://www.plasticfreejuly.org/)

### Rise Above Plastics Activist Toolkit

- o Surfrider Foundation
- o [issuu.com/rise.above.plastics/docs/activist.toolkit](https://issuu.com/rise.above.plastics/docs/activist.toolkit)

### Marine Debris Creative Advocacy Competition

- o Bow Seat Ocean Awareness Programs
- o [bowseat.org/contests/advocacy-competition/overview/](https://bowseat.org/contests/advocacy-competition/overview/)

## Video Films Credit

How Does Plastic Reach the Ocean from Inland Areas?

- o Plastic Oceans Foundation
- o [www.youtube.com/watch?v=1WFYRFxLie0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1WFYRFxLie0)

Investigating Plastic Pollution - The Basics

- o Algalita Marine Research Foundation
- o [www.youtube.com/watch?v=DHg291KeFls](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DHg291KeFls)

Throw Away Culture

- o Rory Moon
- o [theaudienceawards.com/films/throw-away-culture-118873](http://theaudienceawards.com/films/throw-away-culture-118873)

Tasini: the key to breaking the plastic bag habit

- o Tasini Bags
- o [www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmQqGIxpM1Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmQqGIxpM1Q)

#CleanSeas Break-Up PSA: "It's not me, it's you."

- o UN Environment
- o [www.youtube.com/watch?v=-DEc16dEMns](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-DEc16dEMns)

Plastic Free July - it's as easy as this!

- o Plastic Free July
- o [www.youtube.com/watch?v=7u01LS9enPQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7u01LS9enPQ)

Smog of the Sea

- o Ian Cheney
- o [www.thesmogofthesea.com/host-a-screening/](http://www.thesmogofthesea.com/host-a-screening/)

Straws

- o Linda Booker
- o [www.strawsfilm.com/](http://www.strawsfilm.com/)

Bag It

- o Michelle Hill
- o [www.bagitmovie.com/screenings.html](http://www.bagitmovie.com/screenings.html)

It's Everybody's Ocean

- o Atsuko
- o [www.itseverybodysoceanmovie.com/contact](http://www.itseverybodysoceanmovie.com/contact)

Blue

- o Karina Holden
- o [bluethefilm.org/education/](http://bluethefilm.org/education/)