End Plastic Pollution

Our Planet
We only have one planet and so we need to take responsibility for it. This means looking after the earth and everything in it and making sure we don’t damage it in anyway. Everyone can play their part in making sure the earth is safe, clean and looked after and this also includes caring for the plants, animals, birds, sea creatures and each other. Over time, people have been caring less and less about the earth and now we are trying to deal with the consequences that have been caused. One major problem that has occurred is known as plastic pollution which has unfortunately, been caused by careless humans. Luckily, there are things we can do to help reduce this damage.

What Is Plastic Pollution?
The biggest problem with unwanted plastic is the pollution and damage it causes to the environment. Because plastic is cheap and easy to make, humans buy and use a lot of it. They then throw this away. But, plastic is strong and durable because it was made to last. So when it is thrown away, it takes hundreds of years to decompose. It breaks into tiny pieces, which then get blown around by the wind and the rain. Lots of the plastic ends up in our streams, rivers and the ocean.

The amount of plastic on the planet is increasing more and more rapidly, meaning it is threatening our planet through poisoning and injuring marine life, littering beaches and landscapes, clogging landfills and making humans (and other animals) ill.

Did You Know...?
- There are 6.3 billion tonnes of plastic waste on Earth.
- 80% of the debris floating in the oceans is plastic.
- 267 species of animal around the world are harmed by plastic (either through swallowing or becoming tangled in plastic).
What Can You Do to ‘End Plastic Pollution’?

The Three Rs: First Reduce, Then Reuse, Then Recycle

There are lots of things we can all do to help end plastic pollution. We need to remember the three Rs but it is important to first try to ‘reduce’ our use of plastics, then ‘reuse’ where possible. The last resort is to ‘recycle’ as this still has a negative impact on the environment.

- **Reduce**: Avoid single-use plastics, such as takeaway cups and straws, instead use alternatives such as bamboo. You can’t do this alone, so it is important to talk to your family, head teacher or school council about how your school and family can reduce their plastic use.

- **Reuse**: If you have plastic items, ensure that you use them multiple times. For example, instead of buying new ones, refill and reuse water bottles and lunch bags. Also avoid using single-use plastic bags for shopping, using strong, long-lasting fabric bags instead.

- **Recycle**: Check for the recycling symbol before you buy plastic and make sure that you always recycle plastic when you can, instead of disposing of it with the normal rubbish.

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**Glossary**

- **debris**: Scattered pieces of rubbish.
- **decompose**: Rot away.
- **disposing**: Throwing something away.
- **durable**: Hard-wearing.
- **landfills**: An area filled with waste.
- **marine**: Relating to, or found in, the sea.
- **pollution**: Something harmful or poisonous within the environment.
Questions

1. What do we have a responsibility for? Tick one.
   - To look after the earth.
   - To care for animals.
   - To keep the earth safe and clean.
   - All of the above.

2. But, plastic is strong and **durable**, because it was made to last. What does the word **durable** mean? Tick one.
   - single-use
   - hard-wearing
   - long-lasting
   - never-ending

3. Number these events to show the order in which they happen:
   - Humans buy and use a lot of plastic.
   - Plastic is made.
   - Plastic is durable so takes hundreds of years to decompose.
   - Humans throw away plastic.
   - Plastic breaks into tiny pieces which end up in our streams, rivers and oceans.

4. Name three ways that plastic is threatening our planet.

   1. 
   2. 
   3. 

5. Find and copy a phrase or sentence which tells you that plastic pollution can hurt animals.

   

6. Why is it better to **reduce** your use of plastic rather than to **recycle** plastic?

   

7. What one thing could you do today to help reduce plastic pollution?


8. In your own words, explain what plastic pollution is.


