



How much plastic do we use?

Lesson plan: a personal plastic tracker, class data, ocean currents and the Great Pacific Garbage Patch



Ages	9 to 15
Time	Two parts: 20 minutes to launch the tracker, then 45 minutes a few days later
Group	Up to 35 students
Where	Any classroom. No internet needed.
You need	The slides, one plastic tracker per student, one class data sheet per group

What students learn

- How much single-use plastic we use, measured with our own data.
- How to collect, total and chart data, and scale it up.
- How ocean currents move plastic around the world.
- Practical swaps that cut plastic use.

Before the lesson

1. Print one **Plastic tracker** per student and one **Class data** sheet per group.
2. Decide whether students track for one day or one week.

The lesson

- 1** **Launch the tracker 20 minutes, slides 1 and 2.** Explain single-use plastic and fill in the first line of the tracker together. Students track at home and school.
- 2** **Class data 15 minutes, slides 3 and 4.** When trackers come back, groups total their data, draw a bar chart and scale it up to a year. Compare with the national figures.
- 3** **Ocean currents 15 minutes, slides 5 to 7.** Use the gyre and rubber duck stories to show how plastic travels. Correct the idea of a solid floating island.
- 4** **Refuse, reduce, reuse, recycle 10 minutes, slides 8 and 9.** Students choose one swap to try for a week.
- 5** **Wrap up 5 minutes, slide 10.** Discuss one or two questions.

Answers and what to listen for

Scaling up: daily pieces x 365 = pieces a year. Class total x number of classes gives a rough school total. Check the maths together.

Making it easier or harder

- **Younger groups:** track for one school day only and make a pictogram instead of a bar chart.
- **Older groups:** calculate an average per student and a range, and discuss why a week of data is better than a day.
- **Family link:** ask families to try the tracker too, and compare results.

Curriculum links

- **Maths:** tallying, totals, bar charts, averages, scaling up.
- **Science:** ocean currents, human impact on the environment.
- **Ocean Literacy Principle 6:** the ocean and humans are inextricably interconnected.

The teacher reading has the science behind every slide, with links to the sources.

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