



WILD CLASSROOM

Conservation in the Classroom

Don't Be Trashy: The Plastic Problem

February 17, 2022

1 pm EST/ 10 am PST

Recommended grade levels: 4–8

Watch live on [Conservation in the Classroom](#)

View recording on the [Wild Classroom YouTube channel](#)

Plastic is a material we use every day – it makes our hospitals safer, our food last longer, and our packages lighter to send, which means less fuel is needed for shipping. But plastic becomes a big problem when it's thrown away and ends up as trash, which harms the environment and wildlife. At WWF, Erin Simon leads a team who works on solutions to stop the plastic waste crisis. In celebration of International Women in Science Day, join us as Erin breaks down the problem of plastic not breaking down, and what you can do to make sure plastic doesn't end up in nature.

The Presenter



Erin Simon

Senior Director, Plastics, Packaging, and
Material Science

BELL-RINGERS

Help prepare your learners by introducing the topic with these warm-up questions.



Compare

Fill in the charts below with the pros and cons of plastics.

Pros	Cons

Fill In the Blank

Circle the words in the paragraph below that best complete the sentences.

Many plastic products like water bottles, plastic bags, and straws are usually used (**once / twice / many times**). When plastics are not thrown away properly, they can end up in (**outer space / nature / recycling centers**). This is bad for wildlife because these plastic products can be mistaken for (**food / mates / young**) and animals can get (**protected / tangled / nourished**) by it. What's worse is that plastic takes (**1 year / 20 years / hundreds of years**) to break down, so the impact it has on species and habitats lasts a long time.

Brainstorm

Name 3 ways that you, your friends, and your family at home can reduce how much plastic you use:

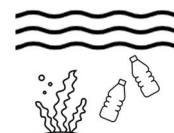
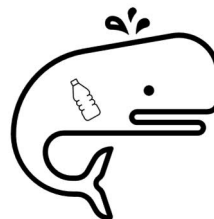
- _____
- _____
- _____



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Sequence

Number the icons from 1-5 in the order that explains how plastic can end up in the environment and harm wildlife.





Planning to watch the event live? Write your question(s) for the presenter here:

INFORMATIONAL RESOURCES

Use these web articles and videos to provide background information to your learners on plastic pollution.

- Web page: [WWF Plastics initiative](#)
- Web page: [Plastic in the Ocean](#)
- Web page: [Whales and the plastics problem](#)
- Web page: [What do sea turtles eat? Unfortunately, plastic bags.](#)
- Web page: [The lifecycle of plastics](#)
- Web page: [Women leading the plastic revolution](#)
- Video: [Meet the newly discovered ocean species: plastic](#)
- Video: [Plastic Pollution](#)
- Video: [The Journey of Plastic](#)
- Video: [Plastic Planet: Untangled](#)

HOW TO HELP

- Video: [9 eco-friendly alternatives for the worst single-use plastics](#)
- Web article: [How changing the way we think about--and use--single use plastics can help people and nature](#)
- Web article: [The problem with plastic in nature and what you can do to help](#)
- Web article: [3 ways the US can act on the plastic waste crisis and protect our oceans](#)



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ACTIVITIES

Check out these lesson plans to supplement the content from the event.

[Plastics activities in sea turtle toolkit](#)

Use lessons from the sea turtle toolkit such as “Only Jellies in the Belly” to educate your learners about the problem with plastics, and what they can do to help.

Grades 3–5



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[Living Planet Report 2020: Youth Edition](#)

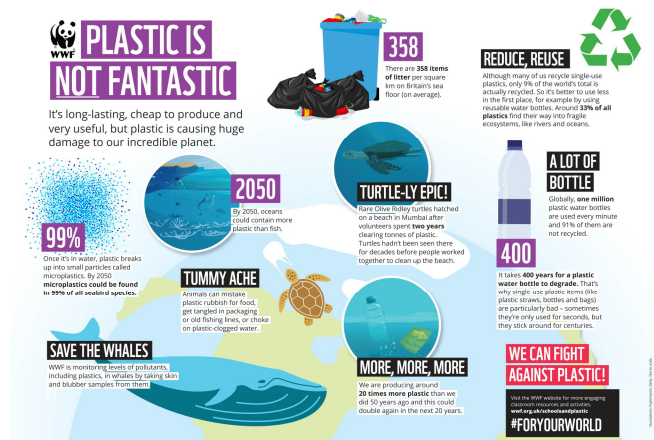
The Living Planet Report is a comprehensive study of trends in global biodiversity and the health of the planet, released every two years. Use the 2020 youth edition of the report, along with our corresponding discussion questions and activities, to teach about threats facing our environment.

Grades 6–12

[The Oceans and Plastic Pollution teacher handbook](#)

Use this teacher guide, activities, and [poster](#) from WWF-UK to discover the problems and solutions with plastic pollution in our oceans.

Grades 3–5



ASSESSMENTS

Conclude your lesson on plastic pollution with these resources and fun assessment tools.

[Kahoot! Oceans collection](#)

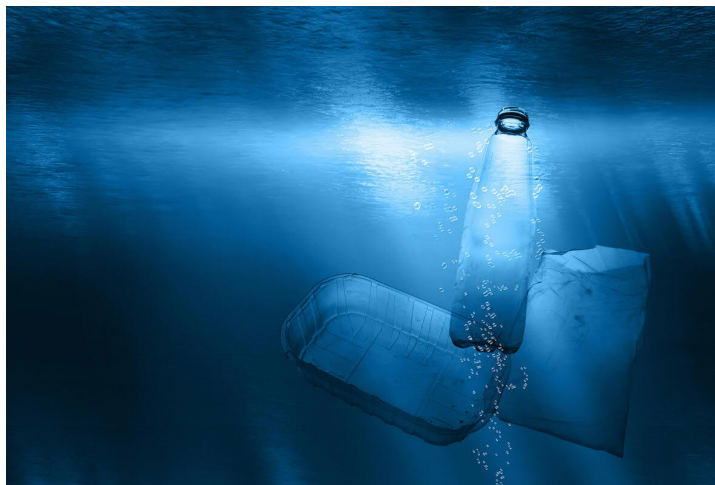
- Plastic pollution
- Threats to oceans

Don't Be Trashy: The Plastic Problem worksheet

Use the worksheet on the following page as an assignment or a quiz following the viewing of the *Conservation in the Classroom* event.

Answer key (for questions on the next page):

- 1) c
- 2) when not disposed of properly, plastic can end up in landfills or in nature where wind or water can transport it to the ocean
- 3) d
- 4) true
- 5) a
- 6) b
- 7) false
- 8) use storage containers that last a long time; use reusable bags and bottles; avoid one-use items such disposable plates, cups, cutlery, and cotton swabs; learn what's able to be recycled at your local recycling center and buy items with that packaging





Don't Be Trashy: The Plastic Problem

Answer the following questions after learning about plastics and how they affect our planet.

1. Which of the items below is NOT an example of a single-use plastic?

- a. wrapper on a candy bar
- b. disposable utensils with takeout food
- c. canvas tote bag
- d. bottle of water or juice

2. Explain how plastic can end up in the ocean:

3. What animals have been affected by plastic pollution?

- a. sea turtles
- b. fish
- c. seabirds
- d. all of the above



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4. True or False: Some types of plastic can take up to 500 years to decompose.

5. This is one of the most damaging types of plastic pollution in our oceans, responsible for over 300,000 marine mammals, such as whales and dolphins, getting entangled every year.

- a. abandoned, lost, or discarded fishing gear (also called "ghost gear"!)
- b. shampoo bottles
- c. food containers
- d. dental floss

6. Over time, plastic waste breaks down into tiny, almost invisible particles known as _____ that are eaten by fish and other small marine life before traveling up the food chain.

- a. megaplastics
- b. microplastics
- c. nanoplastics
- d. macroplastics

7. True or False: Using plastic packaging has zero benefits for the environment so we shouldn't use it.

8. Name 3 ways you can reduce or reuse plastic to help keep it out of nature:

- _____
- _____
- _____