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# Ocean Wise's Plastic Waste Challenge

A household plastic waste audit

Take action against ocean pollution #BePlasticWise

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BE PART OF A WORLD IN WHICH OCEANS ARE  
HEALTHY AND FLOURISHING, FREE FROM THE  
THREAT OF PLASTIC POLLUTION

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## Our throw-away culture

Did you know over 348 million tonnes of plastic is produced annually?

Most people will find plastic, bound for the trash can or recycling bin, in every room in their home. But plastic is not just present in our houses, you will also find it polluting our oceans!

It is estimated that 40% of plastic produced is for packaging and single use items, and that more than 11 million metric tons of plastic litter enters the ocean annually. Without action this number is expected to triple by 2040!



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## The plastic pollution problem

Plastic remains in the ocean for an indefinite amount of time where it causes harm to marine life through entanglement, ingestion, and habitat destruction.

Plastic pollution in the ocean is also affecting its capacity to mitigate climate change, impairing ocean organisms ability to remove carbon from our atmosphere.

*Plastic leachates impair growth and oxygen production in Prochlorococcus, the ocean's most abundant photosynthetic bacteria. Commun Biol 2, 184. 2019*



## Recycling alone is not enough

*Here's a dirty secret: only 9% of plastic waste in 2016 in Canada actually got recycled.*

Why? We produce more plastic than our recycling system can handle, the plastic produced has too many different ingredients, and there is not much demand for everything that is collected and sorted.

To make a difference we all need to reduce the amount, and variety, of plastic we use and make sure that what we do use can be recycled.



Tip: recycling is the process of turning waste materials into new materials. When we recycle at home we are separating and sorting. This is the first step in the recycling process.

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# Take the Plastic Waste Challenge

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The Challenge is a household plastic waste audit for individuals and families. To become a Plastic Trash Challenge Champion, you'll need to go through your garbage TWICE or more!

The first time, you'll learn what plastic waste your household throws out most often, and make a plan to reduce that waste.

A few weeks or months later, you'll go through your garbage again and learn if you were successful in reducing your waste!

## What you need:

- **About 30-minutes**
- **Your household garbage and recycling.**  
We recommend one week's worth of your household garbage, just record how many days of garbage you've gone through.
- **A space to go through your garbage.**
- **Gloves and/or tongs (reusable of course).**  
To handle your waste safely
- **Cleaning equipment**  
For when it is time to clean up (e.g. household cleaner, dustpan, cloth/rags).
- **A copy of the Plastic Trash Challenge Data Card.**
- **A pen/pencil.**
- **Access to [plasticreduction.ocean.org](https://plasticreduction.ocean.org) to share your data**



# Take the Plastic Waste Challenge

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## *Your step by step guide:*

1. Open up your data card
2. **Grab your garbage** and take it to your sorting area.
3. Using your tongs and/or wearing your gloves, pick up and **inspect your garbage**, piece by piece. Before you place each piece back into your garbage, **use the Data Card to categorize each piece.**
4. Once you've gone through all your garbage and completed your data card, **clean your sorting area well.**
5. **Reflect...** what plastics show up the most in your garbage?  
How can you reduce them?
6. **Share your results with us at [plasticreduction.ocean.org](https://plasticreduction.ocean.org) and tell us what your reduction goals are!**
7. Next steps:
  - Save your data card. You'll want to refer to it after your second waste audit.
  - Mark your calendar: Set a date a few weeks or months from now to audit your waste again to see if you've been able to reduce your plastic consumption.
  - Sign up for a shoreline cleanup and compare what you find.

We don't need one person living a zero-impact life. We need everyone doing their best to lower their impact, together!

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# The data card

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Question	Answer
Today's date:	
What room(s) in your house did the garbage come from?	
How many days of garbage did you look at?	
How many people live in your household?	
How plastic wise are you right now? (please tick)	<input type="checkbox"/> I am actively reducing my plastic waste - refusing and reusing on a daily basis. <input type="checkbox"/> I am trying to reduce my plastic waste. I remember my reusable water bottle most of the time. <input type="checkbox"/> I am still learning about plastic waste and thinking about waste reduction.
Date of your last Ocean Wise Plastic Waste Challenge audit? (If applicable)	

# The data card

*To use this card, simply tally the number of plastic waste items as you sort through your garbage and recycling.*

Kitchen and eating	Tally	Total
Food wrappers		
Bottle caps		
Hard plastic packaging		
Soft plastic packaging		
Plastic cups		
Six-pack holders		
Plastic straws		
Plastic Utensils		
Styrofoam		
Other kitchen and eating plastic (please detail)		

# The data card

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*To use this card, simply tally the number of plastic waste items as you sort through your garbage and recycling.*

Shopping and mailbox	Tally	Total
Clothing		
Shoes		
Hangers		
Hard plastic packaging		
Soft plastic packaging		
Plastic bags		
Plastic tags		
Other plastic items (please detail)		

# The data card

*To use this card, simply tally the number of plastic waste items as you sort through your garbage and recycling.*

Bathroom and Personal Hygiene	Tally	Total
PPE - Masks		
PPE – Gloves		
Hard plastic packaging		
Soft plastic packaging		
Plastic bottles		
Diapers & wipes		
Plastic Toothbrush		
Plastic Feminine hygiene products		
Medicinal packaging		
Other plastic items (please detail)		

# The data card

*To use this card, simply tally the number of plastic waste items as you sort through your garbage and recycling.*

Playroom & kids	Tally	Total
Plastic toys		
Balloons		
Other plastic playroom and kids products (please detail)		

Questions	Observations
What plastic do you see most?	
What plastic items would be easiest for you to reduce? (for top tips and inspiration – <a href="#">click here</a> )	
What are your top three waste reduction goals?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> </ol>

Share your completed audit data with us at  
[plasticreduction.ocean.org/individuals](https://plasticreduction.ocean.org/individuals)  
and tell us what your reduction goals are!

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**Be the change you want to see  
#BePlasticWise.**

