

The Problem with Plastic

Most types of plastic are neither **biodegradable** nor **compostable**. Therefore, any plastic that ends up in the local environment will not break down over time, like paper, fruit peel or natural fabrics do. Plastic will simply remain where it is forever unless it is removed by humans or mistakenly consumed by wildlife.

A huge problem with the plastic that ends up in the environment is the chemicals it releases. Over time, pieces of plastic litter will break into smaller pieces. When plastic breaks into **microplastics**, it is eaten by wildlife that mistake it for food.

Scarily, these microplastics contain **toxic** chemicals and heavy metals – poisonous and deadly to local wildlife. These make their way into the food chain, affecting not only the animal that ate the plastic but any animal that then goes on to consume the first animal.

- animals eating plastic waste by mistake, thinking that it is food, for example, some birds eat plastic bags that float in a pond because they think that they are fish;



How We Can Help

People around the world have caused the plastic problem we face today and it cannot be fixed overnight. The best way to stop any further harm to wildlife is by changing how we think about and use plastic. Some helpful tips are:

- Instead of using plastic items, such as straws and plastic bags, buy reusable items, e.g. flasks for hot drinks and canvas shopping bags.
- Glitter (which is often made of plastic) and balloons can also be damaging to the environment and dangerous to animals, who may mistake them for food.
- Recycle as much of your waste as possible.
- Safely pick up litter you see in the environment.



EXERCISE 1: TRUE OR FALSE

Read the sentences and write T (True) or F (False).

1. Plastic pollution can be fixed overnight. _____
2. Animals sometimes mistake plastic for food. _____
3. Reusable bags and flasks can help reduce pollution. _____
4. Microplastics are good for wildlife. _____
5. Toxic chemicals from plastic can harm animals. _____

EXERCISE 2: COMPLETE THE SENTENCES

Drag the words in the correct sentence:

(plastic – animals – reusable – pollution – oceans)

1. Plastic _____ is a big problem for the planet. Many sea _____
2. People should use _____ bags and flasks.
3. Too much _____ ends up in rivers and seas.
4. We must protect our _____ and environment.

EXERCISE 3: MATCH THE PICTURES WITH THE WORDS

a. Duck



b. Plastic bag



c. Hedgehog



d. Reusable flask



e. Bird

