

How to...



Do a beach clean

Take part in the Great British Beach Clean and help the UK's marine life.

From 19 to 28 September it's the Great British Beach Clean, an event where volunteers help pick up and survey litter at hundreds of beaches across the UK. It is also a citizen science project. This means that ordinary people gather and share information that can help scientists work out how waste is affecting beaches.

The Great British Beach Clean is organised by the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) – a UK environmental ocean charity that works to protect the UK's seas. It also puts together research about the state of the seas. Its aim is to persuade politicians to do more to protect marine environments.

Last year more than 15,000 volunteers completed more than 1,200 litter surveys for MCS, and more than 764,000 items were removed from beaches. Here are four tips for getting involved and helping to tackle the UK's coastal litter.



PROBLEM PLASTICS

The top five items found in 2024's Great British Beach Clean were made of plastic.



Decide on a spot

Ask an adult to help you get on the Marine Conservation Society website. You can search for beach cleans in your area – or you could organise your own. Choose a beach that's easy for people to get to. You could visit a few in your area first, to see which one seems to have more litter. Ask an adult to check the tides; it's best to go about two hours after the tide starts to go out, when new litter may have washed up.

Get your gear

Check the weather forecast on the day of your beach clean to make sure you're dressed for it. Wear layers so you can cool down or warm up. Bring waterproofs for rain and sunscreen and a hat if it's sunny. Take water and snacks to keep you going. For litter picking you'll need rubbish sacks, strong gardening-style gloves to protect your hands, and ideally a litter picker tool to avoid touching things.



Pick carefully

It's a good idea to work in pairs so you can look out for litter and each other. Be aware of warning signs and avoid climbing on rocks or walking across muddy areas that can be dangerous. Look for the strandline, which is the highest point that the sea reaches and is often marked by a line of seaweed and litter. Put any rubbish you see in your sack. If you spy sharp things, like glass or metal, ask an adult to help.

Record and sort

The MCS asks volunteers to record the different types of litter they find, such as plastic bottles, cans, wrappers, and fishing nets and how much of it was there. This information can be useful for law changes: evidence from beach cleans was used to campaign to make people pay for plastic carrier bags. After the clean-up, separate any recyclable items; dispose of the rubbish; and wash your hands.



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SCAN ME