

World Oceans Day

Guide to Talking about Ocean Plastic Pollution



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Why Prioritize Action on Ocean Plastic?

Plastic pollution poses a threat to human health and harms and kills marine life. Scientists estimate that if we don't change our ways, the ocean will have more plastic by weight than fish by 2050.

The primary direct threats that single-use plastic poses to marine life are entanglement and ingestion. Many marine animals accidentally mistake plastic for food and choke or get sick by ingesting it. These interactions with plastic are often fatal. Additionally, plastic pollution damages and alters habitats, and can have substantial negative impacts on local economies. More than 80% of marine litter comes from land-based sources and businesses and governments spend billions on cleaning up litter.

Fortunately, plastic pollution is already widely accepted as an urgent problem that we need to and can address. Avoiding the use of single-use disposable plastic items like bags, straws, and bottles is one tangible way for individuals and communities to help. Together we can solve this problem and create a more sustainable society.

How to communicate this issue?

We can make a difference, together

With so much plastic pollution in our environment and plastic production on the rise, it can seem useless to take action. If many of us act together, we can reduce the amount of plastic in the ocean and show the world that we demand less disposable plastic in our everyday lives!

Show the link between plastic and human health

Ocean plastic pollution has serious economic consequences but it can also be dangerous to our health. Scientists are finding that microplastics are making their way up the food chain, including being consumed by fish and eventually into our own bodies.

Encourage a positive social norm

Emphasize that it's normal not to litter and that it is everyone's responsibility to stop litter at the source by reducing use of single-use plastic. Talk about how many people are switching to durable, reusable solutions, for the health of both the ocean and their communities.

Show how animals are hurt by plastic

Plastic pollution affects all types of ocean wildlife, from whales, sea turtles, sea birds, and fish to microscopic animals and corals. The emotional connection people have with animals is strong and telling an individual animal's story makes it personal.

Give people more ownership over public spaces

Make it clear to the people you're speaking with that this is their community and it's a matter of pride to keep it clean. Furthermore, no matter where we live our actions will help keep the ocean, our blue backyard, clean and healthy.

Use photos of beautiful, clean environments

Use fewer photos of littered areas, even with an anti-littering message, as it could give people the feeling that littering is normal and accepted. Photos that show a healthy ocean or people cleaning them up, inspire.

Engaging Youth

Youth not only have the ability to understand plastic pollution, but they also have the power to lead the world towards solutions. For younger children, it is important to use age-appropriate techniques when talking with them about environmental issues, so they're not overwhelmed. However, with plastic pollution, unlike more abstract issues such as climate change, even young children can get involved, make a real contribution to help with solutions, and learn more in the process about being sustainable citizens.