

School Plastics Challenge Assembly

This document provides instructions on how to deliver a Key Stage 1 and 2 school assembly about **plastics waste**. Following a short introduction, you will guide the assembly group through a discussion about litter and plastics in the ocean and how this relates to canals and rivers.

Use the **School Plastics Challenge Assembly PowerPoint** presentation to guide the discussion.

Suggested script ideas are provided in **blue text**.



You will need

1. School Plastics Challenge (SPC) Assembly PowerPoint Presentation.
2. A collection of surprising things that contain plastic: Wet wipes, tea bags, chewing gum, glitter, crisp packets, nappy.

Before you begin

Load the **SPC Assembly PowerPoint Presentation** onto the start screen.

Slide 1: Assembly introduction

“ Good morning everyone, we’re from the Canal & River Trust and we look after 2,000 miles of canals and rivers all across the country.

Why do our canals and rivers need looking after? Why are they important? ”

Take feedback from the assembly audience and run through the points below:

- They provide a home for mammals, fish, birds, and insects.
- They provide important outdoor spaces to be enjoyed by everyone - walking, fishing, sailing, cycling etc.
- Rivers carry water and nutrients all around the earth.
- We all need water to be healthy.

Slide 1: Assembly introduction continued

“ I’m not here **just** to talk about how wonderful canals and rivers are. I’m here today to talk to you about..... **PLASTICS!** But what on earth have plastics got to do with rivers and canals? ”

Take suggestions from the assembly audience until you reach **Litter!**

“ Why is litter, especially plastic litter, so bad? ”

Take feedback from the assembly audience then **move to slide 2**

Slide 2: Why are litter and plastics so bad?

- Plastic can last for more than 1,000 years, it also breaks down into microplastics.
- Danger to animals.
- Damages boats and locks.
- It can be bad for the water quality.
- It looks horrible and puts people off from visiting the canal.
- The litter can travel out to the sea where it’s even harder to recover.



Slide 3: Plastics in the ocean

“ More than half a million items of plastics litter reach the oceans from our canals and rivers every year! Once litter reaches water it’s tricky to get back. Plastic is in lots of things we use, even if we don’t realise it! ”

Hold up each item and ask for a show of hands from those who think the object contains plastic – Wet wipes; Tea bags; Chewing gum; Glitter; Crisp packets; Nappy. (They all do!)

Slide 4: How do plastics end up in the ocean

“ What ways might a piece of plastic litter end up in the sea? Even a piece of rubbish dropped in the high street could make it’s way to the ocean. The wind might blow it into a nearby canal or river, or rainwater might wash it down a drain. Drains in the road can often lead to rivers or out to sea. ”

Slide 5: What can we do about it?

“ One of the best ways to reduce the amount of plastics waste or litter is to not produce as much rubbish in the first place. This is called being **proactive!** ”



How can we use less plastic in school? – Take ideas from the children and discuss the following:

- Carry a reusable water bottle.
- Use bars of soap or refill soap bottles.
- Avoid plastic packaging.
- Use canvas bags instead of plastic.
- Create a swap shop for toys, books clothes (instead of buying new items).
- Waste-free packed lunches – **talk to your parents or carers about the products they buy and put in your packed lunch.**
- Repair or reuse items instead of throwing them away.

Plastics quiz (Slide 6)

“ Let’s see how much you know about plastics and recycling. Here are six multiple choice questions. I will ask a question and you can **signal** what you think the answer is by holding up your fingers 1, 2 or 3. ”

Briefly discuss each question as you go along.

Question 1: Which of these items can you NOT put in the recycling bin?

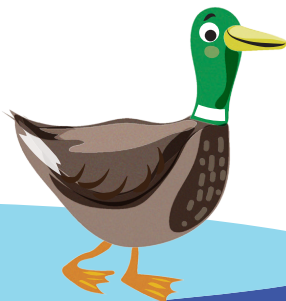
1. Newspaper 2. **Crisp packet** 3. Tinfoil

Most crisp packets are very hard to recycle (they contain layers of plastic and metal fused together) but can be sent off to a special recycling company such as Terracycle.

Question 2: Which of these items does NOT contain plastic?

1. Drinks can 2. **Tea bag** 3. Wet wipe

Discuss alternatives to tea bags – loose leaf tea or lookout for plastic-free tea bags.



Question 3: What does this packaging symbol mean?

1. The packet cannot be recycled
2. **The packet can be recycled**
3. The packet can be composted

Discuss the importance of checking packaging symbols. More information will be provided in the workshop sessions.



Question 4: Worldwide, how many plastic bags are used every minute?

1. 1,000
2. 100,000
3. **1 million**

Discuss alternatives to plastic carrier bags.

Question 5: Which of these items takes the longest to decompose?

1. **Plastic bottle**
2. Plastic bag
3. Drinks carton

Explain that usually denser plastic takes longer to decompose. What are the alternatives to single-use plastic bottles?

Question 6: Of all the litter in all the world, how much is in the sea?

1. 50%
2. **80%**
3. 25%

Scientists say that 8 million tons of plastic enters the oceans every year. That is more than a lorry load of plastic every minute of every day! Once litter lands in the water, it 'sticks' – it's hard to get it out.

Slide 13: Great Work! (Conclusion)

“ So you can see how important it is to make the right choices when it comes to using plastics, but also how **easy** it is to actually make a **big difference!** ”

- Don't drop litter
- Avoid single use plastics
- Reduce, re-use and recycle

This is a problem that we can **all** do something about – every one of us.

Spread the message and take action!