

Organise a Litter Pick on Your Local Canal or River

Planning a visit

Take a look at our [Visit Planning Guide](#) for general advice on planning a visit to a canal or river.

First steps

- How many children and adults will be involved?
- Where will you go?
- What equipment will you need and where will you get it from?
- How long will you need for your litter pick?
- How will the litter you collect be disposed of or recycled?
- How will you keep everybody safe?



Decide on a location for your litter pick

Use our [map](#) if you need to find a good location and if you need advice please email us on explorers@canalrivertrust.org.uk

Go to your location to check it out. Walk around the area and identify any hazards and record these. You will need to assess risks and write a risk assessment. Look at our sample risk assessment on [page 5 of this document](#) for advice.

Choose a spot which is easily accessible with wide towpaths where you can make a difference safely. You should avoid collecting litter from the water's edge, by fast flowing water and around locks, bridges and other structures where the water can be deep.

As you may be litter picking in an outdoor space with water there may be some biohazards which you are unfamiliar with, make sure you include these in your risk assessment, we can provide more advice if needed:

1. Leptospirosis or Weils Disease – can be found on our canals and rivers where rats are present. Cover any cuts with a plaster and make sure that everyone washes their hands after the litter pick and before they eat.
2. Lyme Disease – is caught from ticks which live in undergrowth, everyone should cover up to avoid being bitten.
3. Giant Hogweed – the sap of this plant will burn the skin, avoid any contact with it. Print out an image and take it with you on your initial site visit. If you find this plant, please report to us on 0303 040 4040.

For more information on giant hogweed visit:

www.rhs.org.uk



Giant hogweed

Pupil safety card



Dangerous Litter

Do not touch:

- Sharp or jagged items such as broken glass.
- Heavy or bulky items which are too heavy to lift.
- Biohazards such as dead animals, animal poo or needles.



Always wash your hands after the litter pick and before you eat.

Wear gloves and cover any cuts or grazes before you start.

What will you need for your litter pick?

- Gloves
- Litter pickers
- Bags, with separate ones for recyclable items
- Bag hoops, if you have them
- Camera to record your litter pick
- Litter pick record sheets

Litter pick safety items:

- Reflective vests
- Mobile phone
- First aid kit
- Hand rub
- Throw line or rope

Before you go

- Record your litter pick location on our web pages and download our free learning resources to use with your pupils or group.
- Decide how many children and adult helpers will be involved. Will you have enough supervision?
- Remind everyone to wear appropriate clothing and footwear.
- Discuss water safety with your class or group. There are lots of water safety activities at canalrivertrust.org.uk/explorers. Remember to Stay SAFE – Stay Away From the Edge.
- Practice using the equipment and discuss what litter is safe to collect.



On the day

- Check the weather and postpone if necessary.
- Make sure everyone has suitable clothes and footwear.
- Brief the children on what to expect and hand out equipment.
- When you arrive remind everyone about water safety and the Stay Away From the Edge message. Point out potential hazards and outline any health and safety requirements.
- Remind everyone that they are in public space and that there will be other people around.
- Review what litter to collect and what to leave behind.
- Count or tally specific items of litter (you could use the [litter pick record sheet on page 4](#)), record how many bags you collect and maybe weigh.
- Everyone must wash their hands carefully after the litter pick and never eat without doing so.

After the litter pick

[The School Plastics Challenge](#) has lots of ideas for using the litter in group activities.

When you wish to dispose of the litter, please consider sorting it into recyclable and non-recyclable items and using your school or group's waste disposal system. Alternatively, councils usually offer a waste collection service. Please contact your local council for further information.

Litter Pick Record Sheet

Well done for taking part in a canal or river litter pick. You are making a real difference to your local environment, helping to protect wildlife and reducing the amount of litter that makes it into the ocean.



Please remember our SAFE message – Stay Away From the Edge

Material	Tally	Total
Paper / card		
Plastic		
Glass		
Textiles		
Wood		
Metal		
Other		

RISK ASSESSMENT

Activity: School Plastics Challenge Litter Pick	Location:	Activity Date:
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Hazard identified	Persons at risk	Measures required to control the risk	Risk factor	Action to be taken By (Name)	Date completed and signature
Lack of information and awareness	All participants	All participants should be given a safety talk before taking part covering the risks and general information about the site, correct use of the equipment and the types of litter to collect. Use Water safety resources available via the Explorers website. All participants should learn the SAFE message – Stay Away From the Edge. Use Dangerous Litter card for children.	M		
Slips, trips and falls	All participants	Pre-site visit to ensure area is safe. Wear supportive and slip resistant footwear – wellies, trainers. Do not litter pick on steep ground, around locks, bridges or other structure. Do not litter pick at water's edge or around mooring rings or bollards.	M		
Cuts and abrasions or other injury	All participants	Safety talk to be given to all participants before litter pick commences. First aider present at all times. Ensure first aid kit(s) are on site with the correct items in box and that all items are in date. Emergency plan in place in case of serious injury. Follow school accident reporting procedure. Report all accidents or incidents to the Canal & River Trust on 0303 040 4040.	M		
Needles / sharps	All participants	Pre-site visit on the day to check for any evidence of needles/sharps. Safety talk to be given to all participants before litter pick commences. If needles/sharps are found during litter pick do not touch them. Contact Canal & River Trust on 0303 040 4040 to remove. Find alternative location to litter pick. Mark area where needles / sharps are found until they are removed by Canal & River Trust staff.	M		
Environmental conditions (extreme weather) – rain, wind, strong sunlight (sun burn)	All participants	Safety talk to be given to all participants before litter pick commences. Group leader aware of weather conditions for the day and assess throughout the day. Always wear suitable clothing for the weather forecast – gloves, long sleeves and covered legs. For winter weather warm clothing, waterproofs, for summer weather sun creams and hats. If weather is extreme, then litter pick should be stopped or cancelled.	M		
Leptospirosis	All participants	Safety talk to be given to all participants before litter pick commences. Cover all cuts and exposed skin prior to work. Wear gloves always. Wash hands after litter pick and before eating. If anyone who has taken part develops flu-like symptoms they should visit the doctor and inform them they could have contacted Leptospirosis.	M		

Lyme Disease	All participants	Safety talk to be given to all participants before litter pick commences. Cover up to avoid being bitten by ticks. If anyone who has taken part develops flu-like symptoms they should visit the doctor and inform them they could have contacted Lyme Disease.	M		
Giant Hogweed	All participants	Safety talk to be given to all participants before litter pick commences. Pre visit to check if Giant Hogweed is present. If Giant Hogweed is found do not touch it. Contact Canal & River Trust on 0303 040 4040 to report. Find alternative location to litter pick. If participants get giant hogweed sap on your skin, be sure to wash the area thoroughly immediately, seek medical advice, and do not expose the area to sunlight for a few days.	M		
Contact with faeces.	All participants	Safety talk to be given to all participants before litter pick commences. Do not touch animal faeces.	M		
Contact with members of the public – e.g. walkers, cyclists, anglers	All participants	Safety talk to be given to all participants before litter pick commences. Allow members of the public to pass safely on the water's edge side of the towpath.	M		
Contact with abusive behaviour from public.	All participants	Children to remain under adult supervision and within sight at all times Do not get drawn in to conflict. Move children away from abusive person / people. Stop litter pick if required. Contact local police, as required.	L		
Contact with dangerous / aggressive dogs.	All participants	Safety talk to be given to all participants before litter pick commences. Caution to be taken when approached by dog(s), do not touch/stroke dogs. Dog walkers to be advised by group leader of the litter pick and to keep dogs under control. Move away from dangerous / aggressive dog(s). Stop work and vacate site, if required. Contact local police, if required.	M		
Working next to the water's edge (risk of drowning).	All participants	Safety talk to be given to all participants before litter pick commences. All participant to stay at least 1m from the water's edge. Use Water safety resources available via the Explorers website.	M		
Safeguarding	All participants	All children to be accompanied by a responsible adult (parent, carer or teacher) in approved ratios. No child to be out of sight of a responsible adult. Where a DBS check is required for individuals this is in place.	L		

ASSESSED BY:	Name:	Signature:	Date:
AUTHORISED BY:	Name:	Signature:	Date: