

## Plastic

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Plastic is a lightweight and strong material which is man-made using natural resources such as coal, oil and wood. There are different types of plastic with different uses, including food packaging and single-use bottles. The problem with plastic is that it lasts a long time – in fact, it is thought that it takes around 450 years for plastic to disintegrate or rot away and 50% of plastic is used once then thrown away. Sadly, it is estimated that there will be more plastic in our oceans than fish by 2050.

### I WANT TO DO MORE

Build a plastic bottle greenhouse: use old plastic bottles to create a greenhouse to grow plants in. Keep a record of the process of designing and building your structure using photographs, video footage and written descriptions. Remember to explain the importance of finding a use for plastic rather than throwing it away and to give ideas for what could be grown inside the greenhouse. Once the project is complete, be ready to present your record and results to your peers to encourage others to follow in your footsteps.

### SOME EXTRA FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Throwing away plastic is a big problem because the material does not break down easily. What else could be built with items made from the plastic that you would usually throw away?

### WHERE CAN I GO TO FIND OUT MORE?

You can search for lots of helpful information using these websites:

- Young People's Trust for the Environment: <https://ypte.org.uk/audiences/kids>
- CBBC: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc> (search for 'plastic')
- BBC Bitesize: [www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize) (look at science resources for your age group)

### SMALL ACTIONS CAN GO A LONG WAY

- Try using a shampoo bar instead of bottles.
- Use a reusable water bottle.
- Use paper straws instead of plastic ones.
- Wrap food in wax paper instead of cling film.
- Take reusable bags to the shops instead of buying a new one. When your bag breaks, recycle it before getting a new one.
- Use a lunchbox instead of a plastic bag.
- Recycle wherever possible to reduce waste.
- Use your plastic waste to make something new.
- Buy biodegradable bags. These bags are made of special material which breaks down easily, so it has less of an impact on the environment when it is thrown away.

### THE KEY WORDS I NEED TO KNOW

