

Skimming and Scanning: Plastic Pollution

Skimming and scanning is a useful skill for finding important information in a text quickly. Skim and scan this passage of text to find the words in the box below.

Tick each word off once you have found it in the text.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| ☐ polluting | ☐ entangled |
| ☐ moulded | ☐ contaminated |
| ☐ syringes | ☐ consumption |
| ☐ retailers | ☐ fabric |
| ☐ poison | ☐ recycling centre |

Time taken: _____

Now, write a glossary for at least three words from this list. Use a dictionary to help you.

Plastic pollution is the build-up of plastic in the environment. The amount of plastic on the planet is increasing and plastic pollution is damaging wildlife and human health. Tons of plastic rubbish is thrown away every year and this ends up polluting both land and oceans.

History of Plastic

Plastic is a useful resource. It is lightweight, flexible and can be moulded into any shape. Look around you and you will see plastic products being used every day. Plastic is used to make food containers, bins, toys, syringes and hundreds of other items. Plastic bags were first introduced into supermarkets in the 1960s and are used worldwide by many supermarkets and retailers. In 2013, supermarkets in the UK gave out over 7.4 billion plastic bags to customers. Since October 2015 however, customers are charged 5p per plastic bag which may reduce the number of bags that are produced.

Dangers of Plastic

Although plastic is a useful material, it can also be a very dangerous one. Plastic is made of oil and other chemicals which help them keep their shape. Plastics that are left in landfills or in our oceans release these harmful chemicals which then poison and damage the surrounding environment. This can have deadly consequences for wildlife that lives in these contaminated areas.



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Leaking chemicals is not the only danger posed by plastic pollution. Animals and marine creatures can become entangled in plastic objects which then make it hard (and sometimes impossible) for them to move, eat or even breathe.

Human health is affected by plastic pollution too. Plastic particles are finding their way into our drinking water and even the food that we eat, such as fish, may be contaminated. The effects of microplastic consumption on humans is not fully understood although evidence suggests that it does have a negative impact on our health.

Reduce. Reuse. Recycle

There are 6.3 billion tons of plastic waste on Earth. We all need to act now to help reduce this number and there are lots of things that we can do to help end plastic pollution.

We need to reduce the amount of plastic that we use. Avoid using straws and plastic takeaway cups and say no to plastic bags at supermarkets. Take a fabric bag instead. We need to reuse plastic items that we already have. Wash plastic bottles and refill them. Avoid wrapping food in clingfilm; use a lunch box and wash it after use. And finally, recycle plastic instead of throwing it in the normal bin. Use recycling boxes or take your plastic to a recycling centre so that it doesn't end up in a landfill site or in the ocean.

