



Marine debris is anything man-made and discarded that enters the environment. Most trash comes from land-based sources, sometimes hundreds of miles away from the coast. Trash on the ground may be swept into inland waterways by rain or wind, where it will then make its way into the ocean through rivers and streams.



Debris in the ocean can spread invasive species, become navigational hazards, introduce toxic pollutants, endanger human health, and injure or kill wildlife. Plastic debris discarded into waterways can break down into smaller pieces, but will never fully degrade. These smaller pieces, called microplastics, can be ingested by marine life giving them a false sense of satiation while potentially leaching dangerous chemicals into their bodies. Microplastics can then be passed up the food chain.

A photograph of a sandy beach with a blue line drawn across it, passing through a pile of seaweed. The ocean is in the background.

Marine debris comes in all shapes and sizes. The most common include: fishing gear, netting, derelict traps, boating debris, snorkel/diving equipment, paper and plastic trash, including straws and household items.

- Build a community that recycles. Learn what's recyclable in your area, and encourage your co-workers and neighbors to learn what can and can't be recycled in your city.
- Reduce the amount of marine debris from fishing gear. Collect all unused traps and bring monofilament fishing line back to shore for proper disposal. Look for monofilament recycling bins in marinas and at boat ramps.
- Dispose of trash and recyclable materials in the proper receptacles.
- Choose reusable products over disposable or single-use items when possible.
- Take the pledge to Skip the Straw at [FloridaDEP.gov/SkipTheStraw](https://www.FloridaDEP.gov/SkipTheStraw).

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