



# Breaking the Plastic Wave

*How we can Save our Ocean from Plastic Pollution*

Every minute of every day a truckload of plastic is dumped into the ocean. Which shouldn't be a surprise since we've been producing massive quantities of plastic products, but don't really regulate their use or safe disposal. In the past 50 years, global plastic production has doubled, and in 20 years it is forecast to double again. No one knows how much plastic is floating or buried in our planet's ocean; our best guess, made in 2015, is about 150 million metric tons. Assuming our habits remain the same, accumulation will reach 600 million metric tons by 2040. And by 2050 there will be more plastic than fish.

And plastics are nearly indestructible. No organism on Earth can effectively break it down. If we don't control our plastic ocean pollution problem, *we threaten contaminating the food web of all ocean life*, from tiny phytoplankton to whales.

However, all hope is not yet lost, "**Breaking the Plastic Wave**," a global first-of-its kind analysis finished in 2020 by Pew Charitable Trusts and SYSTEMIQ, shows that we can cut flows of plastic into the ocean by about 80% by 2040 by extensively implementing existing solutions and technologies.

Task 1: On the lines below, rewrite the third paragraph in your own words

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**Reaching this 80% decrease would require eight solutions:**

1. reducing plastic production and consumption;
2. substituting some plastics with alternatives such as paper and compostable materials;
3. designing products and packaging *for* recycling;
4. expanding waste collection rates in middle- and low-income countries;
5. increasing recycling;
6. developing new recycling technologies;
7. tackling the sources of microplastics;
8. and reducing plastic waste exports

**But this can only happen if governments take immediate, large-scale actions to make system-wide changes.** Governments have started fighting plastic waste, but if all current global promises are fulfilled by 2040, the report estimates ocean plastic pollution will only decrease by 7%.

**The actions governments must take:**

1. make reusing or recycling materials cheaper than using new plastic;
2. improve recycling;
3. educate youth and consumers;
4. support development of sustainable substitutes to plastic;
5. eliminate single-use and hard-to-recycle plastic;
6. invest in waste collection and sorting infrastructure - wealthy countries must help poorer ones with financing;
7. implement strong policies that create incentives to shift from a throwaway economy to a circular economy, which targets zero waste and pollution throughout a product's lifetime;
8. implement changes with a long-term vision

Task 2: Circle 1, 2 or 3 government actions you find most important.

The cost to transform our economies with these system-wide actions is estimated at €518 billion. However, the report shows that, by 2040, this transformation could create 700,000 jobs, generate €60 billion in government savings, and reduce annual plastic-related greenhouse gas emissions by 25%.

But the only time is right now. If we don't change immediately, it will be too late, and unimaginable amounts of plastic will poison our ocean's wildlife essentially forever. Write your politicians today and demand change.

Task 3: On the lines below, write why you feel plastic ocean pollution matters to you. Often the first thing you feel is the most powerful. Don't worry about saying it perfect. Simply write your feelings. What do you fear? What do you hope?

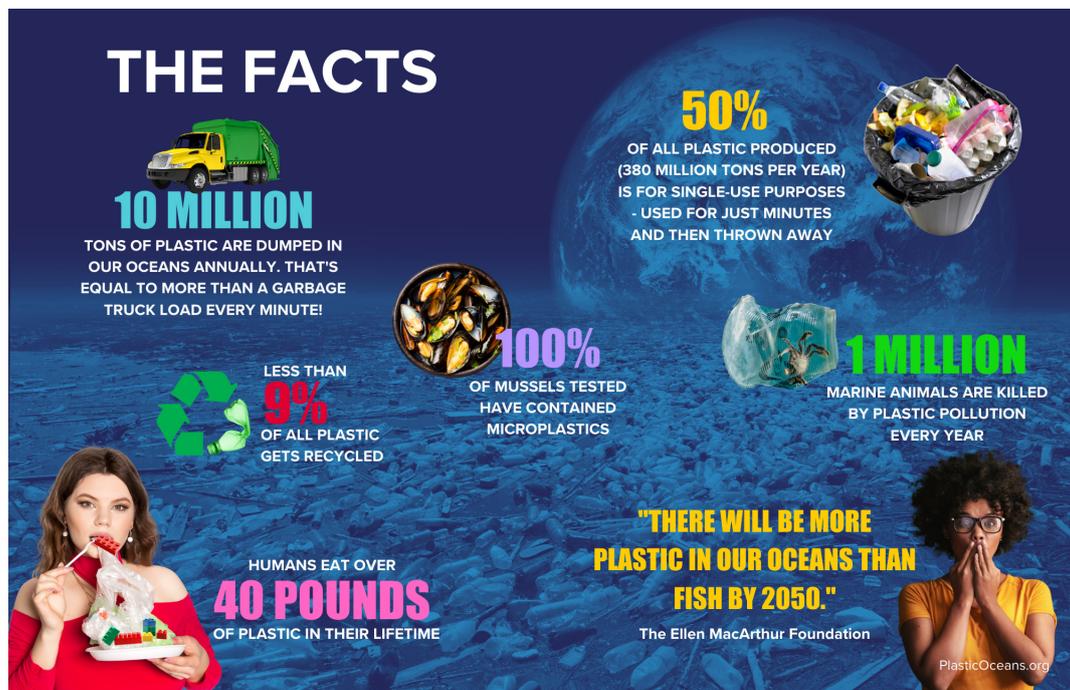
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Task 4: Possible Introduction paragraph Plastic Facts (hook) – circle 1 or 2 you find important

- Every minute of every day a truckload of plastic is dumped into our ocean
- Only 9% of all plastic produced is recycled.
- 2 million plastic bags are used every minute worldwide.
- 73% of beach litter worldwide is plastic.
- One million plastic bottles are bought every minute.
- According to the United Nations, 99% of seabirds will be eating plastic by 2050.
- Plastic bottles take up to 450 years to decompose.
- The average person eats 70,000 microplastics each year.
- The average time a plastic bag is used is just 12 minutes.
- Plastic production is forecast to double in the next 20 years.



Task 5: Possible Conclusion paragraph Plastic Facts – circle 1 you find shocking or combine some.

- Every minute of every day a truckload of plastic is dumped into the ocean.
- Without dramatic change, the plastics entering the ocean each year will more than double by 2025.
- Without dramatic change, plastic entering our oceans each year could triple to 29 million tons by 2040.
- Without dramatic change, there could be more plastic than fish in the ocean by 2050.

Task 6: WRITE A LETTER TO YOUR HEAD OF GOVERNMENT. Write what you feel the government should do to fight plastic ocean pollution. Short is better: 150 – 200 words

Now take a new piece of paper and write your letter. You will also need an envelope and a stamp. Write the following parts:

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**Your name and postal address**

**Date**

**Name and address of your country's leader** (can be found in the FateChanger App - see next page)

**The Greeting (or Salutation)** "Dear Federal Chancellor Schallenberg"

***Content of your letter** - you can copy your completed tasks here. Tip: Adding transitions between your paragraphs will make your letter sound nicer.*

**Introduction Paragraph** – it's good to start with a HOOK. A powerful statistic, story or fact about plastic ocean pollution works well. Use 1 or 2 facts you chose in **Task 4** above.

**Paragraph 2:** Tell your government about the **Breaking the Plastic Wave** report – write the summary paragraph you wrote for **Task 1** above.

**Paragraph 3:** Tell the government examples of critical things they can do – use important actions you circled in **Task 2** above.

**Conclusion Paragraph Part 1:** Start your Conclusion with another shocking and sad fact about plastic ocean pollution – one you chose in **Task 5** above. **Conclusion Paragraph Part 2:** In the same paragraph, tell your government why it really matters to *you* – copy what you wrote in **Task 3** above.

**Closing:** You then add a polite, formal closing such as "Sincerely" or "Thank you."

**Your signature** ends the letter (and your age if you want)

Task 7: Use the FateChanger app on iPhone to find your country leader's mailing address, then enter your letter in the app to add your letter to how many have been written.



Students from Gymnasium Draschestrasse helped design and debug the FateChanger app for iPhone. Download the app, which has lots of resources to learn about plastic ocean pollution, climate change and sustainability. The app then links learning to youth activism and environmental literacy. To learn more, go to [www.kidssaveocean.com](http://www.kidssaveocean.com)



Click “Write Letters, Multiply Impact” to find out the postal mailing address of the head of your government – in Austria it is now Chancellor Alexander Schallenberg.



After you've written your letter, mail it off. After you do, add your letter in the FateChanger app through the Map. If you don't have an iPhone, ask your teacher or a classmate to enter your letter into the app for you.