

Earth Day 2024

# Planet vs. Plastics



## What Is Earth Day?

Earth Day is held every year on 22<sup>nd</sup> April. It is a day of environmental action and awareness. The first Earth Day was organised in 1970 in the United States of America. It has since become a global event involving over 190 countries and more than 1 billion people every year. On Earth Day, people take action to make our world a better place through actions such as litter picking, planting trees and raising money for environmental charities.

## Earth Day 2024

The theme for Earth Day 2024 is 'Planet vs. Plastics'. This theme encourages everyone to work together to limit our use of plastics to help look after the Earth.

## Plastic in the Environment

Countless amounts of plastic enter the environment each year. Plastic can break down into tiny **toxic** particles that rapidly enter our Earth's soil and water.

Plastics can be found in freshwater, soil, air and oceans around the world. Worryingly, this could **endanger** some of our much-loved creatures. It is estimated that by 2050, there will be more plastic in the oceans than there are fish!

### Plastic Pollution



Plastic is a hard-wearing and long-lasting material. This means it can remain in the environment for hundreds of years so every piece of plastic ever produced still exists today. In fact, it can take between 20 to 1000 years for some plastics to **decompose**! **Microplastics** have been found in lots of different places!

### Did You Know...?

160,000 plastic bags are used around the world every second.

## How Can We Reduce Our Use of Plastic?

If we aim to create less waste – to reuse and recycle – then we can reduce the amount of new plastic contributing to our plastic problem. The government is beginning to tackle the plastic problem by introducing restrictions or bans on buying and selling single-use plastics, such as cotton buds, straws and polystyrene cups. In 2015, it became compulsory for shops to charge for single-use carrier bags. There are many other productive steps that you can take to reduce your use of plastics and help save our planet, which include:

### Reuse Items

Instead of using single-use plastic, such as straws and plastic bags, buy reusable items, such as reusable flasks and canvas bags. You could save 156 plastic bottles every year by choosing a reusable bottle!

Many people have been striving to use less plastic. For example, some coffee shops charge people less if they purchase a hot drink with a reusable cup.



### Recycle Your Plastic

If you use single-use plastics, make sure you recycle them in the correct bins so that they can be turned into new items instead of just being thrown away. A wide variety of products can be made from recycled plastic, such as drink bottles, polyester fabrics and carrier bags.



### Plan Your Parties

Plastic party utensils, glitter and balloons can be extremely dangerous to wildlife and the environment. Unfortunately, animals may mistake balloons for food and ingest them, which may make them very sick.

## Glossary

**microplastics:**

Small pieces of plastic less than 5mm in length.

**endangering:**

Putting something or someone at risk or in danger.

**toxic:**

Something poisonous or harmful.

**decompose:**

To break down through chemical change.

# Questions

1. How often is Earth Day celebrated? Tick one.

- ☐ every month
- ☐ twice a year
- ☐ every year
- ☐ once every two years

2. Number the facts from 1-4 to show the order in which they appear in the text.

- ☐ Some coffee shops charge people less if they buy a hot drink with a reusable cup.
- ☐ Animals mistake balloons for food and ingest them.
- ☐ The first Earth Day was organised in 1970 in the United States of America.
- ☐ It can take between 20 to 1000 years for some plastics to decompose!

3. Look at the section called **What Is Earth Day?**

Find and copy one word which means the same as 'worldwide'.

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4. What can animals easily mistake plastics for?

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5. Fill in the missing word.

Plastic can break down into tiny \_\_\_\_\_ particles that rapidly enter our Earth's soil and water.

6. Why do you think plastic is so widely used and produced?

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7. Predict what may happen if people keep using single-use plastic.

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8. Why do you think the author has included ways that we can reduce our use of plastic?

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# Answers

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- ☐ twice a year
- ☒ **every year**
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2. Number the facts from 1-4 to show the order in which they appear in the text.

- 3** Some coffee shops charge people less if they buy a hot drink with a reusable cup.
- 4** Animals mistake balloons for food and ingest them.
- 1** The first Earth Day was organised in 1970 in the United States of America.
- 2** It can take between 20 to 1000 years for some plastics to decompose!

3. Look at the section called **What Is Earth Day?**

Find and copy one word which means the same as 'worldwide'.

**global**

4. What can animals easily mistake plastics for?

**Animals can easily mistake plastics for food.**

5. Fill in the missing word.

Plastic can break down into tiny **toxic** particles that rapidly enter our Earth's soil and water.

6. Why do you think plastic is so widely used and produced?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I believe plastic is used so widely as it is a hardwearing material that is easily moulded into different shapes and will last a long time.**

7. Predict what may happen if people keep using single-use plastic.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think if people keep using single-use plastic, plastic pollution will increase. More plastic will enter the fresh water, soil, air and oceans around the world. This will threaten our wildlife as it may ingest the plastic.**

8. Why do you think the author has included ways that we can reduce our use of plastic?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think the author has included ways that we can reduce our use of plastic so that we can think about little changes that we can make in our lives that can make a difference to the environment.**

Earth Day 2024

# Planet vs. Plastics



## What Is Earth Day?

Earth Day, which is held every year on 22<sup>nd</sup> April, is a day of environmental action and awareness. The first Earth Day was organised in 1970 in the United States of America and inspired millions of citizens to campaign for change. Earth Day has since become a global event, engaging over 190 countries and more than 1 billion people every year.

## Earth Day 2024

The theme for Earth Day 2024 is 'Planet vs. Plastics'. This theme encourages everyone to work together to limit our use of plastics to help look after our planet.



## Plastic in the Environment

Although plastic can be useful, it can also be dangerous. Plastic is made of oil and chemicals. Countless amounts of plastic enter the environment each year when plastic products break down into tiny toxic particles that rapidly enter our Earth's soil and water.

Plastics can be found in freshwater, soil, air and oceans around the world. Worryingly, these microplastics (small pieces of plastic less than 5mm in length) could endanger some of our much-loved creatures. It is estimated that by 2050, there will be more plastic in the oceans than there are fish!



## Plastic Pollution

Plastic is a cheap and hard-wearing material that is used for many things; however, it has a significant impact on the environment. Items (such as plastic bags, bottles and food wrappers) can take hundreds of years to break down and many of them end up in our oceans. This is extremely harmful to wildlife. Creatures can become caught or trapped in plastic bags or other plastic items, causing injury and, in some cases, death. Not only this, microplastics also absorb pollutants, which make them poisonous. These toxic particles are mistaken for food and ingested by marine animals. Microplastics have been found in lots of different places!

## How Can We Reduce Our Use of Plastic?

If we aim to create less waste – to reuse and recycle – then we can reduce the amount of new plastic contributing to our plastic problem. The government is beginning to tackle the plastic problem by introducing restrictions or bans on buying and selling single-use plastics, such as cotton buds, straws and polystyrene cups. In 2015, it became compulsory for shops to charge for single-use carrier bags. There are many other productive steps that you can take to reduce your use of plastics and help save our planet, which include:

### Reuse Items

Over recent years, many citizens have made an effort to reduce their number of single-use plastics and look for more eco-friendly solutions. For example, switching to a reusable canvas bag can reduce the use of 600 plastic bags. Additionally, some coffee shops offer loyalty schemes or discounts for people purchasing hot drinks with a reusable cup.



### Recycle Your Plastic

If single-use plastics are used, the user should ensure they recycle them in the correct bins. This results in them being transformed into new products instead of just being discarded and contributing to landfill. This also saves a lot of emissions and lessens the threat to humans, wildlife and the environment.

A wide variety of products can be made from recycled plastic, such as drink bottles, polyester fabrics and carrier bags.



### Plan Your Parties

Plastic party utensils, sparkly glitter and balloons can be extremely dangerous to wildlife and the environment. Unfortunately, animals can mistake balloons for food and ingest them, which may result in severe sickness or even death. Although the eye-catching effect of glitter can be tempting, glitter is a microplastic that can infiltrate our environment. Try making your own exciting party decorations out of upcycled materials!





# Questions

1. What is plastic made from? Tick **two**.

- ☐ chemicals
- ☐ coal
- ☐ oil
- ☐ soil

2. Draw **four** lines and match each sub-heading to the corresponding sentence from that section.

**Recycle Your Plastic** •

• Plastics can be found in freshwater, soil, air and oceans around the world.

**Plastic in the Environment** •

• Items (such as plastic bags, bottles and food wrappers) can take hundreds of years to break down and many of them end up in oceans.

**What Is Earth Day?** •

• A wide variety of products can be made from recycled plastic, such as drink bottles, polyester fabrics and carrier bags.

**Plastic Pollution** •

• The first Earth Day was organised in 1970 in the United States of America and inspired millions of citizens to campaign for change.

3. Look at the section called **Recycle Your Plastic**.

Find and copy one word which means the same as 'abandoned'.

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4. Where should people dispose of their plastic?

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5. Fill in the missing words.

Additionally, some coffee shops offer \_\_\_\_\_ schemes or discounts for people \_\_\_\_\_ hot drinks with a reusable cup.

6. Why do you think that it is important that we think about the future of our planet?

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7. Explain why canvas bags are better than plastic bags for the environment.

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8. This theme encourages everyone to work together to limit our use of plastics to help look after our planet.

Why do you think the author refers to 'our planet'?

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9. Explain how you think microplastics are being found in the environment.

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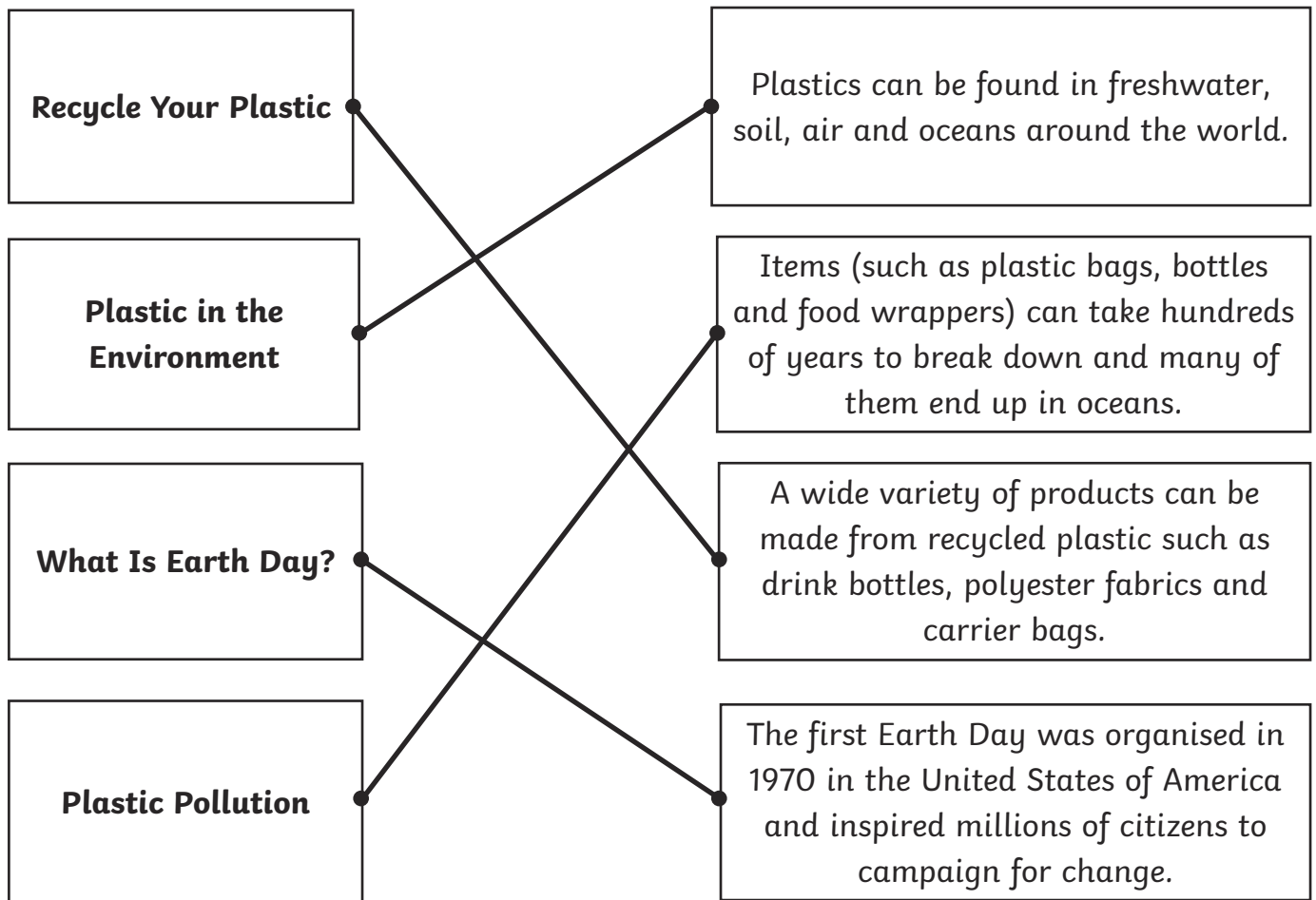
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# Answers

1. What is plastic made from? Tick **two**.

- ☒ **chemicals**
- ☐ coal
- ☒ **oil**
- ☐ soil

2. Draw **four** lines and match each sub-heading to the corresponding sentence from that section.



3. Look at the section called **Recycle Your Plastic**.

Find and copy one word which means the same as 'abandoned'.

**discarded**

4. Where should people dispose of their plastic?

**Plastics should be recycled in the correct bins**

5. Fill in the missing words.

Additionally, some coffee shops offer **loyalty schemes** or discounts for people **purchasing** hot drinks with a reusable cup.

6. Why do you think that it is important that we think about the future of our planet?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think it is important that we think about the future of our planet to protect future generations and all nature. We want the planet to be a safe place for everyone to live in.**

7. Explain why canvas bags are better than plastic bags for the environment.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Canvas bags are better than plastic bags for the environment because they are reusable and do not contribute to landfill.**

8. **This theme encourages everyone to work together to limit our use of plastics to help look after our planet.**

Why do you think the author refers to 'our planet'?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think the author refers to 'our planet' because they are emphasising that it is everyone's responsibility to take care of the environment.**

9. Explain how you think microplastics are being found in the environment.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think microplastics are being found in the environment because they are so small we can't see them to stop them.**



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## What Is Earth Day?

Earth Day, which is held every year on 22<sup>nd</sup> April, is a day of environmental action and awareness. The first Earth Day was organised in 1970 in the United States of America and inspired millions of citizens to campaign for change. Earth Day has since become a global event engaging over 190 countries and more than 1 billion people every year.

## Earth Day 2024

The theme for Earth Day 2024 is 'Planet vs. Plastics'. This theme encourages everyone to work together to limit our use of plastics to help look after the Earth. The organisers of Earth Day urge people, businesses and governments to unite to reduce, reuse and recycle more plastic to make our planet a better place for current and future generations. Earth Day campaigners are 'demanding a 60% reduction in the production of all plastics by 2040'.



## Why Do We Need to Invest in Our Planet?

### Plastic in the Environment

Although plastic can be extremely functional, it can also be hazardous. Countless amounts of plastic infiltrate the environment each year when plastic products break down into tiny toxic particles, oil and chemicals that rapidly enter our Earth's soil and water.

Plastics can be found in freshwater, soil, air and oceans around the world. Worryingly, this could endanger some of our much-loved creatures. It is estimated that by 2050 there will be more plastic in the oceans than there are fish!



### Plastic Pollution

Plastic is a cheap and durable material that is commonly used for multiple purposes; however, it has a consequential impact on the environment. Items (such as plastic bags, bottles and food wrappers) can take hundreds of years to break down and many of them end up in oceans. This is extremely harmful to wildlife who can become entangled in plastic products.

Microplastics (small pieces of plastic less than 5mm in length) have been found in lots of different places!



## How Can We Reduce Our Use of Plastic?

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. If we aim to create less waste – to reuse and recycle – then we can reduce the quantity of new plastics negatively contributing to our plastic problem. The government is launching multiple strategies to tackle the issue by introducing restrictions or bans on buying and selling single-use plastics, such as cotton buds, straws and polystyrene cups. In 2015, it became compulsory for shops to charge for single-use carrier bags, which resulted in a 98% reduction of their use. In 2023, the UK Government implemented a ban on most single-use plastic products, such as polystyrene cups and takeaway containers. There are many other productive steps that you can take to reduce your use of plastics and help save our planet, which include:

### Reuse Items

Over recent years, many businesses and citizens have made a conscious effort to reduce their number of single-use plastics and look for alternative, more eco-friendly solutions. For example, switching to a reusable canvas bag can prevent the use of 600 plastic bags. Additionally, some nationwide coffee shops offer loyalty schemes or discounts for people purchasing hot drinks with a reusable cup.



### Recycle Your Plastic

If plastics are used, the user should ensure they recycle them in the correct bins. Consequently, they can then be transformed into new products instead of just being discarded and contributing to landfill. Unless serious changes are made, experts predict that by 2050, there will be 12 billion metric tons of plastic in landfills, which is 35,000 times heavier than the Empire State Building! Recycling also saves a lot of emissions and lessens the threat to humans, wildlife and the environment. A wide variety of products can be created from recycled plastic, such as drink bottles, polyester fabrics and carrier bags.



### Plan Your Parties



Plastic party utensils, sparkly glitter and balloons can be extremely dangerous to wildlife and the environment. Unfortunately, animals may mistake balloons for food and ingest them, resulting in severe sickness or even death. Although the eye-catching effect of glitter can be tempting, glitter is a microplastic that can infiltrate our environment. Try making your own exciting party decorations out of upcycled materials!

# Questions

1. What is predicted to happen by 2050? Tick **two**.

- ☐ There will be more wildlife.
- ☐ There will be more plastic in the oceans than there are fish.
- ☐ Shops will start using more plastic bags.
- ☐ The plastic in landfill will be heavier than the Empire State Building.

2. Draw **four** lines and match each term with its definition.

**microplastics**

Becoming at great risk of extinction.

**endangering**

Not harmful to the environment.

**global**

Across the world.

**eco-friendly**

Small pieces of plastic which are less than 5mm in length.

3. Look at the section titled **Earth Day 2024**.

Find and copy one word which means the same as 'encourage' or 'ask'.

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4. Fill in the missing words.

Countless amounts of plastic infiltrate the \_\_\_\_\_ each year when plastic products break down into tiny \_\_\_\_\_ particles, oil and chemicals that rapidly enter our Earth's soil and water.

5. What was the result of shops charging for single-use bags?

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6. Why do you think so many items are made from plastic despite it having a negative impact on the environment?

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7. Summarise what you have learnt about microplastics in 30 words or fewer.

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8. **The first Earth Day was organised in 1970 in the United States of America and inspired millions of citizens to campaign for change.**

Why do you think Earth Day 'inspires millions of citizens'?

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9. Predict what impact the end of sales of most single-use plastic products in the United Kingdom will have on the environment.

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10. Explain why using a reusable cup is better than a plastic or paper cup in a coffee shop.

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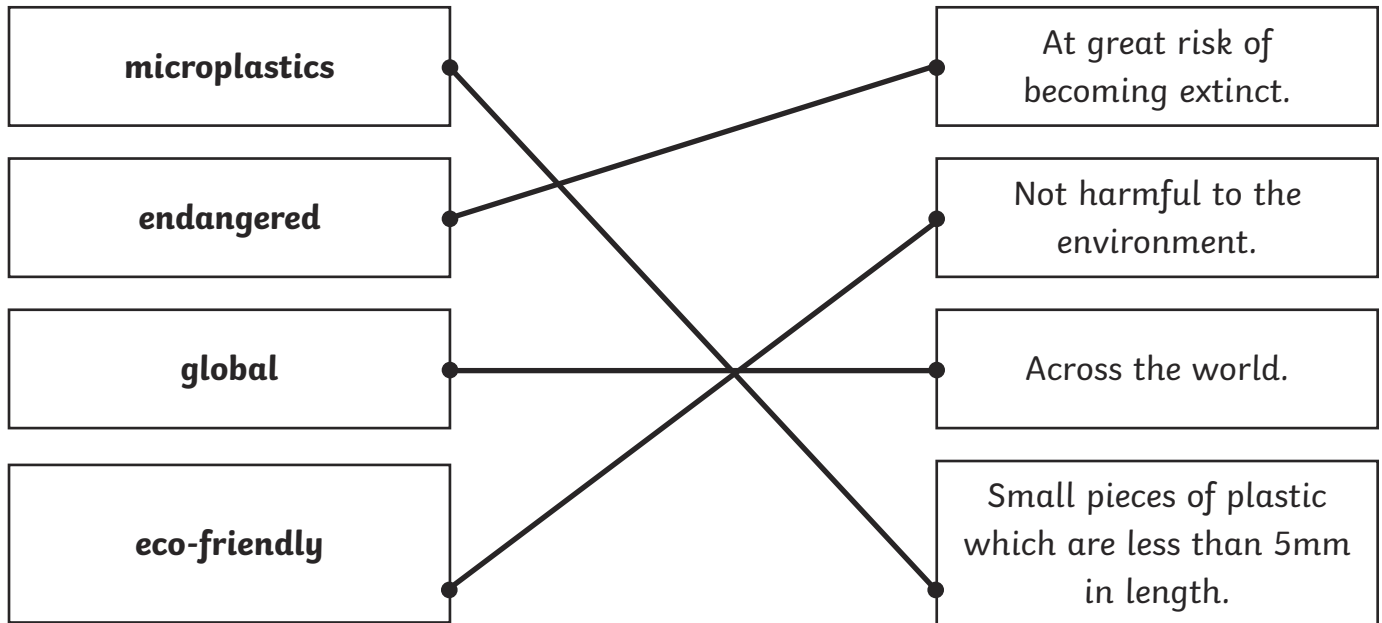


# Answers

1. What is predicted to happen by 2050? Tick **two**.

- ☐ There will be more wildlife.
- ☒ **There will be more plastic in the oceans than there are fish.**
- ☐ Shops will start using more plastic bags.
- ☒ **The plastic in landfill will be heavier than the Empire State Building.**

2. Draw **four** lines and match each term with its definition.



3. Look at the section titled **Earth Day 2024**.

Find and copy one word which means the same as 'encourage' or 'ask'.

**urge**

4. Fill in the missing words.

Countless amounts of plastic infiltrate the **environment** each year when plastic products break down into tiny **toxic** particles, oil and chemicals that rapidly enter our Earth's soil and water.

5. What was the result of shops charging for single-use bags?

**When shops began charging for single use carrier bags, the result was a 98% reduction in their use.**

6. Why do you think so many items are made from plastic despite it having a negative impact on the environment?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that so many items are made out of plastic despite it having a bad impact on the environment because it is hard wearing, long lasting and cheap to produce.**

7. Summarise what you have learnt about microplastics in 30 words or fewer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Microplastics are small pieces of plastic less than 5mm in length that can enter our environment. Microplastics have a negative impact on the health of our environment.**

8. The first Earth Day was organised in 1970 in the United States of America and inspired millions of citizens to campaign for change.

Why do you think Earth Day 'inspires millions of citizens'?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think Earth Day 'inspires millions of citizens' by reminding everyone every year to work together to help the environment. If we all make little changes, we can make a difference together.**

9. Predict what impact the end of sales of most single-use plastic products in the United Kingdom will have on the environment.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that the end of sales of most single-use plastic products in the United Kingdom will have a positive impact on the environment because there will be less plastic pollution. There will be less plastics in landfill and in the environment.**

10. Explain why using a reusable cup is better than a plastic or paper cup in a coffee shop.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think using a reusable cup is better than a plastic or paper cup because the disposable cups can only be used once and are hard to recycle. If you use a reusable cup, it can be washed and used multiple times, and also means that fewer cups need to be made.**