



# Soak in Knowledge: Explaining the Ocean Plastics Crisis to Kids



SpongeBob SquarePants: Operation Sea Change and Ocean Conservancy teamed up to help you explain the ocean plastics crisis to kids.

By now, it's widely known that plastic in the ocean is a huge problem. The latest science shows that 11 million metric tons of plastics enter our ocean every year: that's more than a garbage truck's worth of plastic every single minute.

Explaining big problems like these to little ones can be daunting. Here are some tips for how to start the conversation and teach kids about the importance of protecting our blue planet:

## 1. CONNECT TO ANIMALS

For younger kids, it might be good to start with the basics. Remind them that ocean animals, just like humans, need a clean, healthy environment to grow healthy and strong. We can't eat plastic, and neither can fish or octopuses or other creatures. Ask them what their favorite ocean animal is and learn more about that animal and how plastic pollution might impact them.

## 3. MAKE YOUR ARTS & CRAFTS DAY OCEAN PLASTIC THEMED

Use your trash and recycling bins as inspiration for your next craft project: use food wrappers to create portraits of your favorite Bikini Bottom buddies, transform bottle caps into jellyfish and turn plastic clamshell takeout containers into your very own Krusty Krab. While you're crafting, take it as an opportunity to talk about the importance of reducing single-use plastic waste.

## 5. BEACH RESPONSIBLY

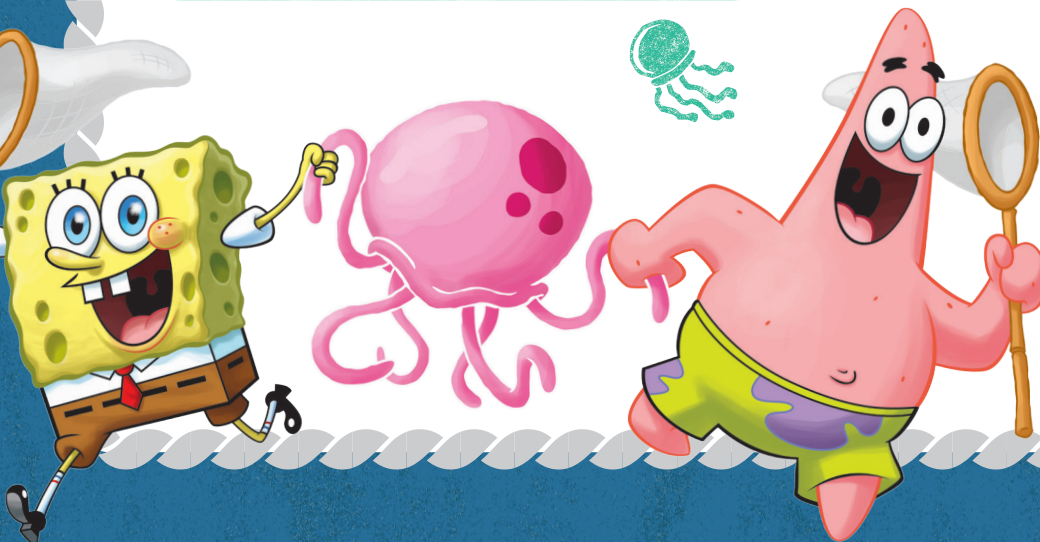
If you're able to make it to the beach, take steps to educate your kids about how to be a responsible ocean steward while you're there. Bring the reusable water bottle, bag, and packed lunch; and leave a single-use plastics at home. Teach your kids about the importance of leaving no trace - or, even better, the importance of leaving the beach cleaner than you found it by doing a mini cleanup while you're there.

## 2. LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Think about the ways you can reduce plastic usage in your home and ensure that you're disposing of what you do use responsibly. Start by doing a small at-home audit of your single-use plastic habits. Keep a notebook in your kitchen or use a notes app on your phone to keep track of the single-use plastic items you use in a week. At the end of the week, you might find it is an eye-opening experience. Once you've taken a look at your plastic habits, sit down with your family and figure out alternatives to some of the plastics in your home: maybe you start buying chips in bulk rather than in individual packaging, or start making your own granola bars instead of buying packaged ones. Finally, read up on your local recycling rules and make sure your kids are aware of them, too.

## 4. JOIN THE CLEAN UP

Whether you're on a coast or hundreds of miles inland, every piece of trash you collect makes a difference for our ocean and the creatures that call it home. Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal Cleanup® is the world's biggest annual beach and waterway cleanup effort: since 1986, more than 17 million volunteers worldwide have collected over 350 million pounds of trash. Joining a cleanup is a great way to put the plastic problem in context for kids. Teach your kids about the importance of caring for our ocean and make joining a cleanup an annual tradition. Visit [SignUpToCleanup.org](https://www.signuptocleanup.org) to learn more about cleanups in your area.



**Ocean Conservancy** has led the fight for a clean, healthy ocean free of trash since 1986, when it first launched its annual International Coastal Cleanup®, the world's largest volunteer cleanup effort for the ocean. The organization continues to work to protect the ocean from today's greatest global challenges, creating evidence-based solutions for a healthy ocean and the wildlife and communities that depend on it. For more information, visit [www.oceanconservancy.org](https://www.oceanconservancy.org).

[SpongeBobOperationSeaChange.com](https://www.spongeboboperationseachange.com)