

Save Our Earth!

Alternate Uses for Common Trash

Each year, the Ocean Conservancy organization holds an International Coastal Cleanup Day, when volunteers from countries all over the world clean up debris from the ocean and surrounding land. This table lists the type and amount of debris found along coasts during the cleanup day in 2008.

Rank	Debris Items	Number of Pieces of Debris	Percentage of Total Debris
1.	Cigarettes/cigarette filters	3,177,121	28%
2.	Bags (plastic)	1,356,352	12%
3.	Food wrappers/containers	927,110	8.3%
4.	Beverage bottles (plastic), 2 liters or less	911,894	8%
5.	Caps, lids	692,494	8%
6.	Bags (paper)	524,051	6%
7.	Straws/stirrers	501,077	4%
8.	Cups/plates/forks/knives/spoons	424,770	4%
9.	Beverage bottles (glass)	415,202	4%
10.	Beverage cans	375,728	3%
	Total Top 10 Debris Items:	9,305,809	83%
	Total Debris Items Worldwide:	11,174,642	100%

Activities

1. None of these items should have ended up as pollution! Many of these objects could have been reused, or at the very least, disposed of properly in the garbage or at a recycling center. Some things, like cigarettes, are best put in the trash, but can you think of other uses for the things in the table? Make a list of alternative uses.

Here are a few ideas to get you started.

- **Paper bags:** book covers, hand puppets
- **Plastic bags:** carry-all for lunches, reused at stores
- **Glass beverage bottles:** single-bud vase



2. Hold a clean-up day on your school grounds. Bring in used plastic bags from home (another great recycling method for those grocery bags!), and get started picking up garbage around your school. You may want to wear gloves. Don't forget the playground, soccer field, picnic tables, and everywhere else trash accumulates. Keep trash and recyclables separate. Once you've found every piece of trash, place the garbage in large trash bags and the recyclables in appropriate containers. How many bags of trash did you collect? Bins of recyclables? If you have access to a scale, weigh what you've found. How many pounds of trash did you find? Dispose of the trash in the school dumpster, and put your recyclable materials in a suitable location (your teacher can help you determine where this is).
3. Once you've returned to the classroom (and washed your hands!), make a list of all the things you found on your trash hunt. What sort of alternate uses for this debris could the owner have found?