

Healthy Oceans

Preventing Plastic Pollution

Vocabulary for Students



- **Biodegradable:** Capable of being broken down by bacteria and other decomposers and returned to nature.
- **Compostable:** Organic material that breaks down relatively quickly—at a rate similar to paper—and leaves no toxic residue. This organic material turns into ‘compost,’ or plant fertilizer. ‘Biodegradable’ does not necessarily mean ‘compostable,’ while by definition compostable materials are also biodegradable.
- **Debris:** Discarded garbage or the remains of something that’s been broken apart or destroyed.
- **Gyre:** A large system of circular currents in the ocean that are a result of wind patterns on the Earth and the Earth’s rotation.
- **Microbeads:** Plastic particles less than 5 mm in diameter that are put in some cosmetic and personal care products like toothpaste and face scrubs. Microbeads are too small to be filtered by sewage treatment plants and thus make their way directly into the ocean when they are washed down the drain.
- **Microplastics:** Small pieces of plastic that are less than 5 mm long.
- **Nonrenewable resource:** A natural resource that is consumed faster than it can be replaced naturally.
- **Photodegrade:** To be chemically broken down by light, typically ultraviolet light from the sun.
- **Toxin:** A poisonous substance.
- **UV (ultraviolet) rays:** Electromagnetic waves with wavelengths that are shorter than visible light.

