

Geography Knowledge Organiser

Plastic Pollution

Year 6
Spring 2



Key Vocabulary

decompose pollution pollutes waste biodegradable microplastics
single-use multi-use reuse reduce recycle consumption contribute

History of plastic

- Plastic is made from fossil fuels such as oil and natural gas, and global plastic production has increased rapidly because plastic is cheap.
- Since the 1950s, plastic production has grown from around 2 million tonnes per year to over 430 million tonnes per year.
- Single-use plastics are a major reason for the increase, with packaging alone making up about 35–40% of all plastic produced globally, much of which is used for only minutes before being thrown away.
- In 2026, global plastic production is estimated to be around 460 million tonnes per year, but less than 10% of plastic is recycled.
- Every year, around 19–23 million tonnes of plastic leak into rivers, lakes, and oceans, harming ecosystems, wildlife, and food chains across the world.

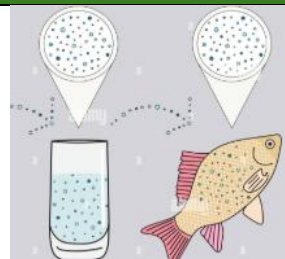
Types of plastic



Single-use plastic



Multi-use plastic



Microplastics

Why is plastic a problem?



Can take hundreds of years to decompose.



Piles up on the land and in the sea.



Harms animals



Damages soil



Pollutes oceans



Overflows in landfills