

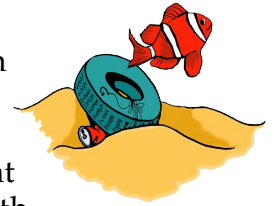
Garbage has become a problem everywhere: even the most remote tropical islands are now plagued with litter which washes up on beaches and reefs, smothering and killing marine life and posing a health risk to humans. Non-biodegradable garbage may persist for hundreds of years, spoiling both the aesthetic and the economic value of an area.



Underwater cleanups are a great way to help protect the marine environment. However, just like any other dive, diver safety and good dive preparation are essential. There are some special considerations when cleaning up under water, especially in fragile coral reef environments. Follow these simple guidelines, developed in collaboration with The Ocean Conservancy, to help clean up the underwater environment safely.

PLANNING THE DIVE

- Become familiar with the cleanup area and find out how the cleanup will be run
- Always dive with a buddy and remember to carry out equipment, safety and signal checks before getting into the water
- Organizers should not arrange for underwater cleanups to be held at sites or at times which could be unsafe or hazardous, such as in shipping lanes, areas with strong currents, fishing grounds or during high winds and waves



GEARING UP FOR A CLEANUP

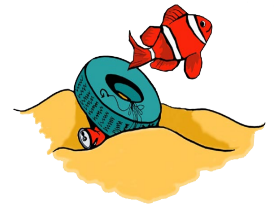
In addition to normal dive gear, divers will need:

- Mesh sacks
- Gloves to be able to pick up rubbish and sharp objects
- Shears or scissors for cutting fishing line and tin cans



DURING THE CLEANUP DIVE

- Work slowly and carefully
- Dive in a head down position to avoid making contact with the bottom
- Remember to remain neutrally buoyant at all times and adjust buoyancy throughout the dive as the garbage gets heavier
- Make sure equipment is secured and the mesh sack is held so that nothing can trail or snag on corals
- One diver should collect garbage while the other holds the mesh sack
- The diver handling the garbage will need to wear gloves
- Handle sharp objects such as glass, needles and hooks with extreme caution, putting them inside other garbage for safety
- Never try to remove anything that cannot be easily lifted such as tires or car batteries – record their location and report them to the cleanup organizers, local authorities or park management
- When the mesh sack gets too heavy end the dive



Cleanup dives are a practical way to help protect and conserve the underwater environment for this and future generations to enjoy

Become familiar with local diving techniques and regulations as they may differ from these general guidelines



GOOD TARGET ITEMS FOR A CLEANUP DIVE

- Plastics, especially plastic bags
- Cloth items or rice sacks
- Fishing line, netting, and broken lobster pots or fish traps
- Batteries, bottles and tin cans
- Cigarette butts and beer bottle caps

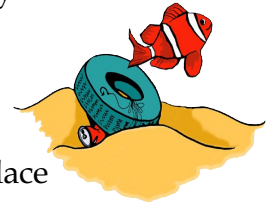


DECIDING WHAT TO REMOVE – AND WHAT TO LEAVE

One of the trickiest things about cleanup dives is recognizing what to remove and what to leave. When things have been in the water for some time they may become home to marine creatures. While this is no excuse for dumping garbage at sea, it is extremely important not to remove items that have been incorporated into the reef.

Check it before you bag it

- Make sure nothing is living in or on each item before removing it
- Bottles covered in growth usually have creatures living inside – leave them in place
- Cut open tin cans carefully to make sure there is nothing inside
- Hold cups or cans close to sandy parts of the sea floor and shake to expel sand or silt



What to leave in the water

- Anything which is “stuck” or encrusted with growth
- Anything, no matter how ugly, which has become overgrown with marine life
- Anything that may be dangerous – remember, “if in doubt leave it”
- Heavy items – never use your buoyancy control device (BCD) to lift objects
- Metal drums and containers which might contain hazardous materials

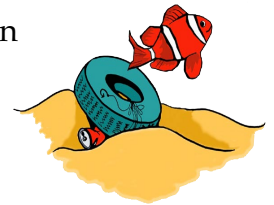


Plastic fishing line

- Never try to pull fishing line free, as corals and other animals growing around it will be damaged
- Line must be cut and removed in sections, using shears or scissors rather than a knife
- Avoid getting entangled by winding the line around an object or hand

MAKING IT EVEN MORE WORTHWHILE

Document everything that is collected so that its origin can be identified and pollution problems tackled at source. For more information and data recording sheets contact The Ocean Conservancy.



AFTER THE DIVE

Arrange for garbage to be collected or taken to an official site – do not leave it on the beach.