



Guidelines for running a Coastal Clean-up Event

- Trash in the ocean and waterways is a serious problem that threatens worldwide human health, wildlife, communities and economies.
- Roughly **80%** of this marine debris comes from **land-based sources**. It is an entirely man-made problem but it is also entirely preventable.
- By conducting your own **clean-up events**, taking the opportunity to **raise awareness** and **recording data** on the trash you collect, you can become part of the solution.

This guide will help you run your own clean-up event. There are three sections: before the clean-up, during the clean-up and after the clean-up. Select the information that will be most useful, depending upon the size of your event. **Every event will make a difference, however big or small!**

Before the Clean-up

1. Contact people

Enlisting the help of local governments or organisations will greatly increase the community engagement of your event. This will inspire and empower people to make a lasting change to their waste management. Consider the best means of communicating with your audience. Find key local leaders who are able to gather groups of people quickly, or visit people directly and ask for their help. Blanket e-mails are often not the best way to inspire action.

2. Choose a location

- Identify the area you want to clean (e.g. beach, river watershed or urban area) and make sure there is trash to clean up!
- Make sure it is safe, accessible and that you are allowed to be there.
- Identify possible hazards such as busy roads, power lines, rocky/slippery areas or high tides, and overcome these e.g. by changing location, or preparing volunteers.
- If the site is hard to find, print posters showing volunteers where to go.



3. Decide what to do with the collected trash

- Can you arrange for the trash to be removed via garbage trucks?
- Which items can you arrange to be recycled? (Volunteers should keep these items separate to the other trash.)

4. Decide upon data collection

The data your volunteers collect during your clean-up can be used to influence long-term solutions for reducing global ocean trash. Design simple data collection guidelines for your volunteers and communicate these during a pre clean-up briefing.

- If you want to separate the trash for recycling, assign different types of trash to different volunteers.
- Contribute to the world's largest clean-up database by completing "Ocean Trash Data Forms" for Ocean Conservancy. Download this [here](#).
- Make sure volunteers return all completed data forms to the organiser.
- Weigh the total amount of trash collected.
- Suggested trash collection team structure includes four (4) persons:
 - One (1) person to record the data.
 - Two (2) people to hold the trash sack.
 - Other team members to collect trash and report it to the data collector as they place it in the sack.
- The event organiser should report all collected data for analysis.
 - Email: cleanup@oceanconservancy.org.

5. Provide educational content

- A clean-up event is a great opportunity to raise awareness within the community. You can inform people what marine debris is, what negative effect it has upon the environment, and how to prevent it.
- Environmental content suggestions:
 - Explain the difference between biodegradable and non-biodegradable items. Biodegradables, such as coconuts or plant material are part of the natural ecosystem and should be left alone. Volunteers should, therefore, only collect non-biodegradable items.
 - Identify the different types of marine debris and how they enter the ocean.



- List the different types of single-use and disposable plastics e.g. straws, water bottles, plastic bags.
- Explain the effects of marine debris e.g. wildlife entanglement, ingestion, habitat damage and economic loss.
- Explain how to prevent marine debris e.g. refuse disposable items, reduce your waste, reuse items such as bags, recycle items like glass bottles.
- Ways to provide educational content include:
 - Display posters around the site at each of the stations listed below.
 - Ask your core team to verbally provide public volunteers with environmental facts as they collect trash.
 - Play interactive games that provide members of the public with environmental facts. For example, develop games using the [“Trash Breakdown Infographic”](#) to ask multiple-choice questions such as “How many years does it take a plastic bag to break down in the ocean? a) 1-2 years b) 2-5 years c) 10-20 years”.

6. Plan the layout of the event

- Where will you have the Assembly Point?
 - A place for volunteer registration and pre-event briefing.
 - A place to hand out trash sacks and data collection forms.
 - Will this also be your assembly point in case of emergency?
- Where will you place the Trash Collection Point?
 - A place to deposit collected trash until it is removed from site.
 - A place to weigh the collected trash, return data forms to the organiser and identify the volunteers that collected the most.
 - A place to collect data forms to record the success of your event.
- Where would you like the Refreshment Station?
 - Your volunteers will need water to keep them hydrated. Will you provide it or ask them to bring their own?
 - You may want to provide small snacks as a thank you for participating.
 - Ensure this station does not use disposable items like plastic water bottles or plastic bags.
- Do you need to provide a First-Aid Station?
- Where will you put the Educational Games Station?



- Will it need to be in a sheltered area in case of rain or intense sun?

7. Assemble your team

- Assign roles to your core team of organisers. You may need multiple people per station, depending upon the size of your event.
 - Team Captain
 - Registration
 - Trash collection
 - Trash weighing
 - Data form collection
 - Refreshments
 - Educational games
- You may want to provide each core team member with a checklist of his or her responsibilities.



8. Tips for promoting your clean-up event

- Design and print posters detailing the event's date, time and location.
 - Display these where they will be seen by as many people as possible e.g. shops, supermarkets, dive centres, schools, restaurants, etc.
 - Whilst handing out posters, promote the event face to face. This is much more engaging than virtual contact.
 - Advertise the event on social media e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Website.
 - Email people asking them to participate.
- Decide whether you want to provide prizes for the volunteers that collect the most trash. You can record the weight of each volunteer's collected trash at the Trash Collection Point to identify the winners. This will encourage more participation.
- State that it is essential for people to sign the registration form upon arrival.
 - This will allow you to give them your pre-event briefing, data collection guidelines and essential materials.
 - State that people have to register to win prizes.
- Include essential information from your pre-event briefing.
 - Some people may skip registration!
 - Highlight the importance of only collecting non-biodegradable items e.g. plastic, bricks, metal, glass, polystyrene and rubber.
 - Highlight the importance of the data you want to collect to encourage people to register and receive data forms
- Let volunteers know ahead of time if they will need to wear or bring anything e.g. gloves, proper shoes, sun protection, reusable water bottles or sacks for collecting the trash.

9. Gather your materials

- Posters promoting the event
- Posters directing people to the correct location
- Posters to label the different stations
- Instructions for your core team of organisers
- Data collection guidelines for volunteers
- Registration forms
- Pens/pencils
- Weighing scales



- Ocean Conservancy data forms
- Clipboards
- Paper to record data
- Educational games
- Work gloves (or ask volunteers to bring their own)
- Trash bags e.g. rice sacks, cement bags or black sacks
- Cutters, scissors, trowels (to remove trapped items)
- Hazardous waste container e.g. empty liquid detergent bottle with lid (for sharp materials e.g. cut glass/needles) clearly labelled
- Drinking water
- Snacks (no disposable items)
- Cameras (to document the event)
- First-aid kit

During the Clean-up

1. Set up

- Arrive early to organise the layout of your clean-up location.
 - Set-up and clearly label the different stations.
 - Post signs directing people to the registration desk.
- Make sure your core team are comfortable with their responsibilities.

2. Registration Briefing

- Give volunteers an itinerary of the event (could be a poster).
 1. Registration
 2. Collect trash and data
 3. Weigh trash for competition and return completed data forms
 4. Games and refreshments
 5. Prize giving/thank you/group photo (state a time)
 6. Trash removal from site
- Provide materials e.g. data forms, trash sacks and gloves.
- Where recycling is available, explain which items are recyclable and how to keep them separate from the rest of the trash.
- Explain how to complete the data forms.
- Explain where the trash should be weighed and left for collection.



- Tell volunteers your most important **dos** and **don'ts**:
 - **Do only** collect non-biodegradable items e.g. plastic, glass, metal or polystyrene.
 - **Do** collect small items e.g. polystyrene balls or sweet wrappers.
 - **Do** collect data.
 - **Do** work together.
 - **Do** report back to the weighing station to weigh your collected trash and return your completed data forms to the organiser.
 - **Do** deposit collected trash in the allocated place.
 - **Do** ensure trash is collected.
 - **Don't** collect biodegradable items e.g. driftwood, coconuts, seeds, seaweed, coral, shells or other vegetation.
 - **Don't** burn any trash you collect.
 - **Don't** trample vegetation.

3. Document the event

- Take before and after photos of the site.
- Take photos during the event.
- Make sure all the trash has been weighed and recorded.
- Make sure all data forms have been filled out correctly when volunteers return them.
- Ensure all trash is removed properly from the site.
- Make sure you do not leave any waste from the event itself.

After the Clean-up

1. Say thank you!

- Have a short thank you ceremony to acknowledge participants.
- Take a final group photo to celebrate everyone's hard work.
- Give out prizes.
- Send your photos and details of the clean up to info@greenfins.net - we'll promote your hard work too!

2. Share your results

- Estimate the distance you cleaned for reporting your data.



- Report your data to the appropriate organisations e.g. photograph and email completed data forms to cleanup@oceanconservancy.org
- Encourage people to share their experiences with you e.g. photos or fun stories.
- Spread the word in person and on social media. Tell people about your good work and encourage them to do the same.

References

Ocean Conservancy. 2015. Trash Free Seas Do-It-Yourself Clean-up Tool Kit:
<http://www.oceanconservancy.org/our-work/international-coastal-cleanup/do-it-yourself-cleanup-tool.html>