

World Oceans Day

In 1992, the Canadian government first proposed setting up a World Ocean Day during the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. The United Nations (UN) officially recognised 8th June as World Oceans Day in December 2008. The objective of the day then and now is to raise awareness of the vital importance of our oceans and the role they play in sustaining a healthy planet. It also aims to inform and educate people about the negative impact that human actions have on the ocean and the importance of finding ways in which to conserve, protect and sustain the ocean for the future.

Oceans cover over 70% of the Earth's surface and they contain around 96% of all the water on the planet. Oceans are the world's largest habitat and are home to a wide variety of creatures and living organisms. There are 5 oceans on Earth: the Pacific, the Atlantic, the Arctic, the Indian and the Southern.

Interesting Fact

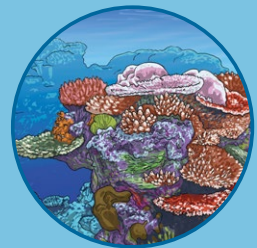
Covering around 30% of the Earth's surface, the Pacific Ocean is Earth's largest ocean. The name 'Pacific Ocean' means 'peaceful sea' in Latin.



Although largely unexplored, the oceans play a major role in everyday life all around the globe. They provide about 70% of the oxygen that we breathe, and many people consider them to be the lungs of our planet. Another of the ocean's important roles is to soak up energy in the form of heat and distribute it evenly throughout the Earth. It also helps to absorb about one-quarter of the carbon dioxide (CO²) that we humans create when we burn fossil fuels such as oil, coal and natural gas.

Did You Know...?

The Great Barrier Reef, which is in the Pacific Ocean and measures around 2,600km, is visible from the Moon! It is one of the planet's richest ocean habitats and is home to more than 1,500 species of fish, 134 species of sharks and rays and more than 30 species of vulnerable marine mammals.



As a result of human action, our oceans are struggling to function as they should. Increasing levels of carbon dioxide in the ocean has led to an increase in the acidity in the ocean. Many sea creatures cannot adapt to this change and therefore die. Sea temperatures are rising with some areas of the ocean seeing a temperature rise of 2°C in the last one hundred years. This causes living things, such as coral, to die. Pollution, both plastic and chemical, is causing major damage to oceans. Oil spills from tankers, fertilisers from agriculture, and litter from land all pollute our oceans. This pollution kills marine life and damages plant life. One of the other biggest problems facing the oceans of the world is overfishing. This means too many sea creatures are being caught in relation to the number that are born. Some species of sea creatures are in danger of becoming extinct because of it and the balance of the ocean is under threat. As countries increasingly view the ocean as a potential source of economic growth, governments must address the challenge of balancing the financial benefits of the ocean while protecting it for the future.

The focus of World Oceans Day changes each year and this year, the theme is 'Innovation for a Sustainable Ocean'. This theme focuses on ideas and innovations that will help protect the ocean and all life that depend on it. It will highlight technological advances, scientific research and solutions-focused programmes that will help to protect the ocean and sustain it for the future. Scientists and environmentalists are trying to find innovative ways to stem the flow of plastics into the ocean and are developing holistic waste management systems. Other innovations include finding ways to repurpose plastic waste to prevent it from ending up in the ocean. For example, in some countries, plastic is being used to make new products such as roads, clothes and even mattresses!

Although governments, businesses and multinational organisations are mostly responsible for making progress towards ocean sustainability, we can all play our part in caring for it. We can all reduce our carbon footprint by using the car less and walking or cycling more. We can strive to use less plastic and recycle more. If living near the coast, we can go on organised beach cleans, collecting and recycling plastic waste. We can research and support charities and innovations that aim to raise awareness of about the importance of caring for our oceans.



Questions

1. Why do you think it took 16 years for the UN to recognise World Oceans Day?

2. Find and copy one word that is a synonym for 'crucial'.

3. How much of the Earth's water is contained in oceans? Tick one.

- 70%
- 50%
- 96%
- 69%

4. Which ocean means peaceful sea in Latin?

5. **Although largely unexplored...**

What does the subordinate clause tell us about the ocean?

6. What is created when we burn fossil fuels? Tick one.

- oxygen
- carbon dioxide
- nitrogen
- carbon monoxide

7. What large habitat is in the Pacific Ocean?

8. Explain why there is more carbon dioxide in the ocean. Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

9. Explain why overfishing is a problem and why it is a difficult problem to solve.

10. Who do you think is most responsible for caring for the oceans and why? Explain your answer fully using evidence from the text to support your answer.
