

Jellyfish Craft



VIRGINIA
AQUARIUM
& MARINE SCIENCE CENTER

Learn how trash is harmful to sea turtles and how you can help protect them.

Duration

Preparation: 15 minutes

Activity: 20 minutes

Supplies

- Clear plastic bottle
- Thin plastic bag
- Blue food coloring
- Thread or string
- Scissors
- Water
- Super glue
- Paper towels

Background

One common threat to sea turtles is trash that ends up in the ocean. Trash in the ocean is referred to as **marine debris**. Plastic bags in the ocean can look surprisingly like jellyfish (jellies), which many animals like to eat including sea turtles. Because sea turtles cannot digest plastic, the bags create a blockage in their digestive system and sometimes the turtles do not survive.

Instructions

Pre-lesson discussion: Ask students about their favorite food. Tell them that leatherback sea turtles love to eat jellies. Then, ask if they can think of anything that might make them sick if they eat it. They may get sick if they eat too much candy, are allergic to something, or consume poisonous materials. Ask if they can think of anything that might make a sea turtle sick. Explain that sea turtles sometimes mistake plastic bags for jellies and eat them. Ask if plastic bags are naturally found in the ocean and discuss ways that marine debris ends up in the ocean.

Steps:

1. Remove the label from the plastic bottle.
2. Fill the bottle with water and add a drop or two of blue food coloring.
3. Cut a circle about 8 inches in diameter out of the plastic bag.
4. Place the circle over the top of the bottle, and gently press the center of the circle into the bottle.
5. Pour some water into the well created by the bag.
6. Take a small piece of thread and tie it around the bag just above the top of the bottle. Be sure to leave a little air. This will be the top of the jellyfish. This should create a pocket of air in the section of the bag in the bottle and should leave a circle of plastic on top of the bottle as well.

7. Next, you'll make the tentacles. Start making slits in the bag by cutting from the outside edge in toward the center.
8. Once you've gone all the way around making many thin pieces, trim some pieces so they're shorter and keep some longer. Thin it out so there are fewer tentacles.
9. When you're done cutting, press the plastic all the way into the bottle and top it off with some more water.
10. Screw the cap on tightly and gently turn the bottle upside down.
11. Watch the jellyfish float to the top of the bottle as you turn the bottle over.
12. For young children, superglue the cap onto the bottle so it does not open.

Follow-up discussion: Review how plastic bags can look like jellies in the water and talk about ways to keep plastic bags out of the ocean. Some ideas include using **reusable** bags instead of getting plastic bags, packing lunch in reusable containers instead of plastic bags, making sure trash gets thrown away or recycled, and picking up trash off the ground.

Vocabulary

Marine Debris: trash that ends up in the ocean such as plastic.

Reusable: able to be used again or more than once.

Extension

If your students enjoyed this activity and would like to get more involved, plan a beach cleanup day and make a Trash Talking Turtle to educate others. For information about the Trash Talking Turtle, visit:

<https://trashtalkingturtles.wordpress.com/>