



ORGANISER SHEET 1 | EVENT OVERVIEW

River and Beach Clean-up Action Plan

A practical guide for schools | Rivers and coastal beaches | EU4Blue

Plan a supervised litter collection on approved, accessible ground beside a river or on a beach. Students investigate local litter, document their findings and propose one prevention measure. Choose the relevant river and coastal checks below and adapt the plan to local conditions.

Start with a clear purpose

A clean-up removes litter from a specific place; it does not solve pollution by itself. Connect the event to ocean literacy by exploring how litter can move through waterways towards the sea. Do not assume that every item collected would otherwise have reached the ocean.

Your event at a glance

School and class or group _____

Lead teacher and school contact _____

Site type: RIVER / BEACH Place: _____

Date: _____ Reserve date: _____

Departure and return times: _____

Meeting point and exact site location: _____

Participant number: _____ Supervising adults: _____ Age range: _____

Collection boundary and accessible base point: _____

Transport and approved return arrangements: _____

Waste partner and confirmed collection point: _____

Who takes responsibility

Role	Responsibility	Name
Lead teacher	Approval, local checks, supervision and final go/no-go decision	_____
Safety and first-aid lead	Site assessment, briefing, emergency arrangements	_____
Waste and equipment lead	Supplies, waste categories and confirmed disposal	_____
Student team leads	Buddy groups, tally sheets and reporting concerns to staff	_____
Inclusion and communication lead	Accessible roles, clear information and photo arrangements	_____

Student roles support the event; they do not replace adult supervision. Agree staffing with school leadership for the site, ages and support needs. Use the applicable school-visit procedures and a site-specific risk assessment; this guide does not replace them.



ORGANISER SHEET 2 | PREPARATION

Work backwards from the event

Three to four weeks before

- ☐ Agree the learning purpose, date, class groups and event lead with school leadership. Obtain the school's required approval.
- ☐ Choose a manageable site and visit it. Define the safe collection area, excluded areas, accessible paths, toilets and a base away from the water.
- ☐ Contact the land manager or local authority. Confirm access, any permission needed and nature-protection restrictions.
- ☐ Decide whether to join a local river or beach clean-up group or organise a school event. Agree responsibilities with any partner; participation in a campaign does not replace school approval.

Two weeks before

- ☐ Agree waste arrangements with the local waste service: accepted categories, bags, safe handling of unusual finds, pickup location, date and contact. Obtain confirmation before the event. [1]
- ☐ Complete the site-specific risk assessment and supervision plan. Plan travel, road crossings, first aid and the response to a missing participant.
- ☐ Ask about access and support needs through the school's usual confidential process. Arrange equivalent roles and any necessary individual support.
- ☐ Inform students and families. Use the school's required consent and emergency-contact procedures. Handle photo permissions separately from participation.
- ☐ Confirm equipment, supplies and costs. Prepare participation certificates with the school name, event title, date and authorised signatory. Use participants' names accurately.

One week before

- ☐ Allocate adults to named groups and zones. Arrange a buddy system, headcount points and the stop signal.
- ☐ Give a short lesson on litter pathways. Let students select a question, such as "Which categories are most common in our approved area?"
- ☐ Prepare tally sheets and a route sketch showing boundaries, base, toilets, safe exit and the emergency access point.

One to two days before and again on arrival

- ☐ Check official weather warnings, local flood or coastal notices, access restrictions and site conditions. At tidal sites, confirm local tide times, heights and a safe return window. Apply the cancellation criteria on p. 3. [3]
- ☐ Reconfirm waste pickup and equipment. Send meeting time, clothing guidance and any changes through the school's agreed channel.
- ☐ Recheck the route and brief all adults. Record the final decision; if the site is unsuitable, use the pre-approved alternative.

Alternative: a supervised school-ground litter audit or an indoor prevention workshop. Assess any substitute outdoor location before use; do not move the group to an unchecked riverbank or beach.



ORGANISER SHEET 3 | SAFETY AND INCLUSION

Set boundaries before collecting

Site decision and adult checks

- ☐ RIVERS: exclude the water's edge, steep or slippery banks, groynes, jetties and unstable ground. Currents and ship-generated waves can be hazardous even where water looks calm. [2]
- ☐ BEACHES: check tides, waves and local advice. Set a latest return time before routes could be cut off. Exclude surf zones, cliffs, rock platforms, mudflats and tidal crossings. Keep a safe landward exit open throughout. [3]
- ☐ Adults can supervise all groups. Mark boundaries and a site-specific buffer from water. Confirm accessible paths, toilets, handwashing and a rest area. Set a safe base and exit; no generic distance can replace the site assessment.
- ☐ Cancel, postpone or relocate for unsafe water levels, tides, surf, weather, ground, access or supervision. Stop if conditions deteriorate. Tide information source: _____ Latest safe return: _____

Decision: GO / CHANGE / POSTPONE Time: _____

Lead teacher: _____ Reason or changes: _____

Rules to read aloud to students

- 1 Stay with your buddy and in your adult's area. Never enter the water, climb structures or reach over banks or rocks for litter.
- 2 Wear gloves and sturdy closed shoes with grip. Use a litter picker where possible; gloves do not make sharp items safe.
- 3 Collect only safe, identifiable litter. Leave needles, glass, chemicals, batteries, dead animals, suspicious containers and possible ammunition untouched. Alert an adult and keep others away.
- 4 Do not open containers, compress bags or reach into them. Ask for help before a bag becomes heavy.
- 5 Leave seaweed, shells, driftwood and other natural material in place. Avoid dunes, nests, reed beds and wildlife; respect people's belongings and living spaces.
- 6 Eat and drink only in the clean break area. Remove gloves and wash hands with soap and water before eating and after collecting. Report injuries promptly.

Emergency response

Stop work, alert the lead adult and move the group to the safe base. In an emergency, call the local emergency service, give the exact location and follow instructions. Do not enter the water to attempt a rescue. For suspected ammunition, stay away and alert emergency services. Confirm the local number and coastal rescue arrangements before departure; 112 applies in the EU.

Local emergency number / rescue service: _____

First-aid lead and mobile: _____

Emergency location and vehicle access: _____

School backup contact: _____

All students can contribute through safe collection, accessible tallying, equipment records, mapping or a school-based communication task. No one should need to disclose health information publicly or enter a difficult area to participate.



ORGANISER SHEET 4 | EVENT DAY

Run the clean-up together

Example: 09:00–11:30 on site, plus travel. Adjust to the group, conditions and any tidal window. Finish early enough for a safe return; do not extend collecting to complete the timetable.

Time	Activity	Lead action
09:00–09:15	Arrival and equipment	Headcount; check clothing, group lists and site conditions.
09:15–09:30	Safety and mission briefing	Show boundaries, base, stop signal and reporting procedure.
09:30–10:15	First collection round	Adults supervise zones; teams tally safe items as collected.
10:15–10:25	Clean break and headcount	Return to base; remove gloves, wash hands, drink and rest.
10:25–10:55	Second collection round	Continue only if conditions remain suitable; respect boundaries.
10:55–11:15	Close collection and record	Adults secure bags at the agreed point; consolidate team logs.
11:15–11:30	Review and departure	Thank participants, check equipment and final headcount.

Equipment checklist

- ☐ Correctly fitting work gloves, litter pickers, suitable bags and spare bags; keep clean supplies separate from filled bags.
- ☐ Sturdy footwear and weather-appropriate clothing; high-visibility clothing where the assessment requires it.
- ☐ First-aid kit, charged phones, group lists, emergency contacts and the site sketch. Keep personal details with responsible staff.
- ☐ Drinking water, handwashing provision, soap, towels and access to toilets; sun or rain protection as needed.
- ☐ Clipboards, pencils, tally sheets and bag labels. Optional: a suitable scale operated by adults without lifting unsafe loads.

Waste handover

Follow the waste partner's instructions. Students must not reopen filled bags to sort or photograph the contents. Keep hazardous finds in place and report them through the agreed route. Leave bags only at the confirmed collection point, clear of public paths and the water; verify collection afterwards.

Waste partner contact: _____ Pickup time: _____

Bag type / sorting instructions: _____

If pickup fails, responsible adult and backup: _____



STUDENT SHEET | COPY ONE PER TEAM

Collect evidence as well as litter

Team code: _____ Adult lead: _____ Date: _____
Approved zone: _____ Start: _____ Finish: _____

Your mission

Record the ordinary litter your team safely collects. Tally each item once, before it goes into the bag; never reopen bags to count. Use the same categories across teams. If something cannot be counted safely, leave it and tell an adult. The goal is careful evidence, not the largest haul.

Category	Tally marks	Total
Plastic packaging and fragments	_____	_____
Paper and cardboard	_____	_____
Metal cans and safe metal packaging	_____	_____
Cigarette ends collected with a picker	_____	_____
Other safe litter	_____	_____
TOTAL ITEMS	Do not count bags as items	_____

Count a separate fragment as one item. Use "other safe litter" for safe items that do not fit; note examples below. Sharp metal, glass and any hazardous item are excluded. This is a simple school audit, not a standardised scientific survey.

Other category examples: _____
Number of collection bags: _____ Approximate fullness: _____
Optional adult-measured net mass: _____ kg / NOT MEASURED
If measured: bag tare removed? YES / NO Wet material noted? _____

Make sense of the result

- 1 Which category was most common? _____
- 2 Calculate its share: category total ÷ all counted items × 100 = _____ %
If no items were counted, write "not applicable".
- 3 Suggest one possible source. What evidence would you need to check it?

- 4 What does your result not tell us about the whole river, beach or ocean?

- 5 Propose one prevention action at school. Name who could lead it and how you would check progress.

Safe reporting only: note an unusual find's location without approaching, touching or publishing sensitive location details. Give the information to your adult lead. No dangerous-find photographs are required.



ORGANISER SHEET 5 | FOLLOW-UP AND SOURCES

Turn one action day into lasting change

Within two working days

- ☐ Confirm waste collection and return borrowed equipment. Record any incidents through the school's procedures.
- ☐ Combine team totals without double-counting bags or items. Keep item counts, bag numbers and measured mass as separate measures; mark estimates clearly.
- ☐ Gather feedback on access, instructions and supervision. Award participation certificates to all participants, including those contributing through accessible or non-collection roles. Record actual participation before issuing them.
- ☐ Share a short, accurate report. Use identifiable photos only through the school's approved permission process; a photograph of equipment or the cleared area is an alternative.

Choose one follow-up commitment

Possible actions: improve bin placement, trial reusable lunch packaging or create an evidence-based litter campaign. Link the choice to your observations without claiming to have proved the origin of the waste.

Chosen action: _____
Responsible person / group: _____
Completion date: _____ Review date: _____
Measure and starting point: _____

Compare conditions fairly: repeat a school-ground audit over a similar area and duration, and note changes in weather or use. Do not convert litter totals into claims about wildlife saved, health benefits or plastic prevented from reaching the ocean without evidence.

Copy and adapt this invitation

Join our school [river / beach] clean-up on [date], from [time] to [time]. Meet at [exact location] for supervised litter collection on land. Wear sturdy closed shoes and suitable clothing, and bring drinking water. [Equipment arrangements.] Accessible and non-collection roles are available. All participants receive a certificate of participation. Contact [school contact] about participation or support needs. Changes will be confirmed through [channel].

Copy and adapt this results statement

On [date], [number] students and [number] adults took part in our school [river / beach] clean-up at [location]. We counted [number] safely collected items and handed over [number] bags to [waste partner]. [Optional verified net mass.] The most frequent category was [category]. These observations describe our collection area and time, not the whole river, coast or ocean. Our next step is [action], led by [group], with a review on [date].

Sources and local planning checks

- [1] RhineCleanUp. General clean-up planning guidance. <https://www.rhinecleanup.org/en/news/in-10-schritten-zum-cleanup>
- [2] DLRG. Dangers in flowing waters. <https://www.dlrg.de/informieren/freizeit-im-wasser/gefahren/fliessende-gewaesser/>
- [3] RNLI. Tides and tidal cut-off. <https://rnli.org/water-safety/know-the-risks/tides>

Check current local school procedures, permissions, protected areas, weather, water levels, tides and waste-service instructions. These school collection rules exclude sharp and hazardous items. At beaches, follow local conservation advice about natural shoreline material.

Last visited: 13 October 2026.