

Underwater cleanups are a great way to help protect the marine environment. There are some special considerations when cleaning up under water, especially in fragile coral reef environments. Please follow these simple guidelines to avoid damage to fragile coral reefs.

PLANNING THE DIVE

- Always dive with a buddy and be sure to check equipment and divers' signals beforehand.
- Make sure underwater conditions and weather are suitable for diving to ensure safety for divers and for underwater organisms.

GEARING UP

In addition to normal dive gear, divers will need:

- Mesh sacks.
- Gloves for protection from rubbish and sharp objects.
- Shears or scissors for cutting fishing line and tin cans.

DIVE PROTOCOL

- Work slowly and carefully.
- Dive in a head-down position to avoid making contact with the bottom.
- 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 with gloves on while another holds the mesh sack.
- Place glass, needles and hooks inside other garbage for safety.
- Never try to remove anything that cannot be easily lifted such as tires or car batteries.

CLEANUP TARGETS

- Plastics, especially plastic bags.
- Cloth items or rice sacks.
- Fishing line, netting, and broken lobster pots or fish traps.
- Batteries, bottles without marine growth, and tin cans.
- Cigarette butts and bottle caps.



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.

WHAT TO REMOVE—AND WHAT TO LEAVE

Do your best not to remove articles that have already been incorporated into the reef and are helping to support life.

Check it before you bag it

- Make sure nothing is living in or on each item before removal.
- Do not remove bottles that are covered in growth.
- Cut open tin cans to make sure there is nothing inside.
- Hold cups or cans close to sandy parts of the sea bed and shake out sand or silt.



What to leave

- 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.
- Heavy items—never use your buoyancy control device to lift heavy objects.
- Metal drums and containers which might contain hazardous materials.



Plastic fishing line

- Never try to pull fishing line free. Cut and remove it in sections to avoid damaging organisms growing around it.
- Use shears or scissors rather than a knife.
- Wind the line around an object or hand to control it.



RECORDING THE RESULTS

Document everything that is collected so that its origin can be identified and pollution problems tackled at the 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.