

## PLASTIC: Read and Understand.



In the late 1800 an American inventor called Wesley Hyatt created the first plastic material. Since then, plastic has been used in many different ways and for many different purposes.

Plastic is a very strong material, but at the same time is light. It is very resistant to weathering, and it is very versatile. This means that it can adapt to many different purposes; it is used in many parts of machines, to make furniture, toys, carrier bags, bag packs, and many other things.

But plastic is made from petrol. As you probably know already, petrol is a non-renewable natural resource, which is used for many different purposes, the main one being as fuel for vehicles. Being non-renewable means that one day there will be no more petrol left.

In Spain, we use around 15 million plastic bottles every day. It seems wise to use these bottles over and over again, so we don't have to use up more petrol.

This is why recycling plastic has become part of our daily routine over the past few decades.

Another reason why plastic is recycled is of course the environment. Plastic that is not recycled ends up in a landfill, where it lies with the rest of the rubbish. Landfills are huge hills of waste where rubbish of all kinds is kept. This rubbish is burned, or buried, and is highly polluting. Some of this rubbish will decompose, but plastic won't.

So now let's take a close look at how the recycling process works.

The cycle begins when you buy a product in a plastic bottle, such as washing up liquid, shampoo, a drink, or laundry detergent.

When the bottle is empty, you wash it thoroughly, and take it to the recycling yellow bin. It is very important that the bottle is free from any remains of the product it previously contained otherwise it won't be suitable for recycling.

The yellow bin is then emptied into a truck and all the bottles are taken to a recycling factory.

Once in the factory, all the bottles are sorted into different types of plastic, to be recycled separately. Plastic bottles are made from three main types of plastic. Look for numbers 1, 2, or 3 inside a triangle on the outside of your plastic bottles.

Then the sorted plastic is washed again and shredded into small flakes. These flakes are melted down at high temperature in a special furnace, and new plastic items are created. The new plastic items will then reach the supermarket, and the cycle begins again.

## ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS

1. What is plastic made of? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. What is a non-renewable resource? \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. What is a landfill? \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. How are the plastic bottles sorted in the Recycling factory? \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. List some plastic objects that we use in our daily lives. \_\_\_\_\_  
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6. What happens after the bottles have been sorted in the factory? \_\_\_\_\_  
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7. What do you think could happen if we didn't recycle any plastic bottles? \_\_\_\_\_  
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8. Aproximately how many plastic bottles are used in Spain every day? \_\_\_\_\_  
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9. What are some properties of plastic? \_\_\_\_\_  
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10. What do you think a furnace is? \_\_\_\_\_  
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