

**BBC**  
**breathing**  
**places**



**explore**  
**the**  
**shore**



**pocket guide**

**BBC Breathing Places is a major BBC Learning campaign to inspire and motivate you to create and care for nature-friendly green spaces where you live.**

Getting out and enjoying nature can have great benefits for you and there are lots of exciting ways you can get involved.

**Go wild with Breathing Places at:**  
[bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces](http://bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces)

**“From beachcombing and rockpooling to snorkelling and diving, exploring the UK’s coastline and beaches is a brilliant way to engage with nature.”**

**Kate Humble**

*BBC’s Autumnwatch presenter*



# “Oh, we do like to be beside the seaside!”

Summer is the perfect time to explore beaches.

On **muddy shores**, you'll find cockles and lugworms galore. Seabirds and wading birds flock to these areas to feast on the abundant food.

On **sandy shores**, you'll see the coiled sand casts of hidden worms, and all sorts of seashells, from razor-shells to scallops.

On **shingle shores**, you'll find beautiful plants like the sea poppy and sea holly toughing it out on the stones.

On **rocky shores**, you'll be bowled over by the sheer variety of life, from barnacles and starfish to anemones and crabs.

But make sure you don't get caught out by the tide (look for tide times on the internet, or call the local Tourist Information Centre), avoid muddy areas and keep well away from the bottom of cliffs.

# Beachcombing

The sea casts up an intriguing mix of natural and man-made objects.

Get children involved by asking them to find: something rough, something smooth, something dry, something slippery, something white, something brown, something hard, something soft, something that smells of the sea, something from a plant, something that was a home, something that's of no use in nature, something that's been changed by the sea, something that makes a sound and something lovely.

Who knows where it will lead? In spring 2008, three children beachcombing on the Yorkshire coast found a gigantic woolly mammoth's tusk more than 12,000 years old!

Try not to disturb any living wildlife in your hunt, and be careful not to touch dead animals, and dangerous items such as syringes and chemical drums.

# Who left this behind?

Here are just a few things you might find:

**Common whelk egg case or 'sea wash balls'** –

In olden days sailors washed with them.

**Cuttlebone** – The internal shell of the cuttlefish (which is a cousin to the octopus and squid).

Acts as a built-in buoyancy aid.

**Mermaid's purse** – The egg cases of rays (with curved 'horns' at the corners) and cat sharks (with curly wurlly tendrils).

**Sand hopper or 'beach flea'** – This shrimp lives in rotting seaweed and helps break it down.

**Seaweed** – A pongy but important habitat. Have a rummage and you'll find it's buzzing with life.

**Shark's tooth** – Fossilised shark's teeth millions of years old are washed out of the cliffs at many sites around the UK coast.



# Rockpooling

Puddles of seawater left behind when the tide retreats, rockpools contain lots of sea creatures and are great places to explore.

What you'll need:

- A white or pale-coloured plastic tray or bucket
  - A seashore identification guide (try pages 6–7 of this booklet to get you started)
  - Clear plastic pots or bug jars with magnifying lids (optional)
  - A small net (optional)
1. Choose a pool small enough for you to reach into the middle with your arm or net.
  2. Stay near the edge, but don't stand *in* it. Try not to cast your shadow over the pool.
  3. First, just look. Once you disturb the water, creatures may hide.
  4. Fill your tray with water from the pool, find a stable place to put it and start transferring in the creatures you catch.

5. Most small animals can be safely picked out by hand if you're gentle. Hermit crabs and snails, like winkles and whelks, may even come out of their shells if left alone.
6. Use a small net to scoop up fast-moving critters like fish and prawns. Take care not to disturb the bottom of the pool and let creatures swim out of your net on their own.
7. For a really close-up view, temporarily pop creatures into a bug jar with some seawater.
8. Gently push seaweed fronds aside and carefully lift up rocks to look for creatures underneath. Don't prise creatures out of crevices or remove those that are stuck to rocks (eg sea anemones).
9. When finished, return everything, including water, to the pool and replace upturned rocks to their original position.



Rockpool

bingo



Why not see how many of these you can identify?



**Barnacles** – Glued to rocks, barnacles build protective shells, then at high tide, they open a hatch and poke out their feathery legs to catch drifting food.



**Bladderwrack** – A brown seaweed with pairs of gas bladders that float it up towards the sunlight when the tide is in.



**Seen**



**Seen**



**Common mussel** – Mussels can live for 15 years. Look for the nylon-like threads that hold them to the rocks like a tent's guy ropes.



**Common starfish** – A mussel's worst enemy, starfish pull mussel shells open and slurp out their insides!



**Seen**



**Seen**



**Green sea urchin** – This little urchin is a camouflage expert, covering itself with pieces of weed and shells to hide from predators.



**Limpet** – This snail protects itself from drying out at low tide by sucking very strongly onto the rocks. Don't try to remove limpets, as you'll hurt them.



**Seen**



**Bingo!**

# Do One Thing

## **Fancy trying other beach-related activities? What about these:**

### **Go on a guided beach safari or guided snorkel**

Lots of organisations, including the National Trust, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and The Wildlife Trusts run seashore events all year round. Also look out for National Marine Week in August.

### **Take a boat trip**

Keep your eyes peeled for marine mammals and seabirds. Depending on where you live you could spot anything from a grey seal to a kittiwake. And if you are really lucky, you might even see a whale, dolphin or basking shark.

### **Clean a beach**

Either organise your own beach-cleaning event or attend one arranged by an organisation such as the Marine Conservation Society.

## **Create a shingle garden**

If you live near the coast, create a haven for native seashore life by planting yellow-horned sea poppy, sea holly, sea beet and other shingle-loving plants.

## **Choose sustainable seafood**

Only buy seafood that has been harvested without damaging the environment.

## **Buy environmentally-friendly products**

Help keep our beaches and seas clean by choosing detergents and garden treatments that are kind to the environment.

For more details regarding these and other ideas, check out: [\*\*bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces\*\*](http://bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces)



**do  
one  
thing**

For more ideas of what you can  
do for nature, why not check out  
other Do One Thing activities at:

**[bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces](http://bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces)**

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