
Detecting, sensibilization and measuring microplastics in the environment: a guidebook of practical activities for primary and secondary schools

Vinyet Baqués^{*1}, Irene Cantarero^{†1}, Elisabet Playà¹, María Lería², and Anna Travé¹

¹Universitat de Barcelona – Facultat de Ciències de la Terra Universitat de Barcelona Martí i Franqués s/n 08028 Barcelona, Spain

²Universitat de Barcelona – Facultat de Belles Arts. C/Pau Gargallo s/n 934034088, Spain

Abstract

Plastic pollution is so pervasive that it has become a severe threat to natural ecosystems, biodiversity, and human health. The integration of plastics issues into the educational system of both primary and secondary schools will increase in early age the awareness about such serious environmental problem. Our main objective is to empower students to use experiments and a collaborative work to address the impact of microplastics on Earth's environments, wildlife and even their health, with the study of table salts, a simple, daily, cheap and common product (which was treated as gold in past centuries).

This guidebook offers different activities concerning microplastics in table salts as well as the following theoretical aspects: (a) General scientific aspects, on how to set up an experiment to resolve a scientific hypothesis; (b) Technological aspects, related to the origin and typology of plastics; (c) Chemical aspects such as chemical reactions (salt dissolution, saturation of a solution), or the importance of a good design of the laboratory protocol to avoid contamination during sample handling; (d) Geological aspects, such as the formation of salt as sediment and evaporite rock or why salt contains particles that are not salt. Moreover, the activities embrace four of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): 3 (Good health and well-being), 4 (Quality Education), 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) and 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).

The activities proposed in this guide can also be used in extracurricular activities since experimentation at different levels is proposed, using everything from laboratory material to material that we usually have at home. For this reason, different activities and protocols have been carried out according to the age of the student and the environment where the activities will be carried out, from the common classroom to the laboratory.

Keywords: Earth sciences, Geology, Primary School, Secondary School, Table Salts.

*Speaker

†Corresponding author: i.cantarero@ub.edu