

Tips to help you hunt - The Great Nurdle Hunt

How to do a Nurdle Hunt

Hunting for nurdles is fun and taking part is easy. By joining in you are helping to end plastic pellet pollution. All you need to do is tell us how many nurdles you found, where you found them, how long you were hunting and how many people took part.

- 1 Head to your chosen location in October
- 2 Count and record number of nurdles
- 3 Record the number of people hunting
- 4 Record how long you were hunting (minimum 10 minutes)
- 5 Submit data online at www.nurdlehunt.org.uk

Note: We encourage you to submit your findings even if you don't find any nurdles. A nurdle hunt that found 0 nurdles is important information too!

We want to know how many nurdles were on the beach, not how many you were able to collect. If there are too many to count, give us your best estimate. Our largest category is >1000 nurdles!

Safety First

Heading to the beach is often a relaxing and easy day out. But don't ever underestimate the sea; waves, tides and currents can be strong, especially in stormy conditions. Follow these helpful tips to stay safe:



A well prepared nurdle hunter, with waterproof jacket, gloves, and equipment. Credit: Melanie Pyne

- If you're going alone or in small groups, tell someone where you are going and when you plan to be back.
- If you're planning a hunt in a place you haven't been before, scout out the area and make sure you can access it safely at the time you wish to hunt.
- Check the tide times so you don't get caught out or cut off from the beach exit. The best time to search for nurdles is after high tide!
- Check weather in advance of your nurdle hunt and prepare appropriately – i.e. wear sensible clothing. Regardless on where you are in the world, we would suggest wearing something sturdy on your feet to avoid plastic/sharp rocks to hurt your feet whilst rummaging for nurdles!
- If you're doing a group event, choose a sensible meeting place, somewhere that is easily accessible (close to public transport links and ramps leading to the beach area, close to your hunt location).
- An important addition to this year's safety considerations is Covid-19. Nurdle hunting can be a Covid friendly activity, it is outside, people can socially distance, we advise you to wear gloves and wash your hands thoroughly anyway when handling nurdles. But please only part take in a nurdle hunt if it is safe to do so and please always follow your local/council guidelines on Covid-19 rules.

Remember: taking part is voluntary and entirely at your own risk. We can't take responsibility for your safety, but we want to help you keep safe as possible which is why we have put together this list. But remember it is not exhaustive.

Step by step guide

Read the steps below and/or [check out our video](#) for a clear idea of what you need to do.

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Before you start

1. Consider any equipment you might need. A suggested [equipment list is on page 4](#) of this document.
2. Check the tide times and head to your location after high tide.
3. Find the strandline (usually a line of seaweed and other debris left over from the last high tide) and note where the back of the beach is. **Nurdles will often be in the most recent strandline and/or the back of the beach in the oldest strandline/vegetation (see figure 1).**
4. Scout out the section of beach you want to survey – You don't need to survey the whole beach. If your beach is big, you may want to identify a stretch of the beach where you would like to survey.
5. Using your [recording sheet](#) fill in the bits of information you can:
 - Number of volunteers taking part
 - Start time / Date
 - Location



Fig 1. Nurdles in strandline (Image Credit: Jace Tunnell, Corpus Christi, Texas, USA.)

Now you're ready

6. Get nurdle hunting - Walk the length of your chosen area looking for nurdles. **Remember nurdles are very small and sometimes tricky to see, so take your time and get close to the ground.**
7. Use your recording sheet to tally the nurdles you find. If there are too many nurdles to count, please visually estimate the amount you have found. One way to do this is to count what you find in a 1m square and multiply that by the length of the patch of nurdles (pace out the length along the beach). Remember our maximum category to report is >1000 nurdles, but if you find more than that, please include your estimate in the 'any other information' box.

Remember:

8. Take photos! Share your story on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and/or our [Facebook page](#). See our [social media toolkit](#) for guidance. **TAG US!**
9. Please also remember – **you don't have to collect the nurdles you find.** The most important bit of information for this survey is the number of nurdles present on the beach. Nurdles adsorb toxic pollutants from the ocean. So, if you do choose to collect and remove them, please make sure you use appropriate equipment or protective clothing, refer to our [equipment list](#) for suggestions on what to use. We would also insist that you wash your hands after touching nurdles or other marine litter when your survey is complete.

When finished:

10. Record the time you finished your survey.
11. Record the number of nurdles found.
12. **Wash your hands**
13. **Submit your results!** Please submit your results to our website as soon as possible using the online form: <https://www.nurdlehunt.org.uk/take-part/submit-your-finds.html>

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Getting others involved

Some of you might be interested in setting up and organising a Nurdle Hunt for others to join in? Watch our video on how to organise a nurdle hunt:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFzqJ8HEf3w>

More top tips!

WHERE TO LOOK

Tide line: The sea washes all sorts of marine debris up onto the shore. Nurdles are washed up with them onto the high tide mark where they get trapped in the strand line, this is usually the best place to start looking.

Paths: Look on sheltered tracks and paths at the edge of the beach. This is where nurdles could have been blown or swept to during very high tides or storms. (See figure 2).

Headlands: Beach litter often accumulates near the headlands of bays or towards a corner of a bay. (See figure 3)



Fig 2: Nurdles found on a path (image credit: Anne Sayer, Hayling Island, Southampton)

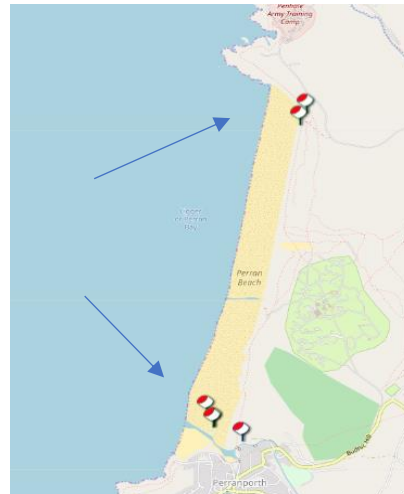


Fig. 3 Nurdles collecting at the edge of a bay or near the headland. Nurdle submissions shown on The Great Nurdle Hunt's [Nurdle Map](#).

Amongst other plastic: Search for nurdles amongst accumulations of other small pieces of plastic on the beach.

Vegetation: Nurdles are very light and can be blown by strong winds onto the shore, from the sea. They often get caught in the base of the grasses and rocks at the top of the beach.

Sandy Beach: It is easier to hunt on sandy beaches rather than stony or pebbly beaches (that's not to say you won't still find nurdles on these types of beaches).

KNOW YOUR NURDLES

Nurdles are hard to spot! They are very small, and their colour often blends in with the sand or can be covered up by seaweed, shells and blades of grass. So, when on your hunt slow down and get close to the ground. Take your time.

Colour: Nurdles can vary in colour from black to blue, yellow to white. Often pellets are clear or white but they become yellow over time, so keep your eyes peeled for all different types.

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Size and Shape: Between 2-5mm in diameter, often shaped like a lentil, these pesky pellets are small! The image below shows the variation in different types of nurdles.



Download our [Nurdle ID Chart](#) to help separate true nurdles from other beach debris!

BIOBEADS

You may also come across another type of pellet which tend to be black-grey in colour and are usually wrinkly – these are called biobeads. They are very similar to nurdles but are used by a different industry. They are also plastic but are used as an aeration aid in water treatment. Let us know if you find these pellets too!

The photo opposite should give you an idea of the different types of biobeads you might come across.



Image Credit: Jodie Harper, Crooklets Bay (Bude) Nov 2018

EQUIPMENT LIST (suggested)

If you're planning to handle or collect nurdles, below is a suggested kit list:



Gloves and container used by a nurdle hunter Image Credit: Extinction rebellion Romsey – Nurdles, Chessel Bay Nature Reserve

- Hand sanitizer – useful to use after handling nurdles, before washing hands.
- Thin gloves – to protect your hands from excessive contact with marine debris. If using plastic gloves, please dispose of them correctly.
- Plastic or metal tweezers – to remove individual nurdles.
- Sieve – to separate nurdles from the sand.
- Bucket/heavy duty bin bags – To collect nurdles and other rubbish or marine debris.
- Old jam jar (to keep the nurdle you find and spread the word of plastic pellet pollution).

Note: we realise that we have suggested several plastic items. If you already own alternative items, we don't recommend purchasing this for a single event. We would always recommend borrowing equipment where possible.



METHODS OF REMOVAL

Sieves:

Sieves of all shapes and sizes can be useful on a sandy beach. A mesh bin can be used for industrial scale removal (image far right courtesy of Rob Arnold)

Image credit: Niamh M, Hartlepool



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Flotation:

Many (though not all) nurdles and microplastic will float in water, so a quick way to separate them from sand can be to simply put the collected nurdles, sand and debris in a bucket of water and scoop off the plastic fragments from the top placing them in another bucket.



Floating nurdles (left and right) plus a sinking yellow airgun pellet (right)

WHAT TO DO WITH COLLECTED NURDLES

Although we don't require people to pick up nurdles for the survey. If you do choose to remove them, we have a few suggestions for you as to what to do with them after:

- **Put them on display** – store your nurdles in a jar and use them to raise awareness. Nurdles are easier to explain to people when you have a good example!
- **Contribute to science** – some scientists in Japan have been studying toxic chemicals associated with nurdles. You can send samples of your pellets to their lab to contribute to this work. Find out more – www.pelletwatch.org. Please check the requirements of how they want nurdles to be handled before sending them directly.
- **Send to an artist** – Check out artists in your local area/country who may do work with nurdles. An artist we can recommend is Maarten Vanden Eynde www.maartenvandeneinde.com/, he is creating a growing artwork called Check mate, which visualises the scale of plastic pollution using a chess board and nurdles. Please consider sending your nurdles to Maarten after you have completed your hunt.
- **Bin securely** – Unfortunately nurdles can't be recycled so if you do decide to throw them away, sometimes the best option is to fill something sturdy with a lid so they can't escape. Or put them in multiple plastic bags (so the bag doesn't split and spill nurdles into the environment on the way to landfill). Not ideal, we know, but that's why we want to [stop them entering our oceans in the first place](#).