

## MICROPLASTICS: A CAMPAIGNER'S GUIDE



Microplastic pollution is one of the most ubiquitous threats to our natural world

### Microplastics include...

Microbeads? Nurdles? Microplastics? It's all the same thing, right? Wrong!

It's time to get to know the lingo, because while it's true that all microbeads are microplastics, not all microplastics are microbeads. It is important that in discussions with businesses and policymakers you are clear in your approach: the only way to tackle the unnecessary use of microplastic ingredients is to ensure that **all solid microplastic ingredients are removed from all products that end up being washed down the drain**. This includes personal care products, cosmetics and cleaning products (both industrial and domestic types).

### It's all about the chemistry...

Another top tip is to brush up on your chemistry. You need to know your polymers from your co-polymers and cross-polymers. It's important to understand how the chemical formation of different polymers affects their properties and uses in consumer products.

Solid plastic particulates (regardless of polymer type) are known to have a serious and adverse impact on marine biodiversity and the health of the environment. Responsible retailers and manufacturers can reduce this impact by eliminating solid plastic ingredients from their products.

**Think P.** Often, discussions about ingredient removals are centred around Polyethylene (PE) because this is the most commonly-used plastic ingredient. But there are four other 'Ps' that you should also be aware of (and one little N!). These are: Polypropylene (PP), Polyethylene terephthalate (PET), Polymethyl methacrylate (PMMA), Polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) and Nylon.

### 'Biodegradable'? Really?

Be aware that introducing 'biodegradable' plastic alternatives is not the answer to tackling this problem. Very few biodegradable plastics will fully break down in the marine environment. Instead, introducing materials that partially break down, but don't disappear, will only add to the microplastic pollution epidemic.

### Sharing knowledge

Develop good working relationships with other campaigners and share your knowledge. The more informed the community is, the better it can target companies and use campaigning tools to get real results. There are lots of resources already available through AMDI, CSIRO, SIMS and Fauna & Flora International (FFI). Using these resources will save you both time and money, and will ensure a consistent message from all campaigners.



Microbeads are found in many common products



Microplastics come in many forms



Polyethylene is not the only type of microplastic

## The devil is in the detail

When discussing the wording to be used in a brand's public commitment to end microplastic use, the following questions might help you pin them down to a clear and meaningful commitment:

1. Does the commitment extend to a company's entire product range, across all territories and into all countries?
2. Have the company's products always been free from microplastic ingredients? If so, will they remain plastic free in the future?
3. Ask the company to state the date by which all products will become free from all solid microplastic ingredients. This is important in cases where existing products need to be reformulated to remove plastic ingredients.
4. Ask the company's permission to make this statement publicly accessible, and share it with the Beat the Microbead coalition.

## Productive relationships are key

Positive working relationships are productive relationships. A clear, constructive and collaborative approach to understanding when manufacturers will phase out microplastic ingredients is the most successful approach.

Always offer to champion any positive news and developments about industry or brand commitments via your social media channels. Be sure to use [@GoodScrub](#) and [@BeatTheBead](#) to share the news globally.

## We are here to help

If you have a question, are unsure about anything, or would like to learn more about efforts underway around the world to tackle this problem, please do drop us a line at [goodscrubguideaustralia@fauna-flora.org](mailto:goodscrubguideaustralia@fauna-flora.org) and we'll be happy to help.

If you have any questions or would like further information please email [goodscrubguideaustralia@fauna-flora.org](mailto:goodscrubguideaustralia@fauna-flora.org)



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