



LITTER LOOKALIKES

Seaweed

When seaweed is dead and has been out of the water for a while, it can turn **white or translucent**, resembling plastic! If you want to test if it's plastic or not, pick it up with gloves and take a closer look....

If there are green or brown patches, it is probably **seaweed**. The texture will be slimy if wet, and it is usually quite thick and flexible. It often appears as a strip, like a belt.



Plastic is usually tougher and won't tear apart; alternatively, it might be perished and disintegrate.



HINT: Compare it to something you *know* is seaweed and **feel** the difference!



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Woody Debris

There are lots of things lurking in the strandline (the **line of seaweed and other debris** on the beach which mark the latest high tide). Much of it is natural - but not all of it!

Look twice at some of the sticks, bark or seaweed on the beach. Some of it might actually be the **plastic covering from the bottom of creels** (crab & lobster pots).



HINT: Pick it up with gloves and flip it over. Is there a reddish stain inside? This is **rust** from the metal bars on the base of creels.



The **edges will be ragged** from where they rubbed on the seabed.



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Sea mat

This colony of **tiny marine animals** (known as “zooids”) can often be found growing on the fronds of seaweed - especially kelp. Each animal lives inside a tiny cell. What causes the confusion is that these cells form a structure that looks like man-made **fabric**! Most fabrics now contain plastic.

Fabric?



...Not fabric??



Look closer. Does it look like it is layered on seaweed? It'll be **Sea mat!**

Still confused? Try peeling it off. Fabric is unlikely to stick to seaweed, but Sea mat won't come off easily!



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Egg Cases

You might be familiar with the Common Whelk (a large, carnivorous sea snail) - but you might not recognise its egg capsules. These dry, spongy balls (also called “sea wash balls”) look very strange and are commonly mistaken for litter.

The appearance can be similar to this bubble wrap, but don't be fooled!



Look a little closer. Try to spot the tiny openings in each capsule where the minuscule snails have hatched.

They are usually **greyish in colour**. If yellow, there may still be unhatched eggs inside!



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Quills (Feathers)

You probably think that feather's are unmistakable, but when you remove everything except the quill (shaft) they can be quite misleading. Hollow and white/translucent, they are simple to mistake for a thin straw or cotton bud stick, at a glance.



Feathers will have a pointed end and might have translucent parts.



Look at the ends.
Cotton bud sticks have 2 or 3 tiny ridges on each end.