

Seaweed Investigations

From the ‘wrack line’ to seaweed tossed ashore after a storm, beach walking can yield some fascinating discoveries. Below are a few suggestions as to how you might engage students in the Sensational World of Seaweed!

TIP: Ideally, if possible, consider doing Seaweed investigations as an in-situ field experience by visiting the beach with your students to discover and study what they might find ‘in place’. Bring along some hand-held magnifiers and perhaps cameras. Students might also sketch what they see. If you are collecting seaweed for in-class investigation, be sure to only collect drifted/loose seaweed and do not pull or pick attached plants. It is important to let students know how you are treating these treasures in a responsible and respectful way; ensuring students understand that even ‘dead’ plants are beneficial in the environment and may even be homes to tiny creatures. Remember to compost the seaweed when you’re done.

A Few Ways to Get Started learning about Seaweed:

Direct Observation: Look at seaweed (use magnifiers if available) to identify the parts of the plants: hold fast, stipe, blades, floats. Describe. Take samples and view cellular structure with microscopes. Worksheet: Learn4YourLife Science Activities <https://bit.ly/3EgkjGg>



Land and Ocean Plant Comparisons:

Compare/Contrast and describe. Look at root systems (land-based plants and sea grass, eel grass) and the hold fasts of sea weeds (Algae). What is the same? Different? Learn about how the parts of the plants help them survive in their respective environments.

Seaweed Pressing:

An artistic way to preserve and observe seaweed. The class might even make a seaweed ID book for the school library or make a card to send to local governments to encourage preservation of our local environment or to thank a local non-profit group working to conserve species.

From the SeaCoast Science Center – Sea Weed Pressing Instructions (using easily found materials: paper, card, wax paper). <https://bit.ly/3WyDkKw>



Seaweed Printing: typically involves rinsing, patting dry, flattening and then painting still wet seaweed. IF you are printing with seaweed, please use non-toxic ink or paint and rinse the seaweed before composting.

What is Seaweed ‘good’ for Inquiry:

Have students learn about and consider the benefits of seaweed and other marine plants to the environment; emphasizing a more holistic and Indigenous perspective where we aren’t only valuing HUMAN use of these important plants. Look at how animals (including decomposers) and other plants benefit as well as human uses. This might extend into cooking with seaweed, cultural investigations, etc. Consider: how is the beach or coastline itself impacted? Seaweed is habitat, a food source, carbon sink and oxygenator. What else is it? Consider conservation efforts and needs given increasing human interest in algae. Find out climate change impacts on algae.



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Recommended Resource:
[Pacific seaweeds: a guide to common seaweeds of the West Coast](#)

by Druehl, Louis D; Clarkston, Bridgette, 2016, Updated and expanded edition.