

The Strandline

Before you start:

Check along the strand line for any sharp objects (fishing hooks and glass) and remove.

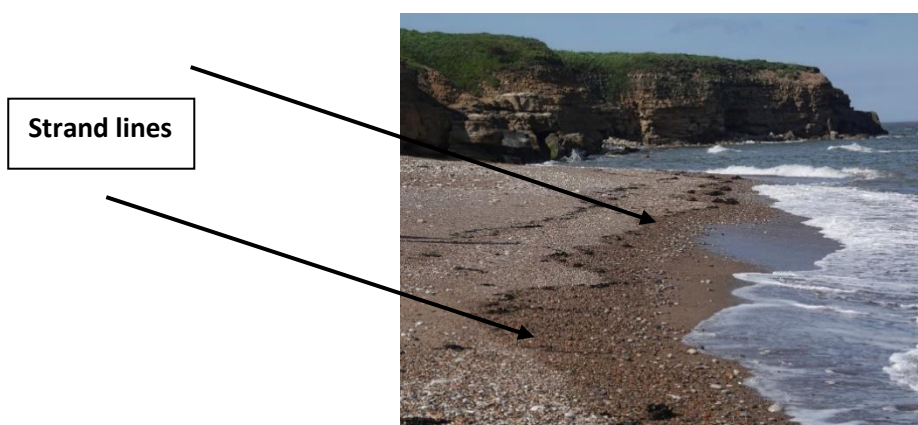
In the winter, the strandline is food for many coastal birds and animals. Try to keep disturbance down to a minimum.

Resources:

- Hand wash
- Sticks- driftwood to move the seaweed
- Strand line detective sheet.
- Litter pickers and sacks
- Container to put your finds in

The strandline is the area on the upper part of the beach where the tide and storms leave behind man-made and natural objects. Sometimes all you see is a black line (coal fragments off the Durham coastline) or a thin line of seaweed. Sometimes after a storm, long, thick piles of rotting seaweed and debris mark the high water mark.

The strandline shows the high water mark at the top of the beach but it is constantly shifting, dependent upon the height of the tide and the onshore wind.



The strandline is the area on the beach, which gives you clues as to what you may find in the surrounding rock pools, sandy beach or the ocean beyond.

Look out for mermaid purses (egg cases of skates, rays and sharks), cuttlefish bones, sea urchins, driftwood, and different types of seaweed, empty sea snail shells and balls of whelk eggs. Unfortunately, mixed in with the natural materials, will be litter: plastic bottles, cans, balloons, crisp packets and fishing line (including hooks). The man-made materials pose a threat not just to the people visiting the beach but also to the wildlife.



Use a piece of driftwood to turn over seaweed and don't forget to put it back where you found it as creatures such as sand hoppers eat rotting seaweed and they are food to other creatures in the food chain such as birds (ringed plover) and mammals.

Check marine litter (fishing buoys, lobster pots) as sometimes creatures attach themselves to this: barnacles, sponges (dead men's fingers) and cat shark eggs.

Questions:

- Can you find the high tide line? How can you tell the sea came up to that point?
- Are there other high tide lines on the beach? Why do you think that is?

Fun learning activities:

What treasures has the sea left behind for us today to find?

- Go on a beach scavenge. Use the strandline detective sheet to identify any 'gifts from the sea' that you can find.
- Make a drift wood monster/creature. All kinds of things are washed up after a winter storm. Use your imagination and see what mythical sea monster you can create using whatever you find on the beach.
- Do a litter pick along the strandline and make the beach a safer place for both wildlife and people.
- When you finish: wash your hands!

Recommended story:

Flotsam: David Weisner