

EI-5265
Ages 6+/Grades 1+

GEOSAFARI® Plankton Net

Warning: Never use the Plankton Net in unsafe water conditions. Always use with adult supervision.

Contents

- 1 Plankton Net with 333 μ (micron) netting with tow rope attachment
- 1 Specimen Bottle with magnifiers and attached cap
- 1 Waterproof Guide

INTRODUCTION

Use your GeoSafari® Plankton Net to capture and observe tiny underwater creatures in both fresh- and saltwater! Explore oceans, ponds, streams, lakes, tide pools—any natural body of water—and then identify the tiny creatures that live there. (Due to purification processes, water from sinks, swimming pools, and hoses will not have any organisms for your net to catch.) Follow the directions below to start exploring the microscopic life in the water around you.

What are Plankton?

Plankton are small organisms (living things) that float or drift in great numbers in bodies of salt- or freshwater. They are an important part of the food chain because many animals eat plankton. Plankton consists of bacteria, protozoa, certain algae, cnidarians, tiny crustaceans, and many other organisms. Plankton are divided into two groups: zooplankton (animals), and phytoplankton (plants). Your GeoSafari® Plankton Net is designed for catching zooplankton.



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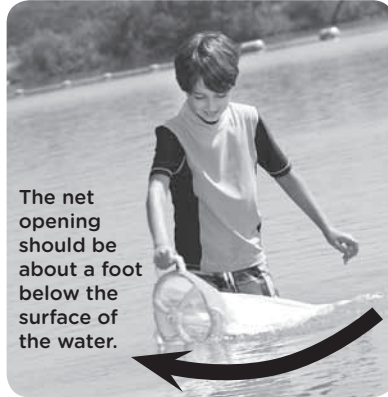


SET UP

Screw the specimen bottle into the tapered end of the net. If you plan to drag your net along a dock or from a boat, you will need a rope (see **Other Ways to Collect Plankton** on the next page for more details).

HOW TO COLLECT PLANKTON

Submerge the entire Plankton Net with the attached specimen bottle into the water. Be sure to hold on tightly to the handle. The net opening should be about a foot below the surface of the water. Use the handle to drag the Plankton Net, with the netting and the attached specimen bottle extended behind it, through the water for at least two minutes. The longer you drag the net in the water, the more plankton you will collect. For the best results, collect your specimen in calm water. Plankton swim away from crashing waves. To drag the net, you can walk forward or even stand still and turn in a circle.



When you're done collecting, lift the netting out of the water—allowing the water and the captured plankton to be funneled down into the specimen bottle. You may find it helpful to dip the netting up and down in the water a couple of times to wash any plankton that may be stuck on the sides into the specimen bottle. Allow any sand to settle at the bottom of the bottle.

To detach and study your catch, carefully unscrew the specimen bottle from the netting and cap it with the attached specimen bottle cap.



OTHER WAYS TO COLLECT PLANKTON

You can stay dry while collecting plankton from a dock or a boat.

Securely tie a rope to the tow rope attachment ring. While standing on a dock, hold onto the rope as you drop the Plankton Net into the water. Hold on tightly as you walk along the dock, dragging the Plankton Net through the water. The net opening should be about a foot below the water's surface. Walk back and forth along the dock for at least two minutes in order to maximize the amount of plankton you collect.



If you have access to a boat, you can also use the rope to drag the net in the water from a moving boat. This is a great way to collect a concentrated plankton sample. Be sure to talk to the boat's driver first, to make sure that the netting doesn't get caught in the boat's motor or propulsion device.



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OBSERVING AND IDENTIFYING YOUR PLANKTON

You may be able to see some larger creatures with the naked eye, but for others you will need the magnified areas of the specimen bottle. Plankton are easiest to see when viewed with a dark surface placed behind the specimen bottle. There is a solid black area on the specimen reference card for you to use when viewing your specimens.

Use the lists of common plankton and larvae included on the waterproof insert to help you identify what you catch.

Your plankton will survive approximately 20-30 minutes in the specimen bottle. The organisms will not survive much longer because they will use up the available oxygen in the water supply. (To keep plankton alive longer in the laboratory, marine biologists use pumps to pump oxygen into the water.)