



Ready for a trip to a marine reserve to study the beach and underwater life?

Biological topics and the new requirements of the curriculum to learn about marine reserves give teachers and students interesting opportunities for education outside the classroom. The escape can be a relief but also an ordeal or challenge for the teacher.

A school trip to any beach involves the extra responsibilities and duties of:

- organising transport
- obtaining parental permission
- collecting travel money
- recruiting sufficient parent helpers to meet the safety requirements of each school's charter

It also requires addressing the issues of:

- a sensible dress code
- ambassadorial behaviour

No disturbing the marine life!

*The Marine Reserves Act is very clear. Marine life must be left in its natural state. This means you, as a teacher, need to ensure your educational activities create as little disturbance as possible. If in any doubt, contact the Department of Conservation
ph: 09 307 9279.*

A pre-visit site inspection by the teacher is needed to evaluate hazards and plan for the children's safety as well as for verifying that planned teaching exercises are feasible. It is important to establish that the biology and ecology of the selected study organisms are as clear on the shore as they are purported to be in a textbook.

No two shores are quite the same and across every beach the physical conditions and community structures of the marine life are extremely variable. Teaching exercises that work, invariably need to be carefully planned for a particular part of a known beach where the study animals or plants are plentiful and the topography easy to understand.

Classes at all levels should be able to collect good information for follow-up lessons in the classroom so long as they are well equipped and the exercises are:

- a. well planned
- b. of limited scope
- c. have outcomes that are already known to the teacher

Collecting information from a marine reserve shore is much more difficult because no specimens can be removed and the wildlife must not be disturbed. This limits studies on site mainly to population counts, size frequency measurements, biodiversity estimation and habitat appreciation, though some simple behavioural investigations may also be possible.