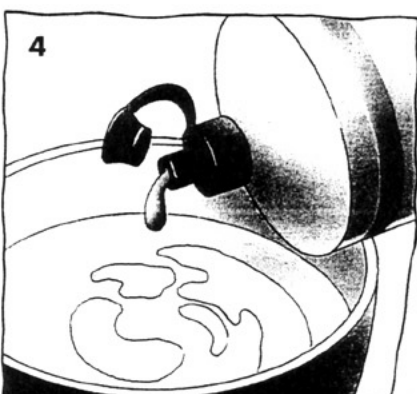
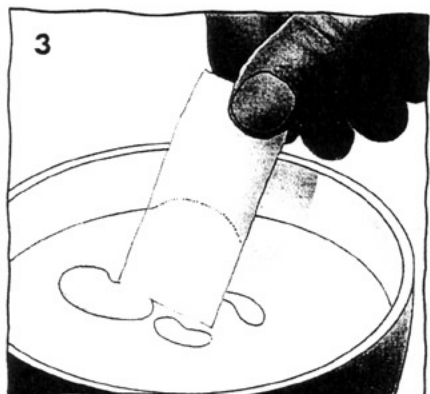


Do it yourself

Do these simple tests to see how oil spills can be removed from water.

1. Fill a bowl with water and pour several drops of cooking oil into it. Watch how the oil floats to the surface in a blob.
2. Stir the oil around with a spoon handle. Try breaking it up and then joining it back together again.



3. Now dip a small piece of white paper into the water where the oil is lying. See how the oil disappears off the surface of the water and the paper gradually changes color.

4. Put a few more drops of cooking oil into the water. Then add a couple of drops of dishwashing detergent and see what happens.



Eye-Spy

Next time it rains, look at the side of the road for puddles with swirling colors of pink, purple, blue, and yellow. These mini oil slicks are made by car oil spreading out over the water's surface.

How It Works

Oil always floats on water. The paper absorbs the oil from the surface of the water, changing color as it does so. In the same way, when a tanker spills oil on the sea, layers of absorbent material are floated on the surface of the water to soak up the oil.

Detergents such as dishwashing liquid break up the blob of oil and spread it out in a thin layer over the surface of the water. Detergents can be used to clean up oil spills at sea. Unfortunately, they can also harm wildlife.