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The collection of drainage samples from active stream channels for geochemical mapping is now a well-established procedure that has readily been adapted for environmental studies. This account details the sampling methods used by the British Geological Survey in order to establish a geochemical baseline for the land area of Great Britain. This involves the collection of stream sediments, waters and panned heavy mineral concentrates for inorganic chemical analysis. The methods have been adapted and used in many different environments around the world. Detailed sampling protocols are given and sampling strategy, equipment and quality control are discussed.