

# Activity: Break it down

When we throw things away, we often don't think about where our rubbish goes and how long it lasts. With each item below, try to work out how long it takes for each item to break down.

## Make it a game!

Write out the times on pieces of paper and put them in different parts of the room. Then, read out each of the items — or put them all in a hat and ask a young person to pick one — and then everyone has to run to the time they think it takes for that item to break down. Three wrong choices and you're out? See how many are left in at the end!

### Time it takes for the item to break down:

1 month

2 years

10 years

20-50 years

80-200 years

450 years

Never!

### Items:



1. Paper bag



2. Crisp packet



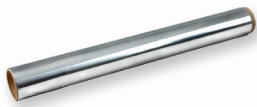
3. Styrofoam cup



4. Fizzy-drink can



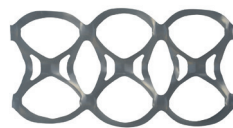
5. Nappies



6. Tinfoil



7. Glass bottle



8. Plastic six-pack holder



9. Sanitary products



10. Banana skin



11. Plastic straw



12. Disposable coffee cup



13. Plastic bottle



14. Rolled up newspaper



15. Apple core



16. Cigarette butt



17. Plastic bag

### Answers:

1 month: ..... paper bag, apple core  
 2 years: ..... banana skin  
 10 years: ..... rolled-up newspaper, cigarette butts  
 20-50 years: ..... plastic straws, plastic bag, fizzy-drink can  
 80-200 years: ..... disposable coffee cup, nappies, crisp packet  
 450 years: ..... plastic bottle, plastic six-pack holder, sanitary products  
 Never: ..... glass bottle, styrofoam cup, tinfoil

## Questions for discussion:

How many did you get right? Thinking about these items — do any of the times surprise you? Why?

### Did you know?



If Henry VIII had drunk water from a plastic bottle and thrown it away, the plastic could still be here now! (But there were no plastic bottles in the 16th century.)