

# How Long Does Trash Last?



In this lesson, students will become aware of how long it takes for selected items to decompose or degarde over time.

## **BACKGROUND:**

Landfills are quickly filling up with trash. Modern landfills must ensure that hazardous liquids are not leached into the soil or groundwater. Many of the items being thrown away could have been reused or recycled. Recycling and reusing will reduce the amount of trash in our landfills, use less energy and help to conserve natural resources.

#### **MATERIALS:**

- Computer
- Paper
- Pencil



### PROCEDURE:

- Brainstorm and list items around the house that the student and other family members wish to research the rate of decomposition.
- Ask the student to guess or hypothesize how many years each item will take to decompose.
- Once they have done this ask the students to rewrite the list in the order according to how many years it will be in a landfill (fastest decomposition to longest decomposition).
- Now have the student research the decomposition rate of each item.
- When that activity is completed, ask the students if they notice any discrepancies.
- Have a discussion as to why the student thought certain items would decompose faster or slower than another andwhat their research actually showed

## **CONCLUSION:**

After completing this activity, have a discussion as a family about ways you can reuse, reduce, or recycle items around the house before throwing away in the trash bin.

Conservation Connection