

# Trash Timeline

recommended age: 5+

## Lesson Inventory:

This lesson is stored in a reusable grocery bag. It includes:

### TIME Cards

1 - 3 months  
1 - 5 years  
1 - 5 years  
1 - 5 years  
30 - 40 years  
120 years  
100 - 150 years  
200 years  
450 years  
500 years  
500 years  
1,000,000 years  
forever

### Pieces of Trash

piece of crumpled paper  
picture of an orange  
cigarette butts (in plastic bag)  
wool sock  
nylon fabric  
six pack holder  
aluminum can  
plastic straw  
disposable diaper  
plastic toothbrush  
plastic water bottle  
glass bottle  
Styrofoam (in plastic bag)

Note: More TIME cards and trash items can easily be added to this lesson. For each new item, create a TIME card using a 3 x 5 inch index card. Write the time it takes the item to decompose in large letters using black sharpie on one side of the card. Write the name of the item in small letters using a pencil on the reverse side of the card.

## Advance Preparation:

If preferred, substitute a fresh fruit or vegetable for the picture of an orange.

## Lesson Steps:

To begin, lay TIME cards on the ground in chronological order.

Students may work individually or in teams of two. Give them each a trash item. Ask them to place the item by the appropriate TIME card (the length of time they think it will take their item to decompose).

Once everyone has placed their trash items, have them flip over the TIME cards to see if they are correct. Incorrect items should then be moved to the correct card.

Discuss student observations and questions.

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## Optional Extension:

Pass around and examine trash items invented to be more biodegradable:

- starch packing peanuts
- compostable candy wrappers
- bamboo toothbrushes
- paper straws
- reusable beeswax food wraps

Discuss what each item replaces:

- Styrofoam packing peanuts
- foil candy wrappers
- plastic toothbrushes
- plastic straws
- aluminum foil, plastic wrap, plastic baggies, plastic food storage containers

## BONUS Ideas!

Fill a kiddie pool with water and let the children squeeze and squish the starch packing peanuts between their fingers until they dissolve!

Take gloves and plastic bags and pick up trash on the Touch of Nature grounds.

Read [Here Comes the Garbage Barge!](#) by Jonah Winter.

Make reusable beeswax food wraps as a craft project.

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