

Answer Key to Decomposition Rates

After completing Activity II: Research the Problem, compare alignment of materials to hypothesized scale number.

Material	Time Frame to Degrade	Decomposition Rate Scale # (4 weeks buried)
Paper	Paper: 2-6 weeks Paper Towels: 2-4 weeks Cardboard: 2 months Waxed Drink Cartons: 2 months	7-10
Glass	1 million years	1
Metal	Tin Cans: 50-100 years Aluminum cans: 8-100 years Heavier bottles (such as hairspray cans): 200-500 years Aluminum Foil: Never	1-4
Plastic	Plastic Bags: 10-1,000 years Monofilament Fishing Line: 600 years Plastic Straws: 200 years Nylon Fishing Nets: 40 years Plastic Bottles: 450 years Disposable Diapers: 500 years Styrofoam: Never Cigarette Butts: 18 months to 10 years	2-5
Rubber	Rubber Bands: up to 1 year Shoe Soles: 50-80 years Car Tires: 2,000 years	3-5
Leather	25-50 years	3-6
Textiles	Cotton Fabrics: 6 months Wool Fabrics: 1-5 years Nylon Fabrics: 30-40 years Synthetic Fabrics: 100 years	5-8
Wood	Plywood: 1-3 years Lumber: 10-15 years	4-7
Food Waste	Several weeks or months (fruits, veggies) to several years (other food waste)	6-10