



Microplastics in the Ocean

Once a plastic object, such as a bottle, is in the ocean, sunlight and seawater make the plastic brittle.

The bottle starts to degrade.

It crumbles into pieces that become smaller ...

... and smaller ...

... and smaller.

These tiny pieces are called microplastics.

Ocean animals, such as fish, squid and crabs, may think microplastics are food and eat them.



brittle

Hard but easily breakable.

degrade

To break down or reduce in quality.

microplastics

Tiny pieces of plastic that are less than 5 mm long.



Name Date

How Long Will It Last?

Look at the objects on this page.

If they are littered and end up in the ocean, how long do you think each one will take to degrade?



Plastic fishing line

- a) 250 years
- b) 600 years
- c) 1000 years



Newspaper

- a) 6 weeks
- b) 5 years
- c) 1 week



Disposable nappy

- a) 450 years
- b) 2 years
- c) 75 years



Apple core

- a) 1 year
- b) 7 weeks
- c) 20 years



Waxed carton

- a) 3 months
- b) 100 years
- c) 4 weeks



Plastic bag

- a) 400 years
- b) 2 years
- c) 20 years



Styrofoam cup

- a) 60 years
- b) 200 years
- c) 10 years



Plastic milk bottle

- a) 6 months
- b) 25 years
- c) 100 years



Aluminium can

- a) 450 years
- b) 200 years
- c) 600 years



Plastic water bottle

- a) 30 years
- b) 100 years
- c) 450 years



Cardboard box

- a) 10 years
- b) 2 weeks
- c) 2 months

Answers: Newspaper 6 weeks; Apple core 7 weeks; Cardboard box 2 months; Waxed carton 3 months; Plastic bag 20 years; Styrofoam cup 60 years; Plastic milk bottle 100 years; Aluminium can 200 years; Plastic water bottle 450 years; Disposable nappy 450 years; Plastic fishing line 600 years.