

How Long Does Litter Last?

Match the shapes below to learn how long it takes different types of garbage to decompose.

Forever

**250–500
years**

**1–5
months**

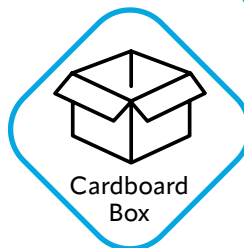
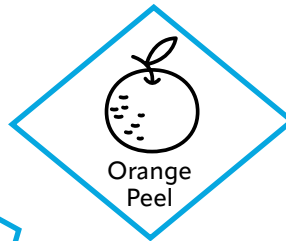
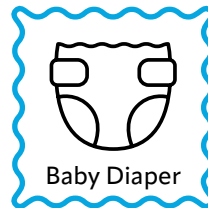
**1 million
years**

**80–100
years**

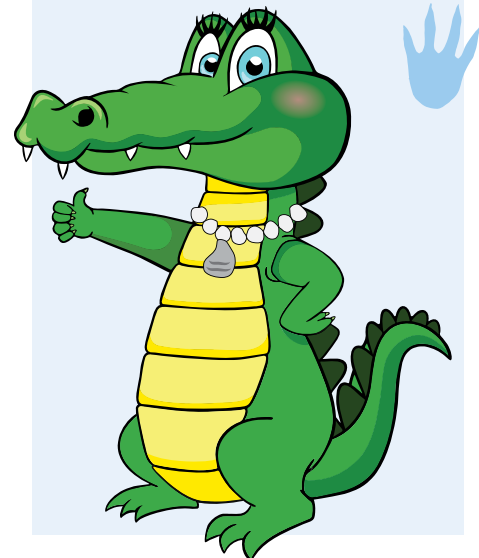
**10–20
years**

**Up to
2 years**

25 years



Some types of trash, like apple cores and banana peels, are broken down by nature over time and become a part of the earth again. We call this **decomposing**—it's like nature's way of recycling. But some trash doesn't break down easily — like plastic bottles and metal. It stays around for a very long time, polluting waterways and releasing toxins into the environment.



Styrofoam - Forever; Glass Bottle - 250–500 Years; Gum - 1–5 Months; Baby Diaper - 1 Million Years; Plastic Bag - 10–20 Years; Aluminum Can - 80–100 Years; Orange Peel - Up to 2 Years; Cardboard Box - 1–5 Months; Aluminum Can - 80–100 Years; Plastic Bag - 10–20 Years; Gum - 25 Years; Cardboard Box - 1–5 Months; Baby Diaper - 1 Million Years; Plastic Bag - 10–20 Years; Aluminum Can - 80–100 Years