

What is plastic and why is it a problem in the ocean?



200 years	6 weeks	2 months	10-20 years
			
ALUMINIUM CAN	NEWSPAPER	FRUIT CARDBOARD	PLASTIC BAG
3 months	600 years	1-5 years	2-5 months
			
COTTON T SHIRT	FISHING LINE	WOOLLEN SOCK	WAXED CARTON
450 years	2-4 weeks	50 years	1-3 years
			
NAPPY / DIAPER PLASTIC BOTTLE	PAPER TOWEL	TIN CAN FOAM CUP	PLYWOOD

Timeline showing



STUDENT SHEET 2b

1. Work in pairs. Complete the timeline showing how long these everyday items take to break down.

Newspaper	Cotton clothing	Plastic bags	Disposable nappies
Plastic bottle	Woollen socks	Styrofoam cups	Fruit cores / skins
Plastic cups / holders		Nylon fishing line / nets	

2. Circle or highlight the items composed of plastic on your timeline

3. Which tends to break down first, items composed of plastic or those made of natural materials?

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4. Why could that be a problem if plastic waste keeps being added to the sea?

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5. Which item takes a longer time to break down than some plastic items?

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A yoghurt pot, bought for 11p in the 1970s, was discovered in a beach clean-up in Teignmouth, Devon, well over 40 years after it had been bought.

6. ‘The best thing about plastic is its durability. The worst thing about plastic is its durability’ Explain why this statement describes our use of plastic and its disposal well.

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