

Litter Timeline Answer Key

ITEM	<1 YR.	1-20 YRS.	21-50 YRS.	51-100 YRS.	>200 YRS.	ANSWER	RECYCLED USES	NOTES
Cotton	×	×				1-5 mos. (Untreated) up to 5 yrs. (Heavily Dyed)	New clothing & accessories, insulation, carpet padding, cleaning rags, fiberfill	Can be donated (Goodwill, Salvation Army, Community Aid)
Rubber				×		50-80 yrs.	New rubberized asphalt (reduces traffic noise), playground & sports field surfaces, rubberized mulch, construction fill, animal mats, shoe soles, doormats, structural rubber bricks	
Nylon			×			30-40 yrs.	New activewear, swimwear, outdoor gear, carpet, industrial plastics	Can be donated (Goodwill, Salvation Army, Community Aid)
Wool		×				1-5 yrs.	New fabrics, home goods, industrial materials	Can be donated (Goodwill, Salvation Army, Community Aid)
Polyester			×	×		20-200 yrs.	New clothing, industrial fibers (e.g., insulation, vehicle trunk liners, carpet backing, acoustic panels), rigid plastic products (e.g., PET bottles, packaging straps, shoe soles)	Can be donated (Goodwill, Salvation Army, Community Aid)
Linen	×					2 wks.-6 mos.	New clothing & accessories, insulation, carpet padding, cleaning rags, fiberfill	Can be donated (Goodwill, Salvation Army, Community Aid)
Leather			×			25-40 yrs.	New clothing & accessories, insulation, carpet padding, cleaning rags, fiberfill	Can be reused or up-cycled directly
Acrylic					×	>200 yrs.	Rigid acrylic can be recycled indefinitely into optical-quality materials, like plexiglass sheets used for retail shelving, signage, vehicle windshields, light covers, and building materials; textile acrylic can be processed and spun into recycled yarn, outdoor waterproof fabrics, and home textiles	Can be donated (Goodwill, Salvation Army, Community Aid); can also be reused or up-cycled directly
Plastic Bag		×				10-20 yrs.	Composite lumber (for outdoor decks & fencing), new plastic bags, packaging, shipping pallets	Cannot be recycled curbside—jams MRF machinery; recycle at grocery stores
Fishing Line					×	600 yrs.	Tackle boxes, new line spools, toy parts, sunglass frames, fish habitat structures	
Plastic Bottle					×	450-1,000 yrs.	New beverage containers, clothing (polyester), park benches, fiberfill (for sleeping bags or cushions)	Turnaround time for recycled plastic bottles is a few months; curbside recycling in Lancaster County
Styrofoam Cup			×			50 yrs.	Picture frames, decorative molding, baseboards, rulers	Polystyrene cannot often be recycled due to its low density and high air content—expensive to collect & store

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Paper Towel	×					2-6 wks.	COMPOST (if organic only!)	
Apple Core	×					2-8 wks.	COMPOST - Compost, soil amendments, feedstock for anaerobic digestion (to create biogas), animal feed	
Batteries				×		100 yrs.	Recover critical minerals, new batteries	Do NOT throw in trash; bring in to HHW for disposal in Lancaster County
Waxed Carton	×	×				3 mos.-5 yrs.	Paper towels, tissues, office/writing paper, wallboard/drywall	
Chip Bag		×				10-20 yrs.	Plastic lumber, industrial pellets, mixed-plastic building materials	Notoriously difficult to recycle; mixture of plastic and aluminum which requires specialized processing
Aluminum Can				×		80-200 yrs.	New beverage cans, aluminum foil, pie pans, building materials (e.g., window frames), automotive parts, aerospace components, baseball/softball bats	INFINITELY RECYCLABLE; turnaround time for cans is <60 days; curbside recycling in Lancaster County
Banana Peel	×					2-8 wks.	COMPOST - Compost, soil amendments, feedstock for anaerobic digestion (to create biogas), animal feed	
Cardboard	×					2 mos.	New boxes/paperboard, tissues, paper towels Also compost (if shredded)	Curbside recycling in Lancaster County
Glass Bottle					×	1,000,000 yrs.	Containers, fiberglass insulation, countertops, tiles, concrete, water filters	INFINITELY RECYCLABLE; turnaround time for glass is as little as 30 days; curbside recycling in Lancaster County
Newspaper	×					2-6 wks.	Tissue paper, toilet paper, cardboard, packing material Also compost (if shredded)	
Tin/Steel Can			×			50 yrs.	New cans, car parts, building materials, electronics, furniture	INFINITELY RECYCLABLE; curbside recycling in Lancaster County