**Student Worksheet: How Long Does Trash Last?**

Instructions: Read and record a response for each question below as directed by your teacher.

1. List some procedures that your community uses for managing its solid waste.

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2. Describe your impressions of a landfill site.

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3. What do all the items in the class “trash” collection have in common?

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4. What will happen to these items if they end up in the landfill?

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5. Which item do you think will take the shortest time to decompose?

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6. Will all the items disappear/disintegrate/degrade immediately or will they continue to take up space in the landfill?

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7. Which items, if any, may never decompose?

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8. Complete this chart. In the first column, list your estimate for the time that each item of trash might take to break down in a landfill. Use a range, for example, 3-5 weeks. Then work with your group to agree upon an estimate of time based on time ranges provided by your teacher. Next, number the items in order as agreed upon. Complete the final column at the direction of your teacher.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Estimated Decomposition Time** | **Trash Item** | **Group Consensus** | **Decomposition Order (Shortest to Longest)** | **Expert Estimated Decomposition Time** |
|  | Aluminum Can |  |  |  |
|  | Banana |  |  |  |
|  | Cigarette butt |  |  |  |
|  | Cotton rag |  |  |  |
|  | Glass bottle |  |  |  |
|  | Leather boot |  |  |  |
|  | Paper bag |  |  |  |
|  | Plastic 6-pack ring |  |  |  |
|  | Rubber sole |  |  |  |
|  | Styrofoam cup |  |  |  |
|  | Tin can |  |  |  |
|  | Wool sock |  |  |  |

9. How would you apply each of these practices in reference to solid waste management? Give an example of each application?

a. Reduce:

b. Reuse:

c. Recycle: