



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ #: \_\_\_\_\_

## Games, Nature, & Experiments

### What is Leave No Trace?

**Estimated Time:** 20 - 60 minutes (per principle)

**Age range:** All grades (with guidance)

**What you need:** paper, writing utensil, printer (optional), additional materials are specified for each principle

#### Background Information:

“The Seven Principles of Leave No Trace provide an easily understood framework of minimum impact practices for anyone visiting the outdoors. Although Leave No Trace has its roots in backcountry settings, the Principles have been adapted so that they can be applied anywhere – from remote wilderness areas, to local parks and even in your own backyard. They also apply to almost every recreational activity. Each Principle covers a specific topic and provides detailed information for minimizing impacts.

“The Seven Principles are well established and widely known, but they are not static. The Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics continually examines, evaluates and reshapes the Principles. The Center’s Education Department conducts research – including publishing scholarly articles in independent journals – to ensure that the Principles are up to date with the latest insights from biologists, land managers and other leaders in outdoor education.”

The 7 Principles - Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics

<https://lnt.org/why/7-principles/>

#### Instructions:

Please see each of the seven Leave No Trace principles for ways to learn more about how to minimize your impact on the environment. The seven principles include:

- 1) Plan Ahead & Prepare: Know before you go
- 2) Travel & Camp on Durable Surfaces: Choose the right path
- 3) Dispose of Waste Properly: Trash your trash
- 4) Leave What You Find: Take photos, leave footprints
- 5) Minimize Campfire Impacts: Be careful with fire
- 6) Respect Wildlife: Be kind to animals
- 7) Be Considerate to Others: You are not the only visitors

## Games, Nature, &amp; Experiments

## 3) Dispose of Waste Properly: Trash Your Trash

**Estimated Time:** 50 minutes

**Age range:** All grades (with guidance)

**What you need:** paper, writing utensil, internet access

**Introduction:**

When in the outdoors, it is important that anything we carry with us into the wilderness is also carried back out of the wilderness and disposed of properly. “Pack it in—pack it out” is a common phrase used by **outdoor enthusiasts**. Some examples of things that must be packed out are food wrappers, food scraps, water bottles, dirty or ruined clothes, and toilet paper. There should be no evidence (or clues) left behind when you leave a wilderness or outdoor area. It is important that we pack these wastes out because **litter** can harm wildlife, pollute **ecosystems** as they **decompose**, and can cause future visitors to have a less pleasant experience. Every material takes a different amount of time to decompose. Thinking about **decomposition rates** can help us realize our impacts.

**New Words**

An **outdoor enthusiast** is someone who enjoys spending time in the outdoors.

**Ecosystems** are places where living and non-living things come together and interact.

**Litter** is garbage that should be thrown out in a trash receptacle, but is instead left on the ground.

When something **decomposes**, it breaks down. This process usually takes a long time—especially if the item is man-made (like plastics).

**Decomposition rates** measure the how long it takes for something to break down.

If something is **environmentally-friendly**, it does not damage the natural world.

These wastes include everything from plastic—to apple cores—to human waste. When disposing of solid human waste (also known as poop), you should dig a hole 6-8 inches deep and at least 200 feet from water, trails, and camp. These holes are commonly referred to as “cat holes.” Believe it or not, we actually use them to bury our excrement! This is widely accepted as the most **environmentally-friendly** option. It’s what’s best for both the wilderness and all of the organisms living in it! Please note that you should never bury anything other than poop. Other types of waste, such as garbage and food scraps, must be packed out with you!

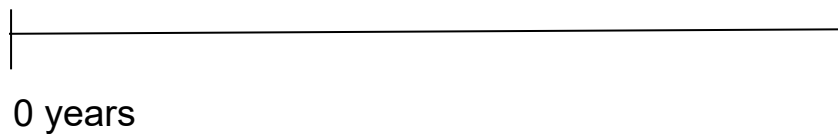
The following activity will have us look at the trash nearby and predict how long it will stick around!



## Trash Decomposition Activity

### Instructions:

1. Plan a walk in your neighborhood, on a trail, or in a park. (See LNT Principle #1: Plan Ahead & Prepare). Be sure to take paper and a writing utensil with you, along with any gear you need for your outing. You can also take a trash bag and gloves if you want to pick up trash you find along the walk!
2. As you walk around, write down the types of trash you see.
3. When you get home, make a timeline for the different decomposition rates of trash. Place each type of trash you found where you think it belongs on the timeline. The type that you think will take the least amount of time to decompose will go the furthest to the left, and the type that will take the most amount of time will go the furthest to the right, with everything else falling in between the two.



4. Check your predictions by looking up the correct decomposition rates online. You can access that information here:

<https://www.saveonenergy.com/material-decomposition/>

Consider the following questions:

Which types of trash take the most time to decompose? The least?

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What are some steps that can be taken to avoid littering in the outdoors?

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### Sources:

<https://lnt.org/why/7-principles/>

<https://www.campgroundsigns.com/please-take-your-trash-with-you-sign/sku-k2-1787>

<https://cleanoutexpress.com/how-to-dispose-of-your-trash/>

<https://www.saveonenergy.com/material-decomposition/>