



Ireland

**Leave
No
Trace**

Christmas Guide: The Breakdown Game

At Leave No Trace Ireland, we know how important it is to Dispose of Waste Properly. But when waste does end up in our natural environments, how long does it stay there?

This depends on a number of factors: Ireland is quite a cold, damp country, which affects how everything breaks down - even natural fibres such as food. In the following pages, we have a breakdown of how long it takes for different items to fully break down and disappear when left in our natural environments...



**Guess How long the following items
take to break down, then swipe to find
out ...**

- » Apple
- » Cardboard
- » Banana Peel
- » Crisp Packet
- » Aluminium can
- » Hard plastic bottle



An Apple: two months to break down

Not all apples are native to Ireland, and not all animals are able to safely eat apples.

Stickers and wax coatings cannot be processed
in their stomachs



Cardboard: three months to break down

While the cardboard waits for the 3 months to break down, animals will often find it and try to eat it. The scent of foods and other unusual things that it once held makes them curious.



Banana Peels: TWO YEARS to break down

Bananas are not native fruit to Ireland, and they have a very hard time breaking down in our cold, damp climate.

Along with the major risk of animals eating a food that their stomachs can't process, they also become visual scars in popular areas as they slowly brown and decompose for two years.



Crisp Packet: 80 YEARS to break down

A snack enjoyed in a instant can last a
life time!



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Aluminium can: 500 yrs to break down

Animals and people (especially children)
can hurt themselves on rubbish partially
eroded or broken, causing infection and
disease



Hard Plastic Bottle: 1 Million yrs to break down

Hard plastics can take up to 1 million years to break down, depending on the environment. Plastic that does break down can become micro-plastics, infecting water supplies, animals, and us.



What's important to think about when looking at these timelines, is what can happen to the item while it sits there, waiting to break down for sometimes years?

Animals are curious creatures and will try to eat or poke at anything they find. Children can also hurt themselves on rubbish partially eroded or broken. And we all know how much our weather changes: wind and rain can carry waste into new areas, spreading the impact far and wide.

When heading out, make sure to Plan Ahead and Prepare, by either leaving anything that could become rubbish at home before you go, or bring something to carry your rubbish home with you in. We can all Protect The Outdoors for us and for the future by following the Leave No Trace Principles!

