**Trash Quiz!**

**Directions**: Circle the Answer that you think is correct

1. What percent of trash produced in the U.S. do you think is recycled?

Less than 25% 50% 75%

1. How many plastic bags do you think are used every minute in the U.S?

500,000 1 million 3 million

1. How many plastic water bottles do you think are consumed in the U.S. every year?

50 million 100 million 50 billion

1. What percentage of cell phones do you think are recycled?

8% 15% 20%

1. What percentage of food waste do you think is composted?

5% 10% 25%

1. How long do you think it takes for Styrofoam is degrade *(break down)* in the environment?

200 years 2,000 years 1 million years

**“America the Wasteful: A Detailed Look Into Our Throw-Away Society”**

By *Rachel Tulipano*

Out with the old, in with the new. This is a classic motto recycled over and over again throughout generations, often used to justify the changes permeating throughout society and our own lives. This motto, though, is recycled far more often than the material items we deem as “garbage” in America. With the amount of goods we claim as broken or useless, America is collectively renowned as a “throw-away society.”

According to [statistics](http://www.ourbetternature.org/throwaway.htm) from 2006, Americans individually generate an average of 4.6 pounds of garbage every day. This “garbage” ranges from the obvious examples of food waste, to the material goods that have broken beyond apparent repair, to the objects we choose to abandon in exchange for their newer, more efficiently innovated counterparts. From disposable cameras to seasonal snow boots, few of today’s commodities in the market are made to last.

1) In your own words, what is the “throw-away society”?

**Not meant to last**During the 1920s and 1930s, the manufacturing philosophy of “[planned obsolescence](http://www.ourbetternature.org/throwaway.htm)” was discovered. As mass production became popular and widespread, this viable business strategy was refined. Manufacturers made it a goal to produce products, or parts of goods, that break, fail, or become less desirable after a certain amount of use or time. This manipulation in the production of goods pressures consumers to replace their broken and/or less-desired products. This trend became profitable for manufacturers and is a process still used today.

2) What is planned obsolescence?

Think about how this trend plays out in your life. Cell phones and computer software are updated on an at least annual basis. How many times have you found yourself abandoning your current phone for a newer, more desirable replacement? Similarly, how often do you find yourself updating your computer software? I speak for myself when I say in the four years I have been a loyal customer of Apple products, my MacBook Pro software has been upgraded nearly three times. So far, it’s an annual update because newer is deemed better.

Manufacturers are compelled to build low quality products in hopes of earning higher profit margins. Throw-away materials guarantee customers will repurchase the same items in newer models, which is cost efficient and pure profit for manufacturers. Planned obsolescence may be manipulative against consumers, but is a smart business strategy for capitalists.

3) Why is planned obsolescence a smart business strategy?

**Combatting the throw-away mentality**As challenging as it may seem to avoid being a throw-away citizen, there are ways of [combating the disposable society](http://www.investopedia.com/articles/pf/07/disposablesociety.asp) we live in:

* ***Recycle everything you can***. This doesn’t exclusively apply to recycling bottles, cans, cardboard, and plastic. You can recycle clothing by donating to local Goodwill drives, consignment shops, or the Salvation Army. Most of these companies will accept anything including clothing, shoes, books, and even used electronics.
* ***Invest in durable products over low-quality goods***. Yes, the cost of durable products will be more expensive up front, but the product should ultimately last you far longer. Getting a full life cycle out of a product is worth the cost in the long run.
* ***Be an inquisitive shopper***. If you already own a cell phone or computer that’s in good condition, what is the purpose of upgrading to something new? Does this new innovation come with an abundance of unique features or more refined software? If the distinctions aren’t all that different, be strong enough to say no and appreciate what you already have.

**Homework**: Think of or research an example of planned obsolescence and explain it in detail (at least a paragraph)