








Name: _____

SORTING PLASTICS

In “Golf Ball Cleanup” (p. 28), you learned about one source of plastic pollution in the ocean. Plastics are made from *polymers*—chemical compounds made up of many repeating units. The table below lists some types. Use data from the table along with information you read in the article to complete this skills sheet.

COMMON TYPES OF PLASTIC

RECYCLING CODE	POLYMER NAME	EXAMPLES OF USES
	Polyethylene Terephthalate (PETE, PET)	Bottles for beverages, food storage bags, microwavable food trays, fabric (polyester), carpet
	High-Density Polyethylene (HDPE)	Bottles for items such as milk, beverages, shampoo, cleansers; wire and cable coverings
	Polyvinyl Chloride (V, PVC)	Pipes for plumbing, clear plastic wraps, flooring, medical products such as tubing
	Low-density Polyethylene (LDPE)	Bags for groceries, dry cleaning, and garbage; squeeze bottles, disposable gloves, plastic wraps
	Polypropylene (PP)	Bottle caps, heavy duty microwavable containers, medicine bottles, carpeting
	Polystyrene (PS)	Foam egg cartons, food containers, packing peanuts, toys, furniture, electronics such as TVs and computers
	Other type or combination of types listed above	Lenses for glasses, some food packaging such as ketchup bottles, other product packaging

SOURCE: NOAA MARINE DEBRIS PROGRAM, TEACHENGINEERING.COM

QUESTIONS

1. Compare and contrast HDPE and LDPE. Cite evidence from the chart.

2. Polystyrene can be made in different ways. To form some polystyrene materials, the polymer is heated and air is blown through it. What examples listed in the chart do you think are made using this method? Why?

3. Products made from PET and HDPE are the most commonly recycled plastic items. Why do you think some types of plastic are recycled more than others? Give at least two reasons.

4. What can you infer about the fact that there are 7 separate plastic recycling codes in this table?