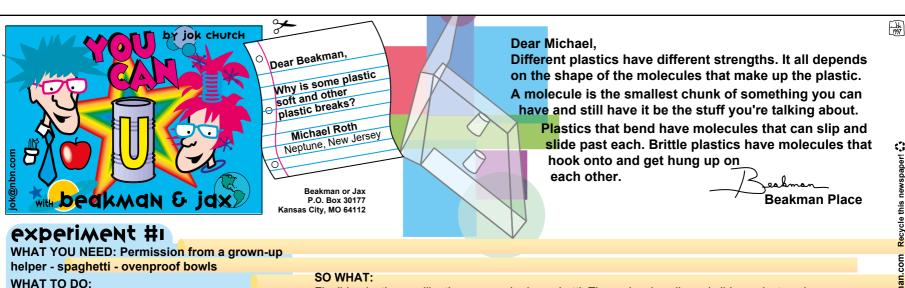
Black





Flexible plastics are like these uncooked spaghetti. The molecules slip and slide against each other.

That makes it a big trash problem. Some plastic

can be recycled, and that's great. But most of the plastics used for packaging

cannot be recycled - tons and

tons and tons every

day.

The molecules in brittle plastics hook onto each other. It's called cross-linking, and it's something like tangled-up spaghetti. When you tried to pull out a tangled spaghetti strand, it broke. That's what happens to the molecules of cross-linked plastics. The cassette case above is one example of a plastic that is cross-linked.

Flexible plastic is made from long chains of carbon and hydrogen atoms. Their strength comes from this long and flexible shape.

Ask your helper to boil a handful of spaghetti. Drain it

really well and dump it in a bowl. Roast it uncovered

In another bowl place another handful of uncooked

Try lifting out a strand of the spagnetti from the other

at 375° for an hour. Let it cool completely.

spaghetti. Lift one strand out. Slip it back in.

AKE ANOTHER LOOK

bowl. What happens?

snake that can slide and curl without snapping. Brittle plastics don't slip and slide past each other.

This plastic is also very long-lasting. The molecule is too big to come apart easily. Plastic can last thousands of years and not decompose or rot.

Can help by buying plastic when you want something to last a long, long time. Don't buy plasticBlack

wrapped stuff just to throw away the plastic. It's bad for the planet no matter what the advertising tells you.

P.S. from Jax: Plastic is more than a noun. It's also an adjective – a way for something to be. When something is soft and moldable we say that it's plastic. Another meaning for it is fake and phony and totally artificial.