

School Waste Audit Guide

Why conduct a waste audit?

- Provide students with memorable, hands-on, and inquiry-based learning that lets them experience waste in a new way, ask questions, and make connections.
- Help students understand the cumulative impact of daily choices when they see the quantity and type of waste produced over one school day.
- Connects to curriculum in multiple grades and subjects and provides schools with valuable information about the type and quantity of waste produced and can encourage student and staff to properly sort their waste and divert from landfill.

How to conduct a waste audit

Start by planning for the day. Connect with your school admin and custodial team – your school will have more success when everyone is on board! A school gymnasium or large classroom with windows for ventilation are great options for spaces to hold the audit.

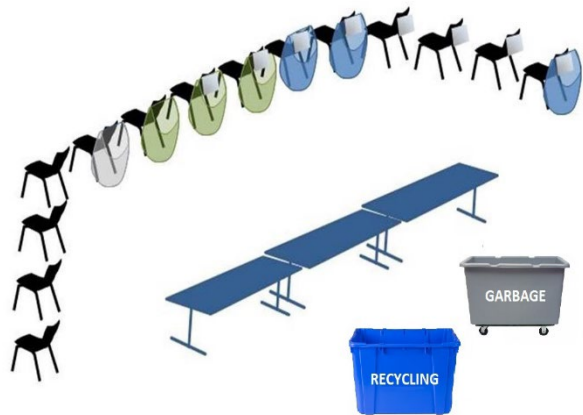


What you'll need:

- School garbage collected from the day before the audit. (*Remember to exclude washroom garbage or any waste containing sensitive information*)
- School recycling that contains one day's worth of recycling from the day before.
- 15 chairs
- 2-3 folding tables
- 1 large tarp or tablecloth to protect tables from the waste
- Waste collection bags (if possible, use clear, blue, and green bags to represent different streams of waste)
- PPE including gloves, aprons, and tongs
- Hanging spring or digital scale
- Reference sheet of how to sort waste
- Waste Audit Data Collection Sheet + clipboard
- Waste Category Signs + large butterfly clips to attach them to chairs

Waste Audit Set Up & Procedure:

1. Place 2-3 tables end-to-end
2. Place chairs in a semi-circle around the tables, facing outwards. Clip Category Signs and bags on the backs of the chairs
3. Cover the tables with a tarp or tablecloth and lay out the garbage on the tables
4. Wear PPE including gloves and aprons
5. Have students and staff sort the garbage into the Category bags
6. Once all the garbage has been sorted, remove the bags from the chairs, weigh each category and complete the Waste Audit Data Collection Sheet.
7. Place a new set of bags on the chairs and repeat the previous step but with recycling.
8. Use the data collection sheet to calculate waste contamination and diversion rates.



Visual Waste Audits

Unable to conduct a full-scale audit at school? Try a Visual Waste Audit instead! A visual waste audit does not require sorting the collected waste. Instead, weigh each bag from the garbage stream, recording the mass. Then examine the contents of each bag while looking for the categories of waste. Talk with your fellow auditors about the contents to estimate the percentage for each category. Once all garbage bags have been assessed, calculate the average volume for each of the categories across all bags. Repeat this with the recycling stream. Click [here](#) for **EcoSchools Canada's Waste Audit Guide** for conducting visual audits.

Tips!

- To generate the most accurate data, choose a typical school day for your audit. Avoid audits after pizza days, holidays and other occasions that typically produce more waste.
- Measure the impact by carrying out two waste audits to compare tonnage before and after waste reduction efforts are put in place. For example, conduct one audit early in the school year, then again towards the end of the year to measure success!
- Create a culture of waste reduction by sharing the waste audit data and results at staff meetings and with the Eco Team, who can use it for assignments and related initiatives.