

# Waste Audit Guide



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More and more students are getting involved, taking action, and becoming environmental leaders in their schools. By taking the initiative to start recycling, composting, and other waste reduction programs, students are benefiting the environment and making a real reduction in the amount of garbage produced at school.

A waste audit will help you determine the types of waste your school generates and the amount of waste your school throws away. It's a great tool to use before and after starting a new waste reduction initiative as a way to measure your success. A waste audit can also give you ideas on where to start reducing waste at school.

## What You Will Need

- A pair of gloves for each waste auditor
- Extra bags or bins (for sorting material)
- A scale (for weighing material)
- Scrap paper and pencils
- Waste audit worksheet (see back of guide)



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## HOW TO DO A WASTE AUDIT AT SCHOOL

### Step 1

Find a group of students who will be responsible for doing the waste audit. During the waste audit, students will need to work in groups of two.

**TIP:** Don't announce to the school that you are doing a waste audit as this may change behavior and impact your results.

### Step 2

Establish a time-frame for your waste audit. For example, you may decide that a week-long (5-day) waste audit will provide a good representation of the waste produced at your school each week. Conduct your waste audit after school when students have left the building and before the custodian has emptied the bins.

**TIP:** To get a true sample of waste generated during an average week at school, avoid weeks that have special events, parties, or holidays.

### Step 3

The week before the waste audit, take a walk through your school and make a list of the locations of all garbage bins, recycling bins, and compost bins (if any). Include current programs (such as recycling and composting) in your waste audit to assess how well these programs are working and to find areas for improvement.

**TIP:** To save time during the waste audit, divide the school into sections (e.g. floors, wings, grade levels) and assign a group of two students to audit the waste in each section.



## Step 4

For each day of the waste audit, sort and count the contents of each garbage bin and record the total number of pieces of each waste material in the *Waste Material Log*. Weigh each type of waste (e.g. garbage, recycling, and compost) and record the total weights in the *Waste Type Log*.

Because compost and recycling bins are not emptied on a daily basis, ensure that these bins are empty on day one of your waste audit and only weigh them before they are ready to be emptied again. It is not necessary to count and sort the materials in the compost and recycle bins; however, you should make note of any materials found that don't belong in those bins.

**TIP:** The *Waste Audit Worksheet* gives you a place to record the total amount of each waste material and each waste type for the 5-day waste audit. If more than one group of waste auditors is working at one time, be sure to record your combined results on one copy of the *Waste Audit Worksheet*.

### Finding Waste Type Weights:

- Remove the contents and weigh the empty bin.
- Put the contents back into the bin and weigh it again.
- Subtract the empty bin weight from the full bin weight to find the weight of material inside.
- Do this for each bin of the same waste type (e.g. garbage) and add up the total.
- Repeat this process for each waste type included in the waste audit.

## Step 5

Once you have completed the waste audit, compile your findings and share the results with the rest of your school. Use diagrams, bar graphs, and/or pie charts to show how much garbage your school generates, the types of materials your school throws away and how much your school recycles and composts (if applicable).

**TIP:** If you notice a large amount of one type of waste (e.g. food packaging), you may want to start a program that will help reduce this type of waste at school (e.g. waste-free lunch days).

## Step 6

Repeat the waste audit in the exact same way after starting a new waste reduction program. This will help you measure how much waste your school is reducing as a result of your new environmental initiative.

### INFORMATION

For more information on doing a waste audit at your school, contact MMSB:

**Marketing & Public Education Officer**

Email: [schools@mmsb.nl.ca](mailto:schools@mmsb.nl.ca) • Website: [mmsb.nl.ca](http://mmsb.nl.ca)



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## WASTE AUDIT WORKSHEET

Waste Audit Dates: \_\_\_\_\_ Waste Auditor Names: \_\_\_\_\_

### Waste Material Log

Fill in the total number of pieces of each waste material for the 5-day waste audit.

Waste Material	Total # of Pieces					
	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Total
<i>e.g. Paper</i>	149	98	120	134	119	620
Paper						
Cardboard						
Plastic containers						
Plastic grocery bags						
Baggies (e.g. Ziploc)						
Plastic cutlery						
Food packaging (e.g. granola bar wrapper)						
Styrofoam cups						
Paper plates						
Paper towels / napkins						
Metal (e.g. paper clips, staples)						
Food scraps						
Other:						

### Waste Type Log

Fill in the total weight (kg) of each waste type for the 5-day waste audit.

Waste Type	Total Weight (kg)					
	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Total
<i>e.g. Garbage</i>	9.5	4.3	6.4	9.4	6.9	36.5
Garbage						
Beverage Container Recycling						
Paper Recycling (if applicable)						
Compost (if applicable)						
Other:						

### Waste Formula

At the end of the waste audit, use this formula to calculate the total amount of garbage your school throws away in one school year (based on 38 teaching weeks per school year).

$$\left[ \text{___ kg Total Weight of Garbage} \right] \times 38 \text{ weeks} = \text{___ kg Total Weight of Garbage per School Year}$$

