



# WASTE AUDIT Guide

## What's a Waste Audit?

Ever wonder what's in your school's waste? A waste audit is a formal, structured process used to quantify the amount and types of waste being generated by an entity. Information from audits will help identify current waste practices and how they can be improved. In schools, they serve as a tool to:

- educate students as to the importance of recycling
- incorporate experiential learning to classroom subjects
- measure effectiveness of existing waste management systems
- identify ways of reducing consumption of wasted materials

Believe it or not, waste audits are a fun activity for students to engage in. If you think about it, how often do you get to explore what's in your waste?

## Before you start

- Form a group of about 10-15 students and adults to help out with the waste audit.
- Obtain permission from your school Principal to conduct the waste audit in the cafeteria, gym or open outdoor space.
- Work with your custodian to save or collect cafeteria and/or classroom and office waste and take it to the designated area.
- **SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS:** Do NOT sort waste from bathroom or health-related areas. Remind students to wear closed shoes on the day of the audit.

*Time Required:* 1.5 hours approximately

### *Materials needed:*

data sheets	scales for weighing	clear plastic bags
plastic tarp	waste category signs	hand sanitizer
tape	gloves	small bucket for pouring liquids
4-8 large bins	goggles (suggested)	aprons (suggested)

## Waste Audit Procedure

1. Set up the tarp over the space that will be used for sorting waste.
2. Label the bins with the waste category signs, according to school waste streams:

**PAPER & CARDBOARD** **METAL, GLASS, PLASTIC, CARTONS (MGPC)** **ORGANICS** **LANDFILL/TRASH**

3. Give a quick orientation on NYC's recycling rules, so that participants can sort items into the proper categories.
4. Hand out gloves and other protective gear to participants.
5. Divide participants into sorting teams and weighing/recording teams:

**Sorting teams** will be responsible for laying the school waste on the floor and sorting them into the proper categories.

**Weighing/recording teams** will be responsible for weighing the waste before and after it is sorted into the correct categories and recording the results on the data sheets.

6. Clean up

## After the Waste Audit

A waste audit can be a very eye-opening experience. Use the momentum to share the results with the rest of your school and create a plan to reduce waste based on your findings. Questions to think about:

- What were the main components of the school's waste?
- Would the results be different if the audit was done at a different time in the school year?
- What were some of the items that could have been reused instead of thrown away?
- How could students reduce waste going into landfills?

# Data Sheet

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Pre       Post

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

	Weight (in lbs)				ADDITIONAL COMMENTS
	PAPER	MGPC*	TRASH	FOOD WASTE	
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					

\* MGPC = Metal, Glass, Plastic, Cartons

Team Members:

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