



Waste Audit Guide

A waste audit provides schools with a snapshot of what is actually in their trash bags and what opportunities exist to minimize what ends up in the dumpster. Waste audits begin by sorting a percentage of one day's worth of garbage collected in a school – identifying what can be “pulled out” of the trash and recycled or composted. Calculating waste contents can provide opportunities for learning and student leadership, and it can be a great way to kick-start or reinvigorate waste minimization projects at school. Waste audits often turn into an eye-opening experience about trash and feels like a treasure hunt—you never know what you might find!

Step-by-step Waste Audit Guide:

1. Identify Waste Audit Team

A successful audit is dependent on having key stakeholders involved. Identify the following people for your audit team:

- Custodian
- Teacher
- Students
- Principal/Headmaster or school administrator
- Cafeteria staff
- Any other interested staff



2. Audit Materials

The following materials should be sourced to ensure a safe and successful audit:

- Sorting area such as a table or floor space covered with plastic or another non-permeable material (provided by school)
- Gloves (provided by school)
- 4-6 buckets (5 gallon or larger) and garbage bags for sorting (provided by school)
- Scale to weigh bags (provided by Facilities)
- Auditing Worksheet (Attachment A)
- First Aid Kit (provided by school)
- Clean-Up Supplies – broom, rags (provided by school).

3. Trash Bag Collection

Coordinate with the Senior Custodian to set aside and label bags of trash from different areas of the school. Suggested areas and # of bags include:

- Offices and copy rooms: 2 bags
- Classrooms and hallways: 2 bags
- Cafeteria (student waste): 2 bags
- Cafeteria (kitchen waste): 1 bag

4. Waste Audit Set Up

- Gather all materials and prepare your sorting area
- Hang posters in a visible area and remind the team about the audit process
- Label collection buckets as follows: GARBAGE, RECYCLING, FOOD, MILK CARTONS and SOILED/WET PAPER

5. Kick off the Audit

Review roles and responsibilities and review safety measures. **Suggested roles:**

- Recorders – a person(s) to complete the audit worksheet, weigh the bags, record suggestions
- Sorters – a person(s) familiar with waste categories (garbage, recycling, or compost) who will sort the items into the right containers
- Set-Up and Clean-Up – someone who can obtain audit materials and help put them away
- Media – someone to document the audit with photos or video & advertising the audit results.

If you want to set-up an audit in your school, please contact Phoebe Beierle, BPS Sustainability Manager:
pbeierle@bostonpublicschools.org
 or (617) 635-9138

6. Start Sorting!

Open bags from each separate area and begin to sort contents into corresponding containers.

Tips:

- Sort cafeteria waste last as it is often the messiest.
- Remove large items first and save smaller items at the bottom of trash pile for the end.
- If you are participating in milk carton pilot, make sure to keep track of the volume of milk cartons found in the trash.

7. Clean-Up

- Complete the audit worksheet and make sure one person has all the data and recordings
- Clean up the area, remove any trash.

8. Take Action

- Share the photos and results of the audit with the school community (present at PTO meeting, write newsletter article, post results on the school website, etc)
- Implement changes in the school to increase recycling or composting.

Students at Boston Arts Academy conducting a waste audit



Audit Safety Tips

- Have a First Aid kit available at the audit site
 - Wear old clothing, or cover your normal clothing with an apron or trash bag
 - Wear closed toe shoes and avoid wearing flip-flops or sandals
 - Always wear gloves
 - Do not pick up sharp objects, such as broken glass or needles
-
- Do not throw audit objects into piles
 - Wash your hands thoroughly after the audit

Audit Worksheet

Area of School: _____

Number of Bags: _____

Material	Weight (lbs.)	Volume measurements (inches)	Volume = height x π x r ² (width/2 = r)
Single-Stream Recycling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper/paperboard • Plastics #1-7 • Aluminum • Dry juice boxes • Clean lunch trays • Glass • Cardboard 		Height: Width:	
Organic Waste <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food • Napkins • Paper towels • Tissues • Dirty paper lunch trays 		Height: Width:	
Cartons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dry milk and juice cartons • Wet milk and juice cartons 		Height: Width:	
Trash <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chip bags • Plastic wrappers/bags • Styrofoam • Juice pouches • Plastic utensils • Plastics without recycling number symbol 		Height: Width:	

School Audit Worksheet

Total Number of Trash Bags:

<u>Material</u>	<u>Total Weight</u>	<u>Total Volume</u>	<u>Total School Percentage</u>
Single-Stream Recycling			
Trash			
Food and Organic Waste			
Milk Cartons			
TOTAL			100%