

# Classroom Waste Audit Activity

## Reduce, Reuse, Recycle & Compost

### What is a waste audit?

Waste audits help us understand what types of waste we produce and how much, allowing us to identify opportunities for reduction, recycling and reuse. They also support the Core Competencies of the BC curriculum by helping students recognize the real impact of their school's waste, building personal and social awareness and responsibility. Waste audits develop critical thinking through data analysis and problem-solving, and they connect to subjects such as math, science and social studies.

### Method

Materials: scale, boxes for sorting, gloves, waste audit data sheet.

1. Collect one day's worth of waste and weigh it.
2. Sort through bag(s) of waste and separate into the following categories:
  - a. Compost, such as apple cores and paper towels.
  - b. Mixed containers such as yogurt cups.
  - c. Refundable beverage containers such as juice boxes and pop cans.
  - d. Flexible plastics such as granola bar wrappers and chip bags.
  - e. Reusable items such as Ziploc bags, rubber bands or paper clips.
  - f. Paper and cardboard.
  - g. Glass.
  - h. Garbage such as paper mixed with glitter, sequins, or oil-based paint.
3. Weigh your separated piles of trash, compost, reuse and recycling. Track the data using a waste audit data sheet. You can also take photos of the waste for further impact. For more accurate results, repeat the process on multiple randomly chosen days, for example five times over one month, and calculate the average.
4. As a class, review the waste audit data. Discuss the findings including the main sources of waste (by weight or number of items).
5. Brainstorm strategies for reducing waste such as:
  - a. Using reusable containers instead of Ziploc bags, foil or cling wrap for snacks and lunches.
  - b. Packing cutlery from home instead of disposable plastic forks or spoons.
  - c. Avoiding individually wrapped snacks by buying in bulk and portion into reusable containers.
6. Create classroom reuse centers to designate space for sharing and repurposing materials.

## Waste Audit Data Sheet & Reduction Plan

Homeroom:

Date of audit:

Type of Waste	Number of items	Weight of box and waste (a)	Weight of box (b)	Weight of waste equals (a - b =)
Compost				
Mixed containers				
Beverage containers				
Flexible plastics				
Reusable items				
Paper				
Garbage				

Total weight of garbage:

Number of students:

Estimated weekly waste production (total waste weight x 5):

Estimated yearly waste production (total weekly waste weight x # in session school weeks):

Ideas for reducing our waste:

Ideas for reusable items:

What items should we avoid using:

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Learn more about what waste goes where. Visit: [www.crd.ca/whatgoeswhere](http://www.crd.ca/whatgoeswhere)