

Conduct a waste audit

A waste audit is a great way to find out what type of waste you are generating, where you might want to focus your efforts and give you a baseline to measure any improvements.

1

Choose a day or a week to commence the audit. Audit with one class or a number of classes. Ask your students to keep all of their packaging and food scraps from recess and lunch.

2

In the classroom, place nine large containers labelled with the following categories: plastic containers, glass, milk and juice cartons, paper and cardboard, metal, squeeze pouches, chip and snack packets, plastic wrap and bags, and food scraps. On the first day, the class can work collectively to identify their packaging items and sort them into these nine categories.

3

After each recess and lunch, for the duration of the audit, ask your students to continue placing their packaging and food scraps into the correct boxes.

4

Keep a tally, or record the weight, of the items collected in each box over the week or the day. Ask the students to fill in the results on a large chart.

5

Average the number of items collected per day over the five days, then multiply by 20 to obtain a monthly estimate. You can then extrapolate this amount to calculate the waste generation rate for all the classes in the school, or convert each material type into a percentage of the total amount discarded at your school.

6

If you would like a more comprehensive picture of the waste generated by your school as a whole, select different groups of students to also assist in monitoring the waste generated in the library, computer labs and art studios, offices, the canteen and other parts of your school and repeat steps 1 to 5.*

*You may need to modify the container labels for the different materials collected, and you may need a longer audit period (e.g. a fortnight or a month) to get accurate waste generation rates for all areas of your school.

Waste audit table

Below is an example table you can use for your waste audit.

ITEM	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	TOTAL
Milk and juice cartons						
Plastic containers						
Glass						
Paper and cardboard						
Metal						
Squeeze pouches						
Chip packets						
Plastic wrap and bags						
Food scraps						
Aluminium cans						
Printer cartridges						
Computers and accessories						
Mobile phones and accessories						
Books						
Steel cans						
Fluorescent lights						
Other/miscellaneous						