

The Waste Audit

A "how-to" tip sheet

The *Waste Audit Guide* with illustrative photos and step-by-step instructions can be downloaded at ecoschools.ca > *guides and other publications* > *guides*

The guide invites learning, encourages student leadership, and is accompanied by downloadable resources. See page 47 of this guide.

Questions? Need help? Contact Mieke Foster at mieke.foster@tdsb.on.ca or 416.395.3055.

- ◆ Have team members make posters for each sorting category.

The Ontario Ministry of the Environment requires schools to do an annual waste audit and post the results along with a Waste Reduction Work Plan. Producing your own audit results gives you data for developing a Work Plan that has meaning!

► 1. Plan your waste audit

- Consult with the principal, head caretaker, and other EcoTeam members to identify day, time, and space for audit
- Arrange for caretaker to save at least 5 bags of representative garbage and recycling for your audit. (Label where they come from to provide feedback!)

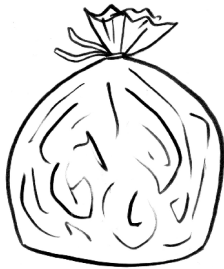
► 2. Assemble your audit supplies

- large sorting table (tape 2 together if necessary)
- 5 chairs to hang bags of sorted waste on
- clear plastic bags
- sorting category signs fastened to chairs
- 5 two inch fold back/binder clips to hold bags and signs to chair backs
- 5 labelled storage basins for transferring sorted waste to clear bags
- audit posters listing items in each category
- a hanging spring or digital scale
- gloves for auditors
- worksheets to record findings and begin plan
- clipboards and pens
- camera for recording the stages of the audit
- clean-up supplies

► 3. Identify your waste audit team and responsibilities

- Appoint one person to be in charge
- Define tasks: gathering supplies, setting up, auditing, recording, taking pictures, cleaning up, and communicating results

- ◆ Create two other optional categories: "Unopened food" and "Reusable things"!



- ◆ If you plan to audit more than 5 bags of garbage, set up a second sorting station.
- ◆ Record findings and observations during your audit. This will help with your Work Plan.
- ◆ Refine your Work Plan: e.g., "improve recycling" might become "improve paper recycling in staff room."

▶ 4. Waste audit categories

- Recyclable containers:** metal cans, plastic bottles, milk/juice cartons, yoghurt tubs/lids
- Recyclable papers:** copy paper, newspaper, notebooks, magazines, books, cardboard
- Other recyclables:** e-waste, printer/toner cartridges, CFL bulbs, batteries, etc.
- Food wastes and soiled papers:** fruit peels, paper towels/tissues/napkins/plates
- Real garbage:** coffee cups, plastic/foil wrapping must go to landfill

▶ 5. The waste audit itself

A. Set up

- Gather audit team together and review tasks
- Bring garbage and recycling to sorting area
- Set up tables, basins, chairs with bags & signs, wall posters

B. Auditing

- Empty each bag's contents one at a time onto sorting table and sort items into basins labelled by waste category
- Empty full basins into plastic bags draped over chairs until all garbage is audited
- Repeat process for recycling

C. After the audit

- Weigh bags of sorted garbage and recycling
- Record results and observations on the waste audit work sheet (see following page)
- Tidy up and deliver sorted recyclables and garbage to appropriate containers
- As a team, develop your Waste Reduction Work Plan (see page 43)
- Decide how to communicate your findings to the whole school