



## TAKE ACTION – WASTE ACTION PROJECTS

# HOW TO DO A WASTE AUDIT

### Resources needed

- Scales
- Tarpaulins
- Protective gloves (rubber gloves or disposables)
- Plastic boxes to put sorted rubbish in, labelled with categories:
  - *Paper/cardboard*
  - *Organic waste* (Food and garden)
  - *Recyclable items*: plastics (1 and 2), glass, tins, cans
  - *Reusable items* (eg: yoghurt pots that are not recyclable)
  - *Landfill waste*
- Pen and clipboard
- Plastic bags for lining boxes for ease of disposal (especially organic and landfill boxes)
- Your audit record sheet
- Cleaning gear (e.g. bucket of soapy water, disinfectant and cloth)

*Optional:* camera, change of clothes for afterwards

Below: Use labelled plastic containers like the one above to sort waste into groups



### Preparation for the audit

1. Choose a day to perform your audit. Consider school events and lunch order days. Inform the school when and where your audit will take place. You may want to invite other classes to attend.
2. Let the person who empties the bins know about the audit and get them to save the school waste from the day before. If you have a large school you could save waste only from half of the school and multiply results by two.
3. Choose a suitable area to do your audit. A building that doesn't get used much is best. The room will smell afterwards so make sure you have some ventilation.



Right: Sorting rubbish at Tui Glen School's audit

### The morning of the audit

Before the audit spread out the tarpaulin and set out the labelled boxes. You may want to put the landfill and organic bins together on one tarpaulin, as they will create the most mess. Make sure that the rubbish is in the room for the starting time.

### The audit

1. Glove up!
2. Use the audit information sheet supplied to record your results. A clipboard may help make recording easier.
3. Ask students about the amount of rubbish produced in one day. Is it more than they expected? Encourage them to imagine how much waste the school produces in a week/ month/ year.
4. Demonstrate an example of each type of rubbish and which bin it should go into so that the children are clear about what sorts of objects belong in each bin.
5. Weigh one empty box and record its weight on the sheet.

6. Empty all the rubbish out onto the tarpaulin. With the students, go through the rubbish and sort it, putting it into the right boxes. You could take photos as you do this.

7. Once you've separated all the rubbish, weigh each box and evaluate the volumes. Write the results on the audit results sheet. To get the exact weight of each group, take the empty box weight away from the total weight of each box. eg, weight of food waste = total weight of box - weight of empty box.

8. Discuss where the items in each box would end up: Where would reusable items eventually end up? Where would the recyclable items go?

9. Divide the boxes into: DIVERTABLE/ RECYCLABLE waste - waste that won't go to landfill, and LANDFILL waste - that will end up at 'the dump'. Compare and discuss.

10. Once you have finished your audit, consider recycling paper, plastic and glass at a nearby recycling station or kerbside collection. You could also compost the food scraps/ organic waste. If you don't have a compost bin yet, these could be buried in a garden.

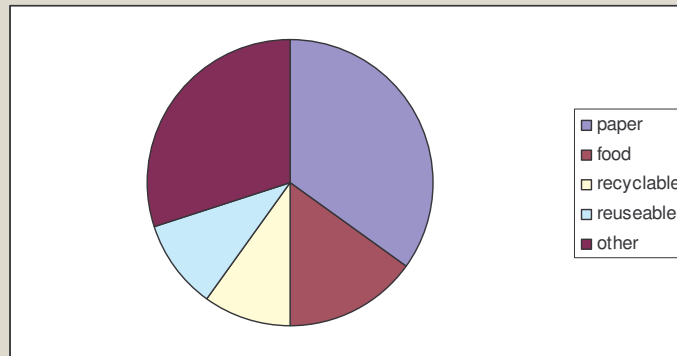


Above: Lakeview student sorting rubbish

## Evaluating the results

Questions to ask:

- Which box had the most waste? Which had the least? Why is this so?
- Which results surprised you?
- How much waste produced at your school is *divertible* from landfill?
- How could you present your findings to the rest of the school?
- How could you avoid sending so much waste to landfill?
- What else could you do with this group of waste? eg: no 1 and 2 plastics can be recycled



Left: Lakeview's audit results. 65% was paper and landfill waste. Because they already recycle they will target landfill waste issues.

## Where to next?

Identify the particular issues with waste in your school and brainstorm possible solutions.

Which groups of waste had the most weight and volume in your school?

Consider the following action projects to target the main culprits:

Paper/ Cardboard- Recycle paper and/or cardboard

Organic waste- Set up compost bins or worm farms

Recyclables- Recycle plastics/ glass/ cans

Reusables- Start a system to reuse objects – collect yoghurt pots to plant seedlings into  
Landfill waste- Look at the content of the waste. Are there alternatives to these objects?. Consider holding 'wrapper free days' in your school.

For details about how to set up these systems see the Take Action website ([www.gw.govt.nz/takeaction/waste](http://www.gw.govt.nz/takeaction/waste))

## Re-visit

Do another waste audit after you have started your recycling/ waste minimisation schemes. An audit will evaluate if the new systems are working and highlight room for improvement. Get motivated students to remind people about the systems via a short talk to a syndicate, performance at assembly or a talk to each class. The audit will also establish how much of your waste is now being recycled and how much is going to landfill. Compare this to your first audit! Celebrate your success!



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

[www.gw.govt.nz/takeaction/waste](http://www.gw.govt.nz/takeaction/waste)

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