



Making Your Home Zero Waste: Waste Audit Instructions

Way to go working toward Zero Waste in your home! We've created this instruction sheet to show you how you can easily identify ways to reduce waste, and also make sure what you do discard goes into the right bin.

This entire project will take at least two weeks and is divided into two parts. Be sure to give yourself a full two weeks to complete the activity! In Week 1, we will be looking at our current waste habits. In Week 2, we will measure the potential for waste diversion if we recycled and composted as much as we could.

Let's get started!

PART 1 of 2: Week 1

Scope: Waste generated in house or yard

Tools needed:

- Your normal waste collection containers- trash cans, recycling containers (if your household recycles), and compost containers (if your household composts)
- Scale that can measure pounds
- The Home Waste Audit Calculations Sheet found at the end of this document
- Access to a computer with internet to record and submit your results

Purpose:

- Bring awareness to and identify how much waste is produced throughout the home
- Identify purchasing habits that produce waste
- Let participants compare their waste production to national averages
- Engage all household members to share ideas on how to reduce waste

Instructions:

1. **Pre-Test.** [Take the Home Waste Audit Pre-Test](#) to get an idea of what you already know.
2. **Prepare.** Make sure all members of the household are aware of the waste audit and won't dispose of items until you've completed the end-of-week measurements. If a truck comes once a week to take your trash or recycling, it is best to start this project on collection day, so that you don't have to skip a week of collection. For example, if your trash is picked up on a Wednesday, then start your audit that day and finish it the following Tuesday.
3. **Collect.** Collect waste just like you normally do throughout the week, but keep it all to be weighed at the end of the week.

4. **Weigh.** At the end of the week, weigh each collection individually. This may be done with a normal bathroom scale. Be sure to subtract the weight of the bin from your total weight (see the Home Waste Audit Calculations Sheet at the end of this document for instructions on how to do this).
5. **Record.** Record the weights of your waste collections on the Home Waste Audit Calculations Sheet.
6. **Analyze.** Fill out the rest of the Home Waste Audit Calculations Sheet.

Part 2 of 2: Week 2

Timeframe: One week

Scope: Waste generated in house or yard

Tools needed:

- “Zero Waste Stations”: 3 bins, bags, or storage containers for 1 week’s worth of recyclables, compostables, and landfill items (garbage).
- Scale that can measure pounds
- The Home Waste Audit Calculations Sheet found at the end of this document
- Guidelines posters posted above each bin (download the guidelines for recycling, composting, and landfill and print them here: ecocycle.org/recycle).
- Access to a computer with internet to record and submit your results

Purpose:

- Allow households that do not participate in composting or recycling programs to see how much they could be diverting from the landfill
- Identify materials that participants are not sure can be composted or recycled
- Engage all household members to share ideas on how to reduce waste

Instructions:

7. **Prepare.** Make sure all members of the household are aware of the waste audit and won’t dispose of items until you’ve completed the end-of-week measurements. Carefully review the [Recycling](#) and [Composting](#) Guidelines with all members of the household and discuss any items that you didn’t realize were recyclable or compostable.
8. **Collect.** Collect waste throughout the week, separating recyclables, compostables, and landfill materials as you go. Even if you do not have recycling or composting services, keep collecting materials as if you do.
9. **Weigh.** At the end of the week, weigh each collection individually. This may be done with a normal bathroom scale. Be sure to subtract the weight of the bin from your total weight (see the Home Waste Audit Calculations Sheet for instructions on how to do this).
10. **Record.** Fill out the rest of the Home Waste Audit Calculations Sheet.
11. **Analyze and Share.** Once you are done with your calculations, use [the Home Waste Audit Analysis Form](#) to analyze your results and share your data.

Tips:

- Rinse out all recyclables and trash items thoroughly before setting them in the collection bin. If the compost begins to create odors, store it in a sealed container (a compostable bag works well for this) in the freezer or in the garage.
- If you are unsure of which collection an item goes into, try looking it up in the [online Eco-Cycle guide](#) or send a picture of the item to lyons@ecocycle.org. We'll get back to you as soon as we can!
- If you do not have a way to properly dispose of your compost collection in Week 2, please put it in the trash (landfill). Recyclables should be brought to the Lyons drop-off site, or wherever you usually put your recycling.

Fast Facts:

- Our systems for producing, shipping, consuming, and disposing of goods and food accounts for 47% of our greenhouse gas emissions.
- According to the Rainforest Action Network, about 2.4 million acres of acres of rainforest are cleared each year to meet demands for new wood pulp, paper, plywood, and palm oil in Indonesia alone. This puts wildlife habitat, human health, and indigenous ways of life at risk.
- Plastic grocery bags CANNOT be put into the recycling bin because they get stuck in the sorting machinery at the Boulder County Recycling Center. When bags get stuck in the machinery, the whole facility has to be shut down while an employee goes and cuts the bags from the gears with a knife.
- By recycling just ONE aluminum can, you can save enough energy to power a TV for three hours.
- Organic material (animal and plant matter), will break down in a landfill. However, this process is very slow and produces methane, a potent greenhouse gas. By composting organic matter, not only is methane *not* produced, but what *is* produced is a healthy soil that can actually take CO₂, another greenhouse gas, *out* of the atmosphere.

Additional Tools and Resources:

- www.ecocycle.org/recycle -- resources for recycling, reducing, reusing, composting, and otherwise being green in Boulder County
- www.ecocycle.org/compost -- tools for backyard and curbside composting
- www.ecocycle.org/UFixIt -- Calendar for free, local "U-Fix-It Clinics" for broken appliances, electronics and more
- www.ecocycle.org/EcoLiving -- Zero Waste Home guides, eco-cleaning recipes, waste-free lunch ideas
- www.ecocycle.org/CHaRM -- for recycling hard-to-recycle and unusual materials
- Apps:
 - Bulk App, for where to buy food in bulk
 - Letgo: like having an ongoing garage sale at your fingertips

Home Waste Audit Calculations Sheet

Week 1

Weight of empty bins (lbs) =

WBR = Recycling*: _____

WBC = Compost*: _____

WBL = Landfill*: _____

* Leave these blank if you do not have a bin for this.

Weight of bins + collections (lbs) =

WCR1 = Recycling*: _____

WCC1 = Compost*: _____

WCL1 = Landfill*: _____

* Leave these blank if you do not have a bin for this.

A1 = Weight of recycling collected in Week 1 (lbs) = **WCR1** - **WBR** = _____

B1 = Weight of compost collected in Week 1 (lbs) = **WCC1** - **WBC** = _____

C1 = Weight of landfill materials collected in Week 1 (lbs) = **WCL1** - **WBL** = _____

D = Number of people living in your house/apartment unit = _____

E1 = Total weight of waste produced = **A1** + **B1** + **C1** = _____

F1 = Total weight of materials diverted from the landfill = **A1** + **B1** = _____

G1 = Diversion rate (%) = the percentage of waste materials that are prevented from going into the landfill =

G1 = $F1 \div E1 \times 100 =$ _____ %

H1 = Yearly household waste production (lbs/year) = **E1** * 52 (weeks/year) =

I1 = Yearly individual waste production (lbs/year) = **H1** ÷ **D** = _____

J1 = Daily individual waste production (lbs/year) = **I1** ÷ 365 (days/year) = _____

List some things that you see in your landfill (trash) collection.

Week 2

Weight of empty bins (lbs) =

WBR = Recycling: _____

WBC = Compost: _____

WBL = Landfill: _____

Weight of bins + collections (lbs) =

WCR2 = Recycling: _____

WCC2 = Compost: _____

WCL2 = Landfill: _____

A2 = Weight of recycling collected in Week 1 (lbs) = **WCR2** - **WBR** = _____

B2 = Weight of compost collected in Week 1 (lbs) = **WCC2** - **WBC** = _____

C2 = Weight of landfill materials collected in Week 1 (lbs) = **WCL2** - **WBL** = _____

D = Number of people living in your house/apartment unit = _____

E2 = Total weight of waste produced = **A2** + **B2** + **C2** = _____

F2 = Total weight of materials diverted from the landfill = **A2** + **B2** = _____

G2 = Diversion rate (%) = the percentage of waste materials that are prevented from going into the landfill =

G2 = **F2** ÷ **E2** x 100 = _____ %

H2 = Yearly household waste production (lbs/year) = **E2** * 52 (weeks/year) =

I2 = Yearly individual waste production (lbs/year) = **H2** ÷ **D** = _____

J2 = Daily individual waste production (lbs/year) = **I2** ÷ 365 (days/year) = _____

List some things that you see in your landfill (trash) collection.