



CITY OF CAPE TOWN  
ISIXEKO SASEKAPA  
STAD KAAPSTAD

# Conduct a waste audit at your school

Implementing a waste programme at school requires an understanding of the type of waste the school generates. Knowing what kind of waste you generate most will help you decide how to separate at source and how to set up a recycling centre. The Solid Waste Management Department has developed a model to help you audit your school's waste stream; this is laid out in easy steps below.

### **1. Form a waste management committee**

Identify the school's waste coordinator (leading waste champion), who will be responsible for:

- taking responsibility for initiating, planning and implementing a waste audit;
- developing and driving action plans to reduce, reuse and recycle waste within the school;
- raising awareness of the school's waste minimisation programme;
- providing training for all interested parties;
- setting up and chairing regular meetings with the school waste management committee as well as other role players;
- keeping the school management informed; and
- raising awareness within the surrounding community, media, and businesses to support the initiative.

A waste champion can be a teacher, a pupil, a parent or a janitor, or any party affiliated to the school

### **2. Conduct a waste audit**

A waste audit will assist in establishing a production point of the waste at your school, the quantity, the type, and how often you throw away your waste.

**You will need the following materials:**

- Bagged rubbish
- Old carrier bags (eight for each group involved in the audit)
- 10-20 large bin bags
- Spring balances or Newton meter scale
- Ground sheet/floor covers
- Clipboards with copies of the recording sheet
- Rubber gloves (one pair for each adult and child)
- Overalls or old clothing

Waste Audit Checklist	
Item	Check
Rubbish (in bags)	
Old carrier bags (eight for each group involved in the audit)	
10-20 large bin bags	
Spring balances or Newton meter scale	
Ground sheet/floor covers	
Clipboards with copies of the recording sheet	
Rubber gloves (one pair for each adult and child)	
Overalls or old clothing	

#### Follow these steps to prepare for the audit:

- Carry out a risk assessment – consider what the dangers associated with the audit might be and put measures in place to minimise them.
- You may want to send a letter to the parents to inform them about the activity. Children should wear old clothing on the day, request adult volunteers.
- Ask the school caretaker to save two days waste from the entire school, including non-teaching areas such as bathrooms, staff rooms, offices and the playground.
- Ask the caretaker to look through the bags to remove sharp objects and label each bag with the area of the school it came from (e.g. classroom 1, playground) – label all waste, kept separately and store safely and securely. Store all bags of waste safely overnight.
- Audit your school's waste on an average school day.

#### Doing the audit:

- Explain the health and safety issues to the students involved in the audit.
- Gloves should be worn at all times by everyone handling the waste.
- Weigh all bags containing discarded food – record the results in grams on the recording sheet.
- Divide the students involved in the audit into three to four groups – each group should have a ground sheet to work around, a recording sheet and pencil, and a set of spring balances or Newton meter scales.
- Get each group to empty the contents of one bag of rubbish at a time onto the ground sheet and sort it into the different types of waste shown on a recording sheet.
- Get a separate carrier bag for each waste type – sort the waste into these bags and weigh them using an appropriate spring balance or Newton meter scale.
- Once the contents of the carrier bags in each group have been weighed and recorded, empty them into larger bin bags and re-use the carrier bag.
- When all bags have been sorted and the data has been recorded, dispose of the waste and recyclables in the usual manner.

### 3. The follow up of the audit

Once you have completed the audit, conduct the following follow ups:

- Calculate the daily, weekly and yearly waste totals for the school – multiply daily totals by five for the weekly results, and the weekly totals by 38 weeks (average number of weeks per year spent at school) – work out the percentage of different types of waste produced.
- Compare waste data from different areas around your school to identify the waste 'hot-spots' (places where most of the waste is being generated).
- What are the most common types of waste? Is any of it recyclable? Which type of waste would make the biggest difference if recycled?
- This is the information you will use in planning how to REDUCE, REUSE AND RECYCLE your school's waste.
- Present your findings to the rest of the school through an assembly or newsletter.

### 3. Further tips to reduce waste at school

The best way to solve our waste problem is to firstly, reduce the amount of waste we produce. Here are some more tips on how to reduce waste:

- Avoid buying products with lots of packaging.
- Reduce packaging by buying items you use in bulk, and by buying refills and concentrates.
- Buy products with packaging that is made from recycled or recyclable materials.
- Don't buy disposable products such as paper plates.
- Choose glass over plastic as it can always be recycled.
- Avoid all toxic and hazardous products where possible – try and use organic cleaning products as they are safer for you, and for the environment.
- Avoid using non-recyclable materials such as cling wrap or tin foil at your school.

#### Contact us

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