



WASTE AUDIT CHECKLIST

WHO IS THIS FOR?

Anyone looking to uncover additional recycling opportunities.

WASTE AUDIT CHECKLIST



ALIGN SUSTAINABILITY WITHIN YOUR MISSION.

SO HOW DO YOU GET THERE? The oversimplified answer is that you have to look in the trash to find out. There are really four things you can do that will help you to figure out what's in the trash to be diverted:

1. Look in the trash to see what's in there. Better yet, conduct a full-scale waste audit.
2. Look at your purchasing records to see what you are buying that will eventually be thrown away.
3. Talk to the staff that handle the collection every day to find out what they are seeing.
4. Look to your peers. What have they managed to divert compared to what you have?

*This checklist is intended to aid in a full-scale, detailed waste audit.

PRE-SORT PLANNING

- Evaluate waste hauler's accepted recyclable types against current collections
- Determine methods and waste categories
- Outline goals and state some predictions
- List multiple, well-ventilated areas where waste sorting can be conducted
- List pros and cons of sorting at each area (ventilation, convenience, flooring, clean-up)
- Consider recruiting help with physical sort & involving student body
- Obtain buy-in/permission for waste sorting at the most ideal location

SAFETY & SORTING EQUIPMENT

- Puncture-resistant nitrile gloves
- Full Tyvek coverall
- Eye protection
- Some sort of mask
- Long pincer-style cooking tongs
- Clean-up supplies and equipment
- First-Aid Kit [better safe than sorry]
- Folding Tables w/ Plastic Covering*

*Quick Tip: Consider creating a "lip" or frame on the perimeter of the table under the plastic covering to keep liquids from running off.

PHYSICAL SORTING

- Coordinate time and place with the sorting team
- Coordinate waste "pull" and note the time and place of sample
- Execute waste audit by separating by waste stream*
- Tally up or weigh various waste streams, record
- Clean up your mess and dispose/recycle properly

*Quick Tip: if the trash is already in a bag or bin, don't dump that bag or bin. Lift the items out of that container and leave the wet slop in the bottom.

FINDINGS & FOLLOW UP

- Tally data and produce bar graphs and/or pie charts
- Compare findings against initial predictions
- Objectively evaluate the sample size and date/time of "pull" and sort
- Compare findings to previous waste-audits if available
- Compare findings against purchasing records
- Discuss findings with custodial staff and other stakeholders
- Make recommendations and action plans

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

BRAND The culmination of intangibles people associate with a product or service in relation to their expectations with it.

BRAND-EXTENSION Leveraging the recognition of a brand into another area or category.

OPENING IDS Labels on recycling bins denoting which materials belong in each bin.

DIVERSION RATE Percentage of waste diverted from landfill to be recovered/recycled.



You can't divert stuff out of the trash if you don't know what's in there. The Waste Audit is intended to help you identify lost recycling opportunities.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Surviving the dreaded waste audit pt.1](#)

[Surviving the dreaded waste audit pt.2](#)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

GARETT LAUGAVITZ Working in marketing at Max·R, Garrett coordinates trade shows, contributes to the company blog and serves on their Green Team. Garrett has been with Max·R since 2005; he began working in manufacturing, joined the marketing team in 2008 and was named Assistant Marketing Manager in 2011. Garrett has undertaken or contributed to a number of green projects including switching to 100% renewable energy, achieving Audubon International's property designation as a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary, as well as various education and recycling initiatives.