

How to Conduct a Visual Waste Audit

Use these guidelines if you will be conducting an audit for the first time, or if you'd like to track your event waste.

A waste audit helps you measure the different types of waste generated at your event. The results will help you determine an approximate waste volume and composition, identify opportunities to improve your current waste management initiatives, and compare how much waste was truly garbage (landfilled) compared to diverted (i.e. recycled or composted). Additionally, an audit will allow you to compare your performance against best practices and other similar events. The following guide will provide you with a step-by-step process for conducting a high-level waste audit at your event.

- 1) Use the “Waste audit data collection” sheets for your audit. Print in advance so you can record data and notes as you go.
- 2) If you wish to keep waste sources separate during auditing, use one (or more, if needed) data sheets for each source.
- 3) Establish your bin size(s). If using multiple-sized bins, be sure to record their specific volumes on your data sheets (template on the following page). This information is critical for accurate data collection.
- 4) Monitor the bins to ensure proper diversion and take note of trends in materials. Also note which bins appear to be filling at a faster rate.
- 5) If a bin becomes full before the end of the event, mark down which bin is full and how full it is before having it removed and replaced.
- 6) At the end of the event, conduct a sweep of all bins to determine how full each is, visually (e.g., 25%, 50%, 75%, 100%).
- 7) Be sure to record on your data sheet how full each bin was prior to being removed and the general composition of the materials.
- 8) Be sure to monitor each waste station consistently, i.e., all volunteers are on shift from 10AM – 4PM to achieve consistent results.

