

module 3



# waste audit

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Activity presentation

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In this activity students will conduct a waste audit. Waste audits are important tools to get an understanding of the quantity and composition of waste, as well as how it changes over time. RECYC-QUEBEC has twelve categories (Boucher, 2024), but waste audits in schools can be more simplified. After identifying the types of “waste” their class generates in the first activity, students will then use some of the materials to create art.

Materials

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-  Scales to weigh the waste
-  Gloves for students or teachers
-  Access to recycling, trash and composting
-  Graphic organizer

Activity breakdown

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Explain to students that they will conduct a waste audit in their learning space. This can be a community space, a classroom, or even an entire school depending on the number of students and the amount of time available. Whether the audit is conducted in one day or over the space of several days to a week depends on the amount and type of waste generated in the space.

- ② As a class, collect waste generated from a classroom or community space. How you collect the material depends on the space and the type of bags used in the space. For example, it is easiest if your school uses clear trash bags. If the school does not, only collect recyclables bags or classroom wastebins. Make sure to wear gloves.

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- ③ Ensure there are no sharp objects, decaying food or any material with bodily fluids. As a class, sort the waste. *Ask the students if they are able to easily identify sealed bags (for example, recycling). Was there any waste you might dispose of in another way? How much of the waste consists of food?*

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- ④ Use the provided sheet to classify the waste into different categories, depending on the waste management of the learning space. These categories might be recyclables (sorted into glass, cardboard and paper and plastics), organics (if there is a composting system in place), and landfill. Ask students to identify what type of waste goes in each category in your municipality, and whether *Ask if these are useful categories? Does the waste fit neatly into them? Is the waste sorted "properly"?*

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- ⑤ Once the waste has been sorted into categories, students will rank the waste based on which is most common. Students should decide how they will determine the rank of the waste- for instance, they may choose to count the pieces or weigh the waste if there are scales available. *Ask if there any challenges in trying to determine how to rank them.*

Activity breakdown (continued)

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Ask students to determine what they think the waste materials were used for. *Is there an alternative that could be used that would not have to go to landfill or go into a recycling bin? Alternatives could include using already existent materials in different ways, or coming up with entirely new materials. Ask students if they can come up with other uses for the materials they have identified through the bags.*

Conclusion

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Explain to students that findings from waste audits can give us a lot of important information. We are oftentimes not aware of how much stuff we're throwing away. Conducting a waste audit gives us a clear visual of not only the amount, but the types of waste that are generated. Once we have a clearer idea of the type of waste that is created in a space we can come up with strategies to reduce waste, and repurpose the waste that is already created.

