



RUBICON Method™ Waste Audit Guide

A practical guide to a
self-conducted waste audit.



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Checklist: What do you need?

- Platform scale to weigh your waste streams
- Tarp(s) to keep your space clean
- Heavy duty gloves to keep your volunteers clean and safe
- Masking tape and markers for labels to organize your bags
- Extra bin liners/bags (**black** = landfill, **clear** = recycling, **green** = organics)
- This guide and data tracking table (see template below)
- Volunteers* to perform the waste audit

*What volunteers should wear: Closed toe shoes, clothes they won't mind getting dirty

Before the Audit: Questions to Ask

1. How many people live or work in the space you are performing your audit?
2. How much time do you have available to perform the audit?
3. How many volunteers will you need? *For example, if you have 250 people and 2 hours, you will need 5 volunteers. If you have the same number of people and only one hour, you will need 10 volunteers.*

$$\frac{\text{\# of people in space} \times (1 \div \text{available time in hours})}{25}$$

4. Do you need to perform a waste audit on your entire space? Consider doing a partial audit if you do have the volunteer capacity.
5. Identify the current state of your waste and recycling program. What materials are not accepted by your waste hauler in your current waste stream? *Unacceptable items vary by locality; you will need to contact your provider or research the specifics. Below is a list of common items that are occasionally not accepted.*

SOMETIMES NOT ACCEPTABLE IN RECYCLING BIN	SOMETIMES NOT ACCEPTABLE IN COMPOST BIN	SOMETIMES NOT ACCEPTABLE IN LANDFILL TRASH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glass • Cardboard • Plastic bags/film • Flexible packaging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meat • Bones • Compostable service ware 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hazardous waste • Universal waste (i.e. lightbulbs, batteries) • Electronic waste (e-waste)

6. Identify locations of current bins.
7. Contact your custodians/vendors to plan the waste audit time to prevent your bins from being emptied on the day of your audit.

During the Audit: Steps to Take

1. Gather all waste for your audit and **label** each bag with the location and waste stream of the bin around the office.
2. Sort through each labeled bag **one bin and one location at a time** and separate into piles by material type (landfill, recycling, compost).
3. Using your platform scale, weigh each pile separately by material type.
4. Enter the weights on the data tracking table.
5. Calculate gross weight by summing up all material types from every pile.
6. Calculate contamination weight by subtracting the weight of the material appropriate to the bin type from the gross weight. *For example, if you have a trash bin with a gross weight of 10 lbs. and 6 lbs. of it is actual landfill trash, your contamination weight is 4 lbs.*
7. Gather all weights for the bins located at that bin station.
8. Calculate **current** diversion rate.

$$\frac{\text{weight of material diverted from landfill}}{\text{total weight of all material}}$$

9. Calculate **potential** diversion rate.

$$\frac{\text{weight of all material that could be recycled or composted}}{\text{total weight of all material}}$$

10. Move on to the next bin location and repeat steps 2 through 9.

After the Audit: Adjustments to Make

1. Clean up your space and make sure to replace the liners/bags in your bins.
2. Which existing services and equipment are still appropriate as-is?
3. Should any services be revised, optimized, or removed entirely? Think about your organization's specific needs, goals, and opportunities.
4. What new services and equipment are needed? Work with Rubicon or your current vendor to explore your options.
5. Can you eliminate or reduce any materials in your waste stream?
6. Are you training the people who contribute to your waste stream? Training includes proper signage and continuing education on "what goes where."
7. Adjust waste and recycling program to promote higher diversion rate. Some simple solutions include:
8. Perform regular waste audits to track progress and adjust the program as needed.

Learn more about the [RUBICONMethod™](#) and promote a **HIGHER DIVERSION RATE** for your company!

Data Tracking Table

LOCATION OF BIN STATION:			
BIN TYPE			
MATERIAL TYPE	LANDFILL BIN	RECYCLING BIN	COMPOST BIN
Landfill			
Recycling			
Compost			
Gross Weight			
Contamination Weight			
Current Diversion Rate			
Potential Diversion Rate			

LOCATION OF BIN STATION:			
BIN TYPE			
MATERIAL TYPE	LANDFILL BIN	RECYCLING BIN	COMPOST BIN
Landfill			
Recycling			
Compost			
Gross Weight			
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Current Diversion Rate			
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Compost			
Gross Weight			
Contamination Weight			
Current Diversion Rate			
Potential Diversion Rate			

Example Table

		LOCATION OF BIN STATION:		Break Room
		BIN TYPE		
MATERIAL TYPE	LANDFILL BIN	RECYCLING BIN	COMPOST BIN	
Landfill	2	2.5	1	
Recycling	8	4.5	3	
Compost	5	1	6	
Gross Weight	15	8	10	
Contamination Weight	13	3.5	4	
Current Diversion Rate	55%			
Potential Diversion Rate	83%			

Example Labels

You will need to label your bags to keep them organized. Use a strip of tape and a marker to label each bag; example below.

Break Room Landfill Bin
Break Room Recycling Bin
Break Room Compost Bin
Operations Landfill Bin #1
Operations Recycling Bin #1
Operations Landfill Bin #2
Operations Recycling Bin #2

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6 Steps to Successful Recycling and Waste Reduction



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D I V E R T



Determine

- ▶ current state of waste and recycling program
- ▶ accepted materials and local regulations
- ▶ needs, goals, and opportunities

Initiate

- ▶ new plan for waste and recycling collection
- ▶ optimized services and hauler schedule
- ▶ equipment and sustainable office supply purchases

Vocalize

- ▶ program improvements to staff, vendors, and custodians
- ▶ what to recycle through picture-based bin signage
- ▶ internal team leaders for feedback and questions

Eliminate

- ▶ food waste
- ▶ disposable tableware and non-recyclables
- ▶ individually-packaged goods

Roll-out

- ▶ side-by-side bin stations
- ▶ color-coded bin liners (**landfill**, **recycling**, **compost**)
- ▶ bins for donations and hard to recycle materials

Track

- ▶ recycling rates and bin contamination
- ▶ ongoing program adjustments
- ▶ sustainability goals and reporting

