



Conduct a Household Waste Audit

For this activity, you will be conducting a household waste audit. Have you ever wondered how much garbage you and your family recycle each week, could possibly compost each week, and send to the landfill each week? Most of us do not think as much as we could about your garbage production. Remember that as garbage decomposes in landfills, methane, a greenhouse gas, is produced. So, the more garbage you produce, the faster our climate warms.

Supplies

- Three Garbage Bins
- Scale
- Willing family members who produce garbage

Procedure

1. Locate three empty garbage bins and label them for:
 - a. Recycling (glass, paper, plastic, cardboard, cans)
 - b. Organic/compostable waste (all kinds of food scraps, coffee grounds, tea bags, eggshells)
 - c. Landfill waste (anything not in the above categories)
2. Weigh the empty garbage bins (so you can subtract the weight of the bins later).
3. You and your family should put all your waste into the bins for a 48-hour time period. Be sure to check the bins throughout to ensure people are putting waste into the correct bins.
4. After 48 hours, weigh each bin again to see how much waste was produced in each category. To find the total amount of waste in each category, subtract the beginning weight of the bin.

Important Terms

- **Recyclable Materials:** Materials that can be recycled, such as glass, paper, plastic, cardboard, or cans.
- **Organic/Compostable Materials:** Food scraps that break down easily, such as coffee grounds, tea bags, eggshells, and banana peels.
- **Landfill Materials:** Any materials that cannot be recycled or composted like those in the above categories.

Data

Fill in the data table below:

	Weight of bin at start	Weight of bin at 48 hours	Total weight of trash (weight of bin at 48 hours - weight of bin at start)
Recycling			
Organic/Compost			
Landfill			

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Based on the data you have collected, how much trash might your family generate in week? In a month? In a year?
2. Were you surprised by how much trash your family produces?
3. Which bin had the most trash? Which had the least trash?
4. What are some ways you could reduce trash production in your family?
5. How does the amount of trash your family takes to the landfill impact climate change?
6. Were you more aware of how much trash you were producing after this audit? Were your family members?
7. What kinds of conversations did this activity produce around your home?