



Litter & Waste

Sustainability Audit

This guide will help you actively observe your surroundings by zooming in on *Litter and Waste* in and around your school grounds. Go out, explore, investigate and start planning your Eco-School actions!



EXPLORE LITTER & WASTE WITH ECO-SCHOOLS

Waste and Litter create significant environmental challenges, contributing to pollution and worsening climate change. Eco-Schools can help reduce these impacts by embracing the 5Rs -Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Repair/Rot - key principles of a circular economy. By refusing unnecessary items, reducing consumption, reusing and repairing products, and recycling or composting, we minimise waste and conserve resources.



Your Eco-Committee can choose to focus on the theme Litter and Waste, or explore several themes at once. Forming sub-groups within the committee ensures continuity, with each group taking long-term responsibility for a specific theme and developing expertise over time. Use the Eco-Schools Seven Steps to explore and weave the theme throughout every part of your school.

SOME QUESTIONS TO GET YOU STARTED...

Local Practices

- What existing practices in our school and community effectively support waste reduction?
- What are we currently doing well in managing waste sustainably?

Identifying Everyday Waste Activities

- Which school and home activities produce the largest amounts of waste?
- What types of waste are most commonly generated?

Understanding Waste Disposal

- How is waste from our school and community currently being managed? What waste or litter challenges can we identify?
- What happens to waste after disposal, and how sustainable are these processes?

Challenge assumptions, slow down, and really observe your surroundings. Your school has its own unique challenges and solutions that only sharp, curious minds will discover. Record what you see - notes, sketches, photos, or simple counts - at different times and seasons.



Ask critical questions: *What's here? What's missing? Why is it like this? What could change?* Use these insights to understand the current situation and move towards high-impact actions to reduce litter and waste at your school.



Litter & Waste Eco-Schools Sustainability Audit

Questions	Your Answers	Reflections/Observations
Cleanliness		
Does your local environment look clean or littered?		
Where is litter most visible (e.g. playgrounds, car parks, paths, near bins)?		
What types of litter do you see most often (e.g. wrappers, bottles, paper, plastics, cans)?		
Where do people tend to drop litter?		
Bins		
How many bins can you find around your school and school grounds?		
Where are bins placed?		
Are there recycling bins as well as general waste bins?		
How many recycling bins do you have around your school?		
Are the bins clearly labelled?		
What different materials are currently collected for recycling? <input type="checkbox"/> Paper <input type="checkbox"/> Plastic <input type="checkbox"/> Cardboard <input type="checkbox"/> Glass <input type="checkbox"/> Bio <input type="checkbox"/> Metal <input type="checkbox"/> Electronics <input type="checkbox"/> Food <input type="checkbox"/> Green waste <input type="checkbox"/> Batteries <input type="checkbox"/> Others		



Litter & Waste Eco-Schools Sustainability Audit

Questions	Your Answers	Reflections/Observations
<p>Waste Audit</p> <p>Choose a date to conduct a waste audit in your school. You will need a floor covering, rubber gloves, a weighing scale, trash bags, a pen and tracking sheets. At the end of the chosen school day, collect all the trash bags around your school. Dump the trash on the tarp and begin sorting it, separating it by types and collecting each type into a bag. Weigh the final bags of separated waste and make notes about your observations.</p> <p>1. How much the total weight of waste is in your school in one day 2. What are the most common waste items?</p>	<p>How much is the total weight for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> paper <input type="checkbox"/> plastic <input type="checkbox"/> cardboard <input type="checkbox"/> glass <input type="checkbox"/> bio <input type="checkbox"/> metal <input type="checkbox"/> electronics <input type="checkbox"/> food <input type="checkbox"/> batteries <input type="checkbox"/> green waste <input type="checkbox"/> others 	
<p>Litter Audit</p> <p>Choose a date and conduct a litter audit in and around your school. You will need a map with the designated areas, rubber gloves, tongs, buckets/bags, pens, tracking sheets and a weighing scale. In pairs or small groups, distribute the areas and collect the litter you find into your bags or buckets. At the end, sort out the collected litter and weigh each type.</p> <p>Keep track of:</p> <p>1. How much is the total weight of the collected litter? How much of it was collected in school and how much around your school? 2. What are the most littered items?</p> <p>What are the litter hotspots inside and around your school? Why does litter pile up there</p>	<p>How much is the total weight for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> paper <input type="checkbox"/> plastic <input type="checkbox"/> cardboard <input type="checkbox"/> glass <input type="checkbox"/> bio <input type="checkbox"/> metal <input type="checkbox"/> electronics <input type="checkbox"/> food <input type="checkbox"/> batteries <input type="checkbox"/> green waste <input type="checkbox"/> others <p>Count how many of the following you picked up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Pieces of paper <input type="checkbox"/> Plastic drink bottles <input type="checkbox"/> Plastic straws <input type="checkbox"/> Soft plastic <input type="checkbox"/> Food <input type="checkbox"/> Aluminum can or foil <input type="checkbox"/> Steel can <input type="checkbox"/> Drink box <input type="checkbox"/> Glass 	



Litter & Waste Eco-Schools Sustainability Audit

Questions	Your Answers	Reflections/Observations
Food Waste and Composting		
What happens to leftover food from lunch or snacks?		
How much uneaten food do you see being thrown away?		
Is there a compost bin or heap in your school or nearby?		
What kind of waste is collected for composting?		
Are there garden or plant areas that use compost made at school?		
Can you see insects, worms, or signs of decomposition around the compost bin?		
Packaging		
What types of packaging are most common? <input type="checkbox"/> single-use plastic <input type="checkbox"/> foil <input type="checkbox"/> paper <input type="checkbox"/> reusable containers <input type="checkbox"/> other		
Do you use reusable bottles or lunchboxes or single-use packaging?		
Reusing		
Can you find examples where materials are being reused? (e.g. jars, boxes, paper, bottles, furniture).		
Are there recycled or repurposed materials used for art and design project?		



Litter & Waste Eco-Schools Sustainability Audit

Questions	Your Answers	Reflections/Observations
Are broken items repaired or replaced?		
Are there any swap or share events (clothes, books, uniforms, equipment)? If so, who organises them?		
How many second-hand sales, or swaps has your school organised this year?		
Community		
Observe how people behave around litter, what is more common, picking up litter, or ignoring it?		
What signs are there reminding people to keep areas clean?		
Are there signs that waste harms wildlife?		
What happens to waste when it rains, where does it go?		
Does your school organise litter-picking days? How many people participate?		

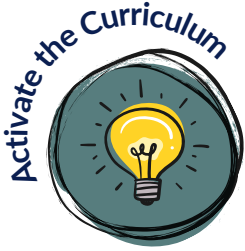


Litter & Waste Eco-Schools Sustainability Audit

Questions	Your Answers	Reflections/Observations
Your questions		

Choosing *Litter & Waste* as a key theme for action?

Follow these next Eco-Schools steps...



What knowledge or skills do you still need to start putting your ideas into action? Take some time to identify what's missing and discuss it within your Eco-Committee. Then, reach out to your teachers and tell them what you'd like to learn more about, whether it's recycling bins options, circularity, or creative ways to reuse materials. Together, you can build the knowledge and confidence needed to start real change!



Use what you've learned from your lessons, your Eco-Schools activities, and your own observations, to turn your ideas into real change by creating an Action Plan for Litter & Waste. Mobilise your Eco-Committee, teachers, school staff, parents, and the wider community to help you reach your goals. You could:



Create a composting system



Ensure accessibility to recycling bins



Facilitate swap or second-hand events



Organise cleanup events

Whatever actions you choose, make sure they are realistic, measurable, and long-lasting, so your Eco-Committee's work continues to grow year after year.



Monitor your actions to see the difference you have made! Use your Action Plan to check what's changed in your school and community. Have you spotted less waste? Are more people aware of the importance of recycling? You could compare *before-and-after photos*, *count bags of litter*, or *note how many people joined your activities*. Measuring your impact helps you celebrate success and plan even better actions for the future!



Make sure the whole school and local community are part of your Litter & Waste journey. Share your findings and actions through assemblies, newsletters, posters, or social media. Invite teachers, students, parents, and local experts to join activities or share their knowledge. By including different perspectives and experiences, your Eco-Committee will build stronger, more creative solutions that last.