

Kid's Activity #5

# "Garbology" 101

Be a food waste scientist!

Archeologists like to study the garbage dumps of ancient civilizations because they tell us a lot about the everyday lives of people and their lifestyles throughout history.

What would our garbage say about us? Likely that we wasted a lot! Let's see for ourselves with a simple food waste audit.

## Food Waste Audit:

**Time: 1-2 hours**

Audits are a way of closely examining something. In a food waste audit, we will separate our waste, then categorize and weigh it to see what we are throwing out and how much we waste.

**CLAIM**  
10 Influencer  
or Systems  
Thinker points

## You'll Need:

- Rubber gloves
- 3 large buckets or bins
- Plastic waste bags
- Portable or bathroom weight scale
- Log sheet or simple piece of paper to record weights
- Table, bench or chairs
- Clean-up materials (soap, spray, cloths, broom, mop)



## Making it Happen:

There are many ways to collect and measure food waste<sup>30</sup> and you can do it anywhere that people eat—in your home kitchen, school cafeteria, place of worship, community center, park or food court. Here's a simple waste audit to separate food waste from garbage and recycling and discover how much food could be saved from the landfill. See Activity #15 if you want to do a more in-depth audit.

1. Pick a time and location where people eat and get your supplies ready.
2. Share your waste audit plan with whoever usually takes care of the garbage.
3. Prepare a log sheet with two or three categories: 1) Food waste 2) Other waste 3) Recycling (if available).
4. Set up a measuring station near where people eat with two or three buckets or bins lined with clear plastic bags on a table, bench or chairs.
5. Remember to weigh the empty bucket or bin first and record the weight on your log sheet.
6. As people finish their meals, help separate their waste into the right buckets or bins. Ask them why they didn't finish their food.
7. Keep track of how many people bring their waste to calculate how much waste was produced per person.
8. When meal time is over, record the weight of each kind of waste and subtract the weight of its empty bin.



## What did you Learn?

- How much of the waste was food? (Example: 5 kg food waste / 10 kg total waste x 100 = 50 percent of our waste was food!)
- You can also divide food waste by the number of people or multiply it by the number of days in the year to find out how much you waste per person or over the entire year.
- What were the most common foods wasted?
- What were some of the reasons that food was thrown out?

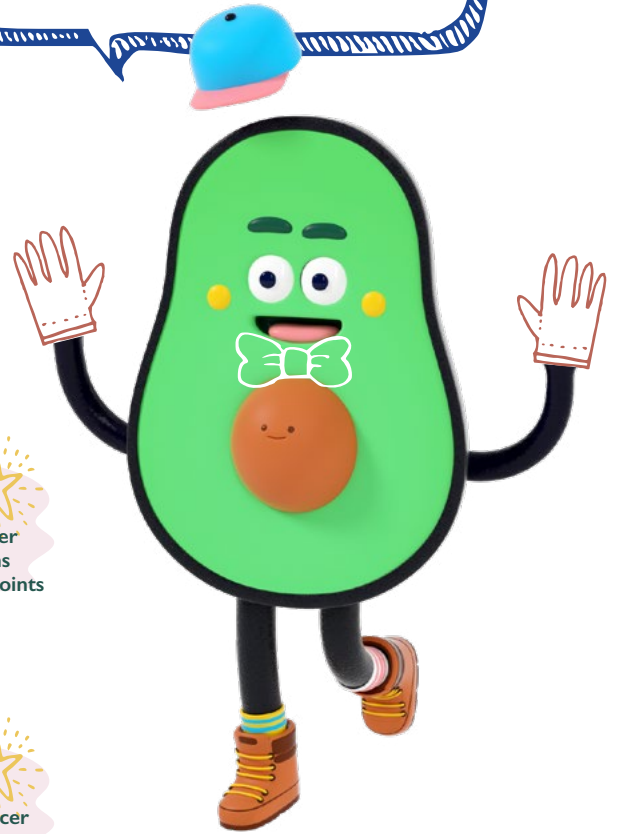
## Want to do More?

- Create a poster to encourage your friends to help prevent food waste.
- Brainstorm menu changes or other ideas that might help reduce food waste. See [Smarter Lunchrooms](#) for ideas.<sup>31</sup>
- Round Two! Set a goal of how much food waste could be prevented. Perform a second waste audit at a similar time of day for best comparison. When food is thrown out, ask and record why it wasn't finished. What are the most common reasons? Did you reach your waste reduction goal?
- Present your results on a poster or chart to show the difference between the first and second audits. Set goals and even a challenge for a third audit.
- If your location doesn't compost food scraps, could you help them start? Check out Activities #8 and #18 for everything you need to know to get started composting.



### Did you know?

The average school-aged kid throws out their own weight in food waste each year.<sup>32</sup>



<sup>30</sup>EPA (2017). A Guide to Conducting Student Food Waste Audits: A Resource for Schools. <<https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/guide-conducting-student-food-waste-audits-resource-schools>>

<sup>31</sup>Smarter Lunchrooms (2017). Resources from Smarter Lunchrooms Pioneers. <<https://www.smarterlunchrooms.org/scorecard-tools/resources-smarter-lunchrooms-pioneers#WasteRedu>>

<sup>32</sup>Based on US estimates from: Recycling Works Massachusetts (2018). Food Waste Estimator Guide. <<https://recyclingworksma.com/food-waste-estimation-guide/#Jump5>>