



Eco-Schools USA at Home: Consumption and Waste

HOW-TO ASSESS WASTE AT HOME

WHY THINK ABOUT MY CONSUMPTION AND WASTE?

The United States is home to just 4.3 percent of the world's population; however, it generates 30 percent of its trash. The average American creates a staggering 4.5 pounds of garbage daily. Almost everything we do creates waste, and as a society, we are currently producing more waste than ever before. Both our buying practices and wastefulness have significant environmental impacts.

MATERIALS

- Eco-Schools USA at Home Audit and Action Plan
- tarp/old shower curtain
- gloves
- a day's worth of trash
- papercraft materials

GUIDING QUESTIONS

RESEARCH THE ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS. THEY WILL HELP YOU UNDERSTAND THE TOPIC BETTER.

- 1) What is a consumer? Who are consumers?
- 2) What does it mean to be wasteful?
- 3) How can waste be categorized?
- 4) What are some environmental impacts associated with buying too much?
- 5) How can you become an eco-minded consumer and less wasteful?

STEP BY STEP

- 1) Read through the Eco-Schools USA at Home Consumption and Waste Audit and Action Plan and decide on dates to do a pre-action audit and a post-action audit. This will help determine the length of your project.
- 2) Gather one day's worth of trash of the entire family. Skip bathroom trash.
- 3) Prep your audit area. Set down a tarp (or large plastic item for trash sorting. If it's not windy, prep your space outside-you don't want trash to blow away! If outside is not an option, opt for tiled floors instead of carpet so that any leaks can be cleaned up more easily.
- 4) Organize your waste into four categories.
 - **Recycled Curbside.** paper, glass, metal, plastic bottles
 - **Recyclable-Not Curbside.** plastic bags, e-waste, batteries, textiles, lightbulbs
 - **Compost.** yard clippings, non-meat food waste, soiled paper
 - **Not Recyclable.** non-recyclable packaging, diapers, straws

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- 5) WASH YOUR HANDS.
- 6) Once you have your waste sorted by category, using the template provided, complete the audit, and make an action plan to reduce your waste.
- 7) After implementing your action plan, conduct a post-action audit, and share your results with your teacher, extended family, and or the local community.