

RecycleLab 'Self-Waste Audit' Information & Procedure

Conducting a waste audit offers science labs clear, measurable benefits. It helps identify the types and volumes of waste being generated, highlights opportunities to reduce single-use items, and uncovers inefficiencies in current waste segregation practices. By understanding exactly what is being thrown away, labs can make informed decisions to cut costs, improve sustainability, and ensure compliance with environmental targets. Additionally it's a great way to understand what waste you can potentially recycle using RecycleLab's plastic lab consumable recycling stream, which is specifically designed for science labs.

How to conduct your own waste audit

Step 1: Prepare for the Audit

Appoint a Waste Audit Lead

Choose one or more team members to coordinate the audit, collect data, and report findings.

Define the Scope

- Choose a specific lab or department.
- Determine the audit period (minimum 5 working days recommended).
- Identify the waste streams to be audited (e.g., general waste, recycling, lab plastic waste, clinical waste)

Gather Supplies

- Clear labelled containers for each waste stream
- Gloves and lab coats (PPE)
- Scales (for weighing waste)
- Tally sheets or spreadsheet (RecycleLab can provide a template)

Step 2: Collect and Categorise Waste

Track Waste at the Point of Disposal

Throughout the audit period, collect all waste in pre-labelled bins or containers according to the category:

- General Waste
- Lab Plastics (e.g. pipette tip boxes, centrifuge tubes)

- Recyclables (paper/cardboard, plastic bottles)
- Clinical Waste
- Sharps

Record Daily Observations Log:

- The number of items and/or weight of each item
- Material of each item

Step 3: Review and Analyse the Data**Calculate Totals**

- Add up weights (or counts) for each category
- Calculatedaily average waste generation per category

Identify Hotspots

- Which waste streams produce the most waste?
- Are certain items avoidable or reusable?
- Are recyclable itemsending up in general or clinical waste?

Highlight Opportunities

- Items that couldbewashed and reused
- Plastics suitableforspecialist recycling (e.g., RecycleLab's service)
- Mis-sorted wastethatcould be corrected

Alternative methods

An alternative approach to directly measuring the volume of lab consumables used is to analyse inventory and purchasing data. By tracking the quantity of specific items ordered and stocked over a set period, labs can estimate usage rates for individual consumables. This indirect method is especially useful in busy labs where real-time waste audits may not be feasible. From the estimated usage volumes, it is then possible to approximate the amount of waste generated, particularly for single-use items.

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