



Litter audit tool

A practical guide for Victorian schools



**ResourceSmart
Schools**

ResourceSmart Schools litter audit tool
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About this audit

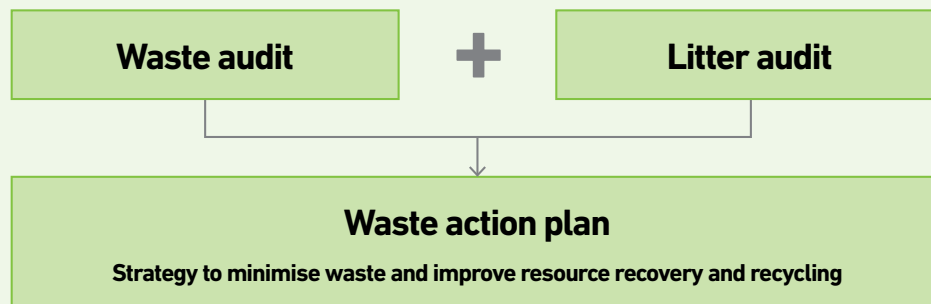
Welcome to the ResourceSmart Schools (RSS) litter audit tool.

The audit tool helps you identify types and quantities of litter in your school grounds, litter hotspots and where litter comes from. You can then analyse your data to find ways to reduce litter, recording your ideas and next steps in your waste action plan.

ResourceSmart Schools audit their litter at least once a year and upload results, photos and presentations to the RSS online system as part of the waste module. The first audit provides baseline data and subsequent audits monitor progress against baseline data.

The waste module is 1 of 5 modules in the RSS program. The other modules are core, biodiversity, energy and water. Schools must accomplish a set number of actions to complete each module and receive a certificate valid for four years.

The waste module has two separate audits – one for litter and one for waste:



What's included in this tool?

- › The difference between waste and litter
- › Tips for completing the audit
- › Checklist to guide teachers/facilitators through the audit
- › Two student worksheets
- › Resources and linking audit activities to the Victorian Curriculum (see the appendix), and
- › Glossary of litter terms.

What does the audit involve?

Teachers and students work together to assess litter use at their school. Teachers will do some preparation and follow-up work (see audit checklists) and students will complete worksheets on audit day.

Who should do the audit?

The student worksheets are best suited to students in Years 3–10, with the supervision and guidance of a teacher.

How long does the audit take?

Teachers will use their discretion to determine a realistic timeframe for each step of the litter audit.

How does the audit link to the Victorian Curriculum?

Exploring the concept of litter, which includes a litter audit, contributes to several learning areas in the Victorian Curriculum (see Appendix 2: Curriculum links). Involving students in this audit also helps with:

- › Critical and creative thinking: Responding effectively to environmental, social and economic challenges requires young people to be creative, innovative, enterprising and adaptable, with the motivation, confidence and skills to use critical and creative thinking purposefully.
- › Mathematics: Conducting a litter audit can incorporate using units of measurement, data and interpretation, chance, patterns, fractions, decimals and numbers.

Download curriculum guides from the [Sustainability Victoria](#) website

Where can I find more information?

Visit [Sustainability Victoria](#) for a module checklist and 'how to' guide packed full of ideas on how to work with students and the school community to reduce litter.

What's the difference between waste and litter?

Waste is used very broadly to describe items or materials that have been discarded because they are no longer wanted, no longer fit for purpose or cannot be used again for their original purpose (e.g. food packaging). Much of what is generally considered to be waste can be reused, repurposed or recovered for recycling.

Litter is waste that is outside the waste management system. In schools, this may be waste that has been dropped, illegally dumped, blown by the wind from bins without lids or blown in from outside the school.

Common waste materials in schools include food, paper and packaging, glass, plastic and aluminium. When these materials are not disposed of correctly, that's when we see litter appearing.

Research shows that two of the most common reasons for littering are 'too lazy' (24 per cent) and 'no bin' (21 per cent). This means we need to educate people and we need well-placed bins and signage. Find more information about litter on [Sustainability Victoria's website](#).



Photo: Litter is an eyesore and is bad for the environment including animals.

Tips for a successful audit

Pick a date

The best time for a litter audit is after lunch and not during or after major school events such as sports carnivals or a fete.

If your school is used by the community during weekends, you may want to audit litter on Friday afternoon and then again before recess on Monday to see if any litter results from the community activities.

Select audit location

Choose areas with high amounts of litter such as the schoolyard. It might be easier to measure a piece of ground and count the litter in a defined spot.

Notify school staff

Talk to maintenance staff about your planned audit so they understand what you are doing and can work around you.

Use the audit checklist

The teacher/facilitator checklist takes you step-by-step through the audit and will help you get everything ready in advance.



Teacher/facilitator audit checklist

Before audit day

Step 1: Gather background information

Upload 12 months of waste bills in the RSS online system to set your baseline data for the waste module.

Decide whether to audit the entire school grounds as a group or allocate outdoor areas to smaller audit groups.

Recruit students to complete the litter audit.

Print student worksheets.

Print an aerial map of your school. If your school doesn't have an aerial map, you can use Google Maps.

Step 2: Organise equipment

Each pair/small group will need:

Aerial map of school grounds.

Gloves for each student.

Tongs – one per pair.

Bucket – one per pair.

Student worksheet(s).

Pens and clipboards – one per pair.

Camera to gather evidence for your RSS waste module, presentations and audit assessment.

On audit day

Step 3: Introduce litter audit tool

Explain the purpose of the audit and clarify student understanding of terms used. Identify types and quantities of litter in your school grounds, litter hotspots and where litter is coming from.

Get students to complete the Current practices worksheet.

Hand out the Litter audit worksheet.

Review the method with the students (see Step 4).

Conduct safety briefing.

Safety briefing

Students must wear gloves and closed-toe shoes at all times and stay inside school boundaries. If they find sharp or heavy items, they must not touch them and should tell their teacher.

Look at the aerial map and decide what areas to audit.

Establish student pairs or small groups and designate areas to audit.

Step 4: Collect data

Give students gloves, bucket and tongs, clipboard, pen and worksheet.

Walk around designated areas and record findings in the litter audit worksheet.

Take photos of litter collected and any hotspots.

Highlight litter hotspots on your aerial map.

Collate results from each group.

Dispose of litter correctly.

Discuss findings.

During or just after audit day

Step 5: Complete waste action plan and prioritise actions

Start brainstorming your litter actions in your waste action plan with students. Ask the following discussion questions:

- › Were you surprised by the results?
- › Which items were most common in the litter?
- › Where did the litter come from?
- › Are there any litter hotspots – places with a lot of litter?
- › What can we do to reduce litter?
- › What recommendations or actions should be included in the litter action plan template?

Populate the litter component of the waste action plan with your litter audit results and recommendations. List actions in priority order from highest to lowest.

Upload litter audit results, photos and presentations to RSS Waste Module in the [RSS online system](#) as support and evidence.

After the audit

Step 6: Communicate and implement

Encourage students to present findings and recommendations to principal, assistant principal and school council (buildings and grounds subcommittee).

Communicate to the wider community through:

- › presentations during whole school assembly
- › stories and hints in the school newsletter, school blog and any social media channels
- › stall at school fair
- › student conferences, and
- › teacher and principals' conferences.

Upload presentations to RSS online system as support and evidence.

Get the waste action plan approved by the principal, assistant principal and business manager.

Upload the approved action plan to the waste module in the RSS online system and incorporate it into your School Environmental Management Plan (SEMP).

Step 7: Monitoring for continued engagement

Ongoing monitoring will tell you how effective you have been in implementing changes and reducing litter.

Recruit monitors to look regularly for litter hotspots.

Conduct regular litter audits to monitor progress.

Write stories about your litter audit to share in newsletters or on your school's intranet, website and social media channels.

Compare impact and achievements with baseline (reflect on where you started).

Communicate and celebrate your success with your school community!



Current practices

Name (s): _____ Date: _____

Does your school do any of the actions listed below to reduce litter? Complete the table and think about improvements your school could make.

Litter reducing practices

Action	Yes/No	Comments
We eat our lunch in designated areas.		
We run regular Nude Food Days.		
Our waste monitors regularly check bins to make sure litter isn't coming from them.		
We include reminders and updates in our newsletter.		
We update our teachers, students and parents at whole school assemblies.		
We encourage students to purchase nude food lunchboxes.		
We educate new families on our nude food policy.		
We take home any food packaging.		
We pick up litter to gain house points/prizes.		
Our canteen sells food with minimal packaging.		
We encourage students and teachers to bring a reusable water bottle to school.		
We encourage teachers to bring a reusable coffee cup to school.		
We make our own beeswax wraps and sell them to the school community.		

Questions

What else could your school do to reduce litter?





Litter audit

Pick up litter in your designated area and record your findings in the table below.

Date and time: _____

Location: _____

Student name(s): _____

Weather conditions (circle today's weather)



Windy



Recent rain



Sunny



Other _____



Questions

What were the most littered items?

Did you find any litter hotspots in your schoolyard? Why does the litter pile up there? (e.g. wind blows it there or rain washes litter towards stormwater drain). Mark any litter hotspots on your school map.

What could you do to stop litter from happening?

Appendix 1: Resources

[Sustainability Victoria](#) has information on litter and illegal dumping.

Appendix 2: Curriculum links

Exploring the concept of litter, which includes a litter audit, contributes to several different learning areas in the Victorian Curriculum F–10. The table below lists examples of how a litter audit could contribute to student learning outcomes in Years 3 to 10.

For more inspiration, read about sustainability as a cross-curriculum priority on the Victorian Curriculum website or download the [RSS curriculum guides](#).

Linking litter audits with the Victorian Curriculum

Levels	Learning area	Content description
Years 3 and 4	Science	Science knowledge helps people to understand the effects of their actions (VCSSU056)
Years 3 and 4	Health and physical education	Describe strategies to make the classroom and playground healthy, safe and active spaces (VCHPEP095)
Years 3 and 4	Ethical capability	Explore the extent to which particular acts might be regarded by different people as good or bad, right or wrong, better or worse, and explain why (VCECU005)
Years 5 and 6	Science	Scientific understandings, discoveries and inventions are used to inform personal and community decisions and to solve problems that directly affect people's lives (VCSSU073)
Years 5 and 6	Ethical capability	Discuss how ethical principles can be used as the basis for action, considering the influence of cultural norms, religion, world views and philosophical thought on these principles. (VCECU010)
Years 7 and 8	Science	Some of Earth's resources are renewable, but others are non-renewable (VCSSU100) Science and technology contribute to finding solutions to a range of contemporary issues; these solutions may impact on other areas of society and involve ethical considerations (VCSSU090)
Years 7 and 8	Geography	The challenges of managing and planning Australia's urban future (VCGGK126)
Years 7 and 8	Health and physical education	Plan and use health strategies and resources to enhance the health, safety and wellbeing of their communities (VCHPEP130)
Years 7 and 8	Ethical capability	Investigate criteria for determining relative importance of matters of ethical concerns. (VCECU016)
Year 9 and 10	Geography	Environmental worldviews of people and their implications for environmental management (VCGGK146)
Year 9 and 10	Health and physical education	Plan, implement and critique strategies to enhance the health, safety and wellbeing of their communities (VCHPEP149)

Glossary

Composting is a process where microorganisms breakdown organic materials (in the presence of oxygen), which produce carbon dioxide, heat and organic residues that may be used as a soil additive.

Food organics includes food waste from households or industry including food processing waste, out-of-date or off food, meat, fruit and vegetable scraps. It excludes liquid wastes.

Garden organics are derived from domestic, industrial and commercial garden sources including grass clippings, woody garden organics, trees and limbs, stumps and roots. Also referred to as green waste or green organics.

Kerbside collections are the waste collection services provided by local councils to residential properties including garbage, commingled recyclables and garden organics. It excludes hard waste.

Landfill is a site for the disposal of waste to land.

Litter includes rubbish and waste left in public or open spaces.

Mulch is any garden organics product that has undergone composting for a period of not less than six weeks, which is then suitable for placing on soil surfaces.

Recycling is a term that covers a wide range of activities including collection, sorting, reprocessing and manufacture into new products.

Waste is anything that is no longer valued by its owner and which is, or will be, discarded.





Sustainability Victoria
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50 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne VIC 3000
Phone (03) 8626 8700
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