

What's in my trash? - Trash Audit

Background:

Did you know that single use plastics are the top trash found at our cleanups? Since 2014, the League to Save Lake Tahoe and community volunteers have executed over 400 cleanup events. During these events, over 60,500 pieces of plastic litter have been picked up. This includes items like cups, bottle caps, straws and utensils, and even cigarette butts. Last year was also the first year that microplastics were found in Lake Tahoe. Not a good thing. Thankfully, by reducing the amount of plastic trash we personally generate, we can help tackle the issue before it becomes a problem.

Today, we are going to walk through how to conduct a trash audit at home, specifically focusing on our plastic trash. A trash audit is a simple process to see how much plastic waste we generate over a few days and what categories of plastics our trash tends to fall into. We will then learn how much of our plastic waste is actually recyclable and ways that we can work to reduce how much plastic trash we generate.








Instructions:

1. Make a hypothesis about what your most common plastic trash will be from and why.

2. Collect all the plastic trash you generate for the next two to five days and place the plastic trash in a bag, bucket, or whatever you have around! Watch our five minute trash audit video located on our website at keeptahoeblue.org/events or on our Instagram (@keeptahoeblue).
3. At the end of your two to five day trash audit, grab your collection of plastic trash and tally up which types of plastic you collected. (These numbers can be found indented into or printed on the plastic generally at the bottom of the item. If there is no number, then tally it in "no number associated" line).

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Types of plastic collected

 1 PETE	 2 HDPE	 3 V	 4 LDPE	 5 PP	 6 PS	 7 Other

No number associated: _____

4. Create a graph, using your data above, that shows the distribution of the types of plastic you collected.

5. What was your most common plastic trash? Was it what you expected? Explain.

6. Which of these plastics do you think are recyclable?

7. What are ways that you can repurpose this plastic waste?

8. Follow up assignment:

- a. Research the waste diversion programs at your local refuse center. Then brainstorm and make an argument for additional ways your community could decrease their amount of waste.
- b. Tune in to our waste management panel discussion with Keep Truckee Green, Incline Government Improvement District - Waste Not and South Tahoe Refuse to learn about what is recyclable, what is not, where your trash goes and how to reduce trash. Ask the experts the questions that you have.
 - i. Go to live stream keeptahoeblue.org/event on April 15 at 5:30 pm. After that date, the recording will be live on the website.