

Ed2S · EDUCATION2SUCCESS

Waste Log

Track what you throw away, spot patterns, and build smarter low-waste habits.

A companion tool for the Ed2S 30-Day Zero Waste Challenge

10

Pages

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Log Templates

Pattern

Review

Print-Ready

Reusable

"You cannot change what you do not notice."

Created by Education2Success.org



Why Track Your Waste?

"You cannot change what you do not notice."

Ed2S Waste Log — Core Principle

Most waste happens automatically.

We don't decide to throw things away, we just do it, on autopilot, dozens of times a day. A snack wrapper here, a paper towel there, takeout packaging from a rushed lunch. None of it feels significant in the moment.

Tracking changes how you see your habits.

When you write something down, it stops being invisible. Logging waste doesn't judge you, it just helps you see what's actually happening, which is the first step toward changing it.

Patterns reveal opportunity.

You might be surprised by what shows up most often. Once you see a pattern, it's much easier to find a realistic way to reduce it. A repeated item is almost always an easy target for change.

This is a tool for observation, not perfection.

What this log can reveal:

Repeated food waste · Too much takeout packaging · Forgotten leftovers · Frequent bottled drinks
Excessive paper towel use · Convenience-driven impulse purchases

01. Notice

Track what you throw away each day.

02. Pattern

Identify what shows up most often.

03. Improve

Find one realistic change at a time.

How to Use This Log

Simple, clear, and repeatable.

One challenge per day

Log waste as it happens throughout the day, or do a quick review each evening.

What to track

Food scraps, packaging, paper products, disposable drinks, takeout waste, household items.

When to use it

Daily during the challenge · Weekly for a reset · Before/after a new habit.

What not to overthink

You don't need to log every microscopic scrap. Focus on the items that show up repeatedly.

Item Thrown Away

Be specific, "leftover pasta" is more useful than "food."

Category

Food / Plastic / Paper / Drinks / Takeout / Household / Other.

Where It Came From

Home, school, work, restaurant, grocery store?

Why It Became Waste

Habit? Convenience? Forgot? Overbought? Expired?

Avoidable? (Y/N/M)

Yes, No, or Maybe? Be honest, not harsh.

Better Option Next Time

One simple idea. Not a perfect plan, just a starting point.

Quick Tips:

Keep the log nearby so you remember to write things down. Write soon after things happen. Focus on patterns, repeated items matter more than rare ones.

Common Waste Categories

A simple system for grouping what you throw away. Use these categories to reveal patterns, but adapt them to what works for you.



Food Waste

Uneaten leftovers, spoiled produce, expired items, over-served meals, fruit peels, vegetable scraps



Plastic Packaging

Snack wrappers, plastic film, produce bags, zip-lock bags, product packaging from purchases



Paper Products

Paper towels, napkins, receipts, paper packaging, tissues, paper cups, newspaper



Disposable Drink Containers

Plastic water bottles, coffee cups, drink lids, straws, juice boxes, canned drinks



Takeout / Convenience Waste

Plastic utensils, sauce packets, to-go boxes, delivery packaging, paper bags, condiment cups



Household / Personal Care Waste

Cleaning product packaging, hygiene product waste, disposable razors, cotton rounds, wipes



Other

Anything that does not fit the categories above, batteries, electronics, miscellaneous items.

These categories are a starting point, not a strict system. If something doesn't fit cleanly, place it where it feels closest, or use Other. The goal is patterns, not perfect classification.

Example Waste Log Entry

This is what a completed daily log looks like. Notice how each entry captures a pattern, not just a single item.

Date: Tuesday, Jan 14

Challenge Day: 3

Location: Home + Campus

Top Category:
Food Waste

Item Thrown Away	Category	Where It Came From	Why It Became Waste	Avoidable? (Y / N / M)	Better Option Next Time
Banana peel	Food Waste	Breakfast at home	Normal food scrap	Unavoidable	Compost if possible
Half-eaten fries	Food Waste	Restaurant takeout	Ordered too much	Avoidable	Order smaller or save earlier
Plastic water bottle	Disposable Drink	Bought on campus	Forgot reusable	Avoidable	Carry reusable bottle daily
Paper towel	Paper Products	Kitchen cleanup	Used out of habit	Maybe	Use cloth towel for small spills
Snack wrapper	Plastic Packaging	Afternoon snack	Single-serve convenience	Avoidable	Buy larger pack or bring snack
Sauce packets (3)	Takeout Waste	Delivery meal	Automatically included	Avoidable	Ask for no extra packets
Produce bag	Plastic Packaging	Grocery store	Habit at checkout	Avoidable	Bring reusable produce bags

Y = Avoidable

N = Unavoidable

M = Maybe

Pattern Insight:

Notice the pattern: 5 of 7 items were avoidable. One change, carrying a reusable bottle, could eliminate a repeated item. Another, eating leftovers first, could cut food waste in half.

What stood out today? *"Too much food waste, I need to check the fridge before ordering out."*

Daily Waste Log

Print this page as many times as you need. One page per day works best.

Date	Challenge Day #	Location	Today's Biggest Waste Category

What stood out today?

Item Thrown Away	Category	Where It Came From	Why It Became Waste	Avoidable? (Y / N / M)	Better Option Next Time

Y = Avoidable	N = Unavoidable	M = Maybe
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Quick reflection: What waste could you easily reduce tomorrow?

Daily Waste Log + Pattern Notes

A deeper version of the daily log, includes pattern prompts at the bottom.

Date	Challenge Day #	Mood / Energy (optional)

Did convenience increase waste today? Y / N	Did planning reduce waste today? Y / N
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Item	Category	Why It Became Waste	Avoidable? (Y/N/M)	Better Option

Y = Avoidable	N = Unavoidable	M = Maybe
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Pattern Notes — End of Day

What showed up most often today? <hr/>	What happened because of convenience? <hr/>
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What waste felt most avoidable? <hr/>	What one choice could reduce this tomorrow? <hr/>
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Weekly Waste Pattern Review

Use this page at the end of each week to spot trends across your daily logs.

Top 3 Waste Categories This Week

#1 _____

#2 _____

#3 _____

Most Common Repeated Items

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Most Avoidable Waste This Week

Least Avoidable Waste This Week

One Pattern That Surprised Me

One Thing I Want to Improve Next Week

My easiest next step:

What Causes My Waste?

Waste often comes from systems and habits, not intentions. Identifying your triggers helps you build better systems that make lower-waste choices feel automatic.

Common Waste Triggers — Check All That Apply

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Forgot reusable items at home | <input type="checkbox"/> Bought too much food |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ate out unexpectedly | <input type="checkbox"/> Rushed or too busy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tired / low energy | <input type="checkbox"/> Unplanned shopping trip |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grabbed convenience items | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor food storage habits |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Didn't see food in the fridge | <input type="checkbox"/> Habit / autopilot behavior |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social setting (eating out with others) | <input type="checkbox"/> School or work limitations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Impulse purchase | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

My Top 3 Personal Waste Triggers

- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
-

Better Systems I Can Try

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Put reusable bags by the door | <input type="checkbox"/> Meal plan once a week |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Create a "use first" section in the fridge | <input type="checkbox"/> Keep bottle in backpack always |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carry reusable utensils | <input type="checkbox"/> Shop with a grocery list |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reduce impulse purchases | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

My best next system change:

Awareness Is a Powerful First Step

Simply noticing your waste is already meaningful progress.

Keep Going.

You don't need to fix everything at once. Using this log, even imperfectly, means you're paying attention. And attention is where all good habits start.

Patterns create opportunities. Once you see what shows up most often, you have a clear target. One small, realistic change at a time is enough.

Keep using this log whenever you want to restart your low-waste habits, test a new routine, reduce food waste, or simply check in with yourself.

Use this log whenever you want to:

- ◆ Restart your low-waste habits
- ◆ Test a new sustainable routine
- ◆ Reduce food waste this week
- ◆ Notice convenience waste patterns
- ◆ Reflect on your progress
- ◆ Complete the 30-Day Challenge

From Ed2S:

Thank you for supporting Education2Success and helping make sustainability more practical, thoughtful, and accessible. Your effort, however small, helps build a more intentional future.