

HOW TO MEASURE HOW MUCH GOOD STUFF IS IN YOUR GARBAGE

Today's date: _____

Materials needed:

- | | | |
|---|---|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sturdy work gloves | <input type="checkbox"/> Three large plastic garbage bags | <input type="checkbox"/> This form |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Large plastic tarp | <input type="checkbox"/> Pen or pencil | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bathroom scale | | |

Steps:

- Single-family households:* On the afternoon or evening before collection day, roll your garbage container to a flat area where you have room to spread the tarp, such as your driveway or lawn. *Apartment residents:* Take your full trash bag outside instead of disposing of it in your building's trash container; find a flat, out of the way area where you can spread the tarp.
- Spread the tarp on the ground and empty the contents of the garbage container onto the tarp.
Tip: If the contents are not bagged, carefully tip the container over with the help of another person.
- Wearing gloves, separate everything into three piles: recyclables, compostables and garbage.
Tip: The rules for what can be recycled vary by city. Check your city's recycling rules at www.stopwaste.org/recycling/residents/recycling-and-garbage-services-your-city.
- Put each pile in a separate bag.
- Using a bathroom scale, weigh each bag and write down the weights.
Tip: An easy way to do this is to weigh yourself, and then weigh yourself holding the bag. To get the weight of the bag, subtract your weight from the weight of you plus the bag.

Recyclables (R): _____ lbs. Compostables (C): _____ lbs. Garbage (G): _____ lbs.

- Calculate the percent of good stuff (recyclables and compostables) in your garbage: add the weight of the recyclables and compostables, divide by the weight of all three bags, and multiply by 100.

$$(R + C) \div (R + C + G) \times 100 = \% \text{ good stuff in your garbage} \quad \underline{\hspace{1cm}} \div \underline{\hspace{1cm}} \times 100 = \underline{\hspace{1cm}}\%$$

If your % good stuff

in the garbage is:	You are:
Less than 10%	FANTASTIC! Keep it up! How low can you go?
10–25%	Not bad but you can do better. Check your city's recycling rules and make it a habit to sort better every day.
More than 25%	Not doing as well as many people in your community. Remind everyone in your household that recycling is important, and make sure they know the rules for what goes where. Challenge yourselves to become Fantastic Recyclers!

- Empty the bags into the appropriate recyclables, compostables and garbage containers. Save the plastic bags for reuse or put them in the garbage. Don't leave any litter on the ground!
- In addition to keeping food scraps, food soiled paper and recyclables out of the garbage, it's important to keep garbage out of the recyclables and compostables containers. Take a look in those containers to see if there's any garbage inside.

What's next?

Track your progress! Keep this page as a record, and do this exercise again in a month to see how much you've improved. Get recycling tips at www.stopwaste.org/recycling/residents.