

# #breakfreefromplastic

## BRAND AUDIT GUIDE

[Break Free From Plastic](#), the global movement working to stop plastic pollution for good is taking coastal cleanups a step further –by naming the brands most responsible for plastic pollution found on our beaches and beyond.

**Our goal?** Mobilize massive citizen muscle with a common mission so corporations can no longer frame the issue as one of only consumer responsibility. **Join us!**

**Background:** Corporations like Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, Nestle, Unilever, Starbucks, Procter & Gamble, and McDonald’s have a HUGE role to play when it comes to plastic pollution. We are sold coffee, soda, chips, candy, sandwiches, shampoo, soap, and even fruits and vegetables packaged in throwaway plastic.

It’s time for these corporations to invest in alternatives and phase out single-use plastic, don’t you agree? Here’s where we need YOUR help! By categorizing and counting branded plastic packaging during your cleanup efforts, you will help us identify the corporations most responsible.

**Steps to conduct your brand audit:** Time to flex your citizen muscles! We have created a simple online form where you can report the most useful information from these audits. [Click here to fill it out!](#)

1. First, it is important to make a waste deposit plan. Think ahead on how to properly dispose all waste from your clean-up activity.

Note: this is not limited to plastics alone. For example, recyclable materials should go to material recovery and/or recycling facilities, and biodegradable wastes could be set aside for composting.

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Waste that cannot be recycled or composted (i.e residual waste) are typically used for the brand audit, **hint: these are the brands we want to identify!**

2. In any clean-up activity, it is important to have the proper gear to do your work and to protect yourself and your volunteers.

Make sure you have the following tools on hand:

- Protective gloves or tongs for all volunteers
  - Collection bins, bags, or buckets (make sure they're all a standard size!)
  - Printed [Brand Audit Forms](#), along with pens / pencils & clipboards
3. After you have identified the location of your clean-up, specify and measure the size of the designated clean-up area. The size of the area should be relative to the number of volunteers or participants. Take before and after photos of the site and share them with our community by tagging the location and #breakfreefromplastic!
  4. Make a plan for recording your data. You can record your data in two ways. Either:
    - a. Gather all collected waste together, and separate the plastics from the rest. After you've separated the plastics, divide them into piles by type, and then divide each of those piles into groups by brand. Count all of the pieces, and record them on the [Brand Audit Form](#).
    - b. Categorize the items by brand as you collect them. Have each volunteer team fill out their [Brand Audit Form](#) as they're collecting trash. Two or three people can be collecting trash and calling out brands they find as a third person marks it on the form, adding tally marks for each branded piece of plastic as it's put into the collection bins or bags.

The first method is easiest if you are cleaning up a large area with a huge amount of waste (i.e. piles of waste, shovel-fulls at a time), while the second method is easier for coastal or city clean-ups with fewer or more isolated pieces of waste.

5. Train your volunteers on how to record the data. Include the information below about each plastic item. [Download the Brand Audit Form pdf](#) and use this form to follow these steps:

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- a. Record the name of the brand. (Hint: This will be the most visible word printed on the item!)
- b. Record the manufacturer of that brand. (Hint: This will be in smaller print in a less obvious place.) Large manufacturers like Unilever, Nestle, and Procter & Gamble each have hundreds of brands. A quick online search should reveal the manufacturer of your plastic item, if you have trouble finding it on the label.
- c. Fill in the rest of the information specified in the form.

Unidentifiable brands can be classified according to package type, which provides insight about problematic materials. You may also view or [download the brand audit categories visual guide here](#).

6. You're ready! Clean up all the waste in your designated site.
7. Let's get social! Take photos of the piles of plastic from each manufacturer and post it to social media. Tag the manufacturer and #breakfreefromplastic!
8. Clean the audit area carefully and properly, remembering to leave the site cleaner than before you started.
9. \*\*\*In order for us to use your awesome information, enter and submit your data! You can upload your photos along with a copy or excel file of your data form which can be found at <https://www.breakfreefromplastic.org/brand-audit-online-form/>.\*\*\*
10. If you have the resources to do so, box up the branded items and send it back to the manufacturer. Include a letter to the company describing the purpose of your brand audit and urge them to #breakfreefromplastic!

## **OPTIONAL:**

If you have enough time (one full day for the clean-up), we suggest counting all types of waste in your designated clean-up site. This process is called a waste audit and takes place prior to the brand audit. A waste audit identifies and quantifies the different components of the waste stream (e.g., organics, recyclable plastics, paper, metals, glass, hazardous waste, residual waste). We can utilize this information to understand how much plastic is found in the waste stream compared to other sources. [Download the Waste Audit Methodology and forms here](#).

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**What are we doing with this data?** Through brand audits, #breakfreefromplastic aims to hold polluting corporations accountable, to drive calls for innovations in product packaging and waste management, and to bring people together who want to take action for a future where beach and community clean-ups are a thing of the past.

## **Special thanks to:**

#breakfreefromplastic member groups in the Philippines: Mother Earth Foundation, Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives, Greenpeace Southeast Asia, Ecowaste Coalition, Health Care Without Harm - Asia, and others, for developing and piloting the brand audit tool as part of their coastal clean-up events in September 2017.

## **Resources:**

- Green Groups Reveal Top Plastic Polluters Following Massive Beach Cleanup on Freedom Island BFFP press release
- Our Beaches Are Branded With Plastic Pollution HuffPost
- DENR leads massive coastal cleanup nationwide Business Mirror - Nestlé, Unilever vow to explore alternatives to plastic packaging GMA News Online