

#breakfreefromplastic

## Frequently Asked Questions for BFFP's Brand Audit 2019



# Plastic Polluters Brand Audit

### **1. What is the purpose of the brand audit project?**

Brand audits are our way of gathering evidence to hold corporations accountable for plastic that is not manageable or that *may* be recyclable but is ending up where it shouldn't be. If we only clean plastic up, it will keep coming back. The only way to combat plastic pollution is to stop it at its source. Brand audits help us do just that! Through a combination of civic action and citizen science, we are recording data to find out which corporations are polluting our communities with single-use plastic. When we show exactly who created the plastic pollution problem, we can better hold them accountable to solve it.

### **2. What will the data be used for?**

Volume II of our "BRANDED" report, where we'll expose the world's top plastic corporate polluters! [You can read Volume I from 2018 here](#). We're counting on you to help us make this year's report bigger than ever!

### **3. Where should I do a brand audit? Does Break Free From Plastic have any specific criteria for the location of a brand audit or cleanup?**

Anywhere that you find single-use plastic! You can collect plastic waste in public, outdoor spaces like parks, beaches, rivers, and even underwater. While these are popular choices, they are not the only places we find single-use plastic. Consider doing a brand audit of your private, indoor spaces as well, such as in your home or office. You can even do a brand audit of an area beside a plastic production facility, since plastic pollutes at all stages of its life cycle from the

moment it is created. It's important to show the diversity of spaces polluted by single-use plastic pollution!

#### 4. Can I take a training on how to plan a brand audit and use the data card?

Absolutely! We've got lots of trainings you can attend online: [click here to sign up for one](#). Note that the last training will be on Thursday, Sep 19. If you would rather watch one on your own time, [click here to watch a recorded training](#).

#### 5. Questions on the brand audit data card:

##### a. What does a completed data card look like?

[Click here to see an example](#).

##### b. How do I select the right "Area covered"?

This question is asking: How big was the space you cleaned up? The simplest way to calculate area is by multiplying the length by the width. [This website can help you!](#)

##### c. How do I find the *latitude* and *longitude* of my brand audit location?

You can either use the TrashBlitz app which finds it automatically, or you can enter the address into [this helpful site!](#)

##### d. How do I measure the *volume* of materials audited in the collection?

This question is asking: How big was your collection container, and how many containers did you fill? Plastics don't weigh very much, but they do take up a lot of space in our environment - and volume helps us understand exactly how much space these plastics take up. That's what we mean by gallons and liters. You can calculate volume by multiplying the length by the width by the height. [This website can help you!](#) (Note: Many people use trash bags as their collection container. If this is your case, you can usually find the bag volume listed on the label.)

##### e. What exactly do you mean by "brand name" and is this the same as manufacturer? Should I record both?

Brands names are the trademark name given to a product by its manufacturer. A manufacturer typically owns and produces multiple brands. In the data card, we ask you to record the brand name only. Typically the brand name is the largest

word on the item, while the manufacturer is in smaller print in a less obvious place. For example, Lipton is a *brand* of tea, and this brand is produced by the *manufacturer* Unilever ([click here for a visual](#)).

For consistency, we're asking people to record brands (not manufacturers). This is for a few reasons: (1) When plastics are old and worn, the labels are hard to read. Brand names tend to be much bigger and easier to find. (2) While we can later verify the manufacturer based on the brand recorded, we can't verify the brand based on the manufacturer recorded because of the diversity of possibilities.

f. **How do I know if something is *recycled locally*?**

It depends where you live, so do some initial research to find out what your city does and does not recycle locally. You can usually find this information on city, county, or province websites, from local recycling organizations, or even at local libraries or other information centers. Maybe you can even contact your local Materials Recovery Facility to check with them directly what they do or do not recycle locally.

g. **How can I tell what kind of material something is?**

There is often an abbreviation (ex. PET) or a number (ex. #1) that you can find, if the plastic isn't too old. Check out our [Brand Audit Visual Guide](#) to help you categorize the different materials you might find.

h. **What does “*single-layer*” or “*multi-layer*” mean?**

“Single-layer” means the item is made out of only one material (ex. A clear bottle, usually made out of PET). “Multi-layer” means the item is made out of multiple materials layered together, making it very difficult to recycle (ex. Tetrapaks, made out of paperboard, plastic, and aluminum). Check out our [Brand Audit Visual Guide](#) to help you categorize the different materials you might find.

**6. How do I report the data to Break Free From Plastic? Do I have to download an app to do this?**

You can report the data online in one of three ways, and none of them require downloading anything.

Option 1: [TrashBlitz](#), developed to make the brand audit submission process easy and fun! Trashblitz is a web-based app, so you don't have to download anything! You just access it through your browser, so there's no need to take up space on your phone because it's a

website. And that makes it more accessible for more people in more places.

Option 2: On our website directly through our [BFFP Brand Audit Online Form](#).

Option 3: If you would feel most comfortable using an Excel spreadsheet, please email us to request a copy at [brandaudit@breakfreefromplastic.org](mailto:brandaudit@breakfreefromplastic.org).

### **7. What is the difference between the paper form and the online form?**

The printable brand audit data card is to help you **record** your data. The online form is for you to **submit** your complete data to us once you are done recording.

### **8. How long does it normally take to do a brand audit?**

This really depends on how much waste you collect and how many volunteers you have to help. If you are an individual doing a small brand audit in your home, it might take you as little as 30 minutes. If you are a huge group doing a brand audit of a big area filled with lots of plastic waste, it might take you a few hours.

### **9. I did a brand audit last year. Can I still do one this year?**

Of course! It would be great to have you back. You'll be an expert brand audit organizer now! We'd love to hear your feedback on some changes we made to the brand audit to improve from last year. Tell us what you think by emailing [brandaudit@breakfreefromplastic.org](mailto:brandaudit@breakfreefromplastic.org).

### **10. Is there a minimum collection or cleanup area for doing a brand audit?**

Nope. All brand audit data is valuable, no matter the size of your collection or cleanup area!

### **11. I'm only one person. Can I still participate?**

Absolutely! You can always do an individual audit of your home, workplace, or an outdoor space you love! All brand audit data is helpful, no matter how big or small :)

### **12. How can I audit the single-use plastics in my own home or office, rather than doing a cleanup?**

Avoid digging around in yucky old wet garbage – especially if you're in a shared office! Instead, if you're going to audit your home or office, designate a separate collection bin or bag for all the single-use packaging and products you use, and collect them all in that bin for 7 days. At the end of those 7 days, take an audit of everything in that collection bin, and record all the waste and brands on the data card. Be sure to let your house or office mates know what you're doing, either through a sign or just by telling them one-on-one. Not only will it stop them from throwing

away your collected waste before you've audited it, but you can also start a conversation about solutions to plastic pollution!

### **13. When's the deadline?**

Submit your brand audit data no later than September 27. Remember, you can do this online either through [TrashBlitz](#) or through the [BFFP Brand Audit Online Form](#).

### **14. Can I do a brand audit outside of this timeline?**

Yes. You are most welcome to submit data at any time! If you submit your brand audit data after the September 27 deadline, however, submissions will not be in this year's Branded report. They will most likely be included in next year's report instead. Until then, social media can be a powerful space to share your own results! See #20 for tips, and check out our [Social Media Guide](#).

### **15. Do I only include plastic branded waste? What if I can't find the brand name?**

While we prioritize branded plastic waste, you should still include unbranded plastic waste in your brand audit when possible. Even if you don't know an item's brand - if it doesn't have a brand name, or it's washed away, or you just can't see it - still count it. Last year, we counted altogether over 180,000 pieces of plastic garbage around the world. Only about 35,000 of those actually had a brand identified. Most of what we got back was unidentified, so we couldn't tell if it was Coca Cola or Unilever or Nestle, etc. But people still recorded that, and we ask that you do the same because there's still a story there. Every piece of plastic that you find was made by someone, and if they didn't put their name on it, then they're not being held accountable for it. So it's important that we be able to show that, because we don't want these polluters to continue avoiding their responsibilities. Make sure that even if you don't know the brand, count what you find in your brand audit.

### **16. What do I do with the collected waste after the brand audit?**

It is important to make a waste deposit plan. Think ahead on how to properly dispose of all waste from your clean-up or collection activity, including plastics and all other materials. For example, recyclable materials should go to material recovery and/or recycling facilities, and biodegradable wastes could be set aside for composting. Waste that cannot be recycled or composted locally (i.e. residual waste) is especially important. Hint: these are the brands you want to identify! When your cleanup is done, this residual must be put in a landfill. 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!

### **17. How can I get access to my data after I submit it online?**

If you submit your data via [TrashBlitz](#), you will receive an automatic email with your brand audit data. If you submit your data via the [BFFP Brand Audit Online Form](#), you can email us and request your data.

**18. I don't think I'll be able to audit everything I collect. What do I do?**

It would be great to focus on branded single-use plastics whenever possible. And do as much as you can with the time, energy, and volunteers you have available - that would be just fine!

**19. I plan to take lots of photos and videos. How can I share them with you?**

Send us your best brand audit photos and videos for a chance to be featured in the final "Branded" report and on our BFFP social media channels! Tag us: @breakfreefromplastic (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) and use the hashtag #BrandAudit2019. If you don't use social media, please email us your photos/videos to [brandaudit@breakfreefromplastic.org](mailto:brandaudit@breakfreefromplastic.org). We'd love to see branded plastic whenever possible, as well as before & after photos to show the positive impact you made with your volunteers!

*If a question remains unanswered, you can email the team at [brandaudit@breakfreefromplastic.org](mailto:brandaudit@breakfreefromplastic.org).*