

Write down everything that goes in the trash, the compost bin, or the disposal for one to two weeks: the date, the item, why it went, and roughly what it cost. Research on food waste diaries finds that tracking alone cuts household waste by about 20 percent.

WEEK OF _____ HOUSEHOLD _____

Log every item, not just the big ones. Half a lemon that dried out counts as much as a forgotten roast. Small, frequent losses usually add up to more than the occasional big miss. At the end of the week, read back through and look for repeats: if the same category shows up three or more times, that is the pattern worth fixing. The four reasons households give most often:

- Forgot it was in the fridge
- Spoiled before it got eaten
- Confused about the date label
- Cooked or bought more than needed