

Strategies for Reading Solid Waste Data

1. Find something striking

For any solid waste data, look for:

- the grand totals, the maximums
- a minimum that might still be considered very high
- an alarming increase or unrealistic decrease
- fluctuating or unusual numbers (i.e., high, to low, then back to high again)
- how the waste will move around: number of trucks involved, associated exhaust and road damage, etc.

2. Try saying it different ways

Most of the newsworthy items above involve comparing one number to another. When comparing two numbers “A” and “B”, you can say things like:

- *A is ___ more than B / less than B [in units like tons or truck trips]*
- *A compared to B is the same as ___ to 100, ___ to 10, one to __, or ___ to ___*
- *A is ___ times B*
- *A is ___ % of B*
- *A is ___ % lower than B / higher than B*
- *To get from A to B would require a ___% reduction / increase*
- *A is bigger / smaller than B by ___ order(s) of magnitude*
- *A is [double, triple, a quarter of, half of, a fifth of, two-thirds of] B*
- [Draw a graph or infographic comparing A to B]

3. Choose the one you think makes the most newsworthy statement