

WEEK 30

Dear NEA Members,

Greetings! There are many new ideas out there to help [members](#). NEA has created a web-site called "Works-4-Me" which are tried and true teaching hints suggested by NEA members. Each week you will receive an e-mail with six helpful (and short) hints to help you in your [professional life](#). They will fall under the following categories:

- Teaching Techniques
- Content
- Getting Organized
- Managing Your Classroom
- Relationships
- Using Technology

In addition, you will get information about your NEA Member Benefits that are available to you through your membership in the Association. Click on the link or visit www.neamb.com.

Teaching Techniques

Removing Temptation

"My students work in groups of four and during test times there is quite a temptation for eyes to wander. I make my students responsible for keeping their papers covered. Whenever I see answers uncovered, I quietly place a small red square of construction paper on the student's desk. This is a warning and a reminder. If a second red square is placed on the same student's desk during the same test, one point is deducted. Each time thereafter, another point is deducted. I never have had to deduct more than one point and I no longer have to nag the class to keep their answers covered."

Content

Student Stories

"I help parents connect with their child's school experience by having the students do reports on themselves called, IT'S MY STORY AND I'M

STICKING TO IT. The students are required to write their favorite story about themselves, interview their parents, a brother/sister and a friend. The interviewees dictate their favorite stories about the student. The participants are asked to keep the stories positive and uplifting. The students later write these stories in the form of a report. They keep the original along with the polished copy. I love reading the finished products!"

Getting Organized

Class Photographer

"When my students are chosen as Star of the Week they also become the class photographer. I bought an inexpensive camera to use that can be replaced if broken. The class photographer brings in a roll of film to snap pictures of classmates during the week. Some pictures I suggest be taken and some the student chooses. The photographer develops the film and designs a page for our class scrapbook. The pages are labeled with the names of the photographers. The students get to keep any pictures that aren't used in the scrapbook."

Managing Your Classroom

Comic Groups

"I cut apart comic strips and pass them out to my students. They must walk around the room to find the rest of their comic strip. When they do, they have created a new team. This is an easy way to create groups. The kids think it's fun so there's no complaints."

Relationships

Idea Box

"We put a box beside our copy machine for student and new teachers and put extra copies of things we've made into it. Many ideas are shared around the copy machine. I also make it a point to ask new teachers what they've learned on related topics so that I can keep current. It makes them feel like a part of the action and teaches me some new things at the same time."

NEA Member Benefit Article of the Week:

Mary Rowland Personal Finance Column—March 2010

Tax Deductions for 2009

If you haven't mailed off your 2009 taxes yet, here are some important tax changes—some of them applicable only to 2009—that may save you some money.

- **College expenses.** The Hope Credit, which allowed a tax deduction of up to \$1,800 for college expenses for freshman and sophomores, has been renamed the American Opportunity Credit. The amount of the credit has been raised to \$2,500 per year and extended to cover students for all 4 years of college for tax years 2009 and 2010 only. Beginning in 2011, the credit will revert to \$1,800 and will be available only for students who are college freshman and sophomores. More info: <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=205674,00.html>
- **Special casualty loss deduction.** Those taxpayers who suffered a casualty loss in an area designated as a disaster area by the president can deduct this loss even if they do not itemize deductions. If you do not itemize, you can add the loss to the standard deduction. If you do itemize, the loss is not subject to the normal reduction equal to 10% of your adjusted gross income. To claim the loss, file Schedule L. More info: <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=108362,00.html>
- **Home buyers.** If you are a first-time homebuyer who bought a primary residence between Jan 1, 2009 and Nov. 6, 2009, you can qualify for a tax credit of 10 percent of the purchase price up to \$80,000. You must not have owned a home in the U.S. for the three previous years in order to qualify as a "first-time" buyer. Your modified adjusted gross income must be less than \$75,000 for full credit for singles, phasing out at \$95,000; \$150,000 for full credit for married filing jointly, phased out at \$170,000.

This tax credit was scheduled to expire on Nov. 30, 2009, but Congress extended the measure for 5 months until April 30, 2010. Homes under contract before that date must close by June 30, 2010 to be eligible for the credit.

The extension bill also adds existing homeowners to the list of eligible buyers. A qualified existing homebuyer receives full credit of \$6,500 if he/she earns less than \$125,000 as an individual, phasing out at \$145,000. Taxpayers who are married filing jointly qualify for the full credit with less than \$225,000 in income, phasing out at \$245,000. To qualify, an existing home buyer must have lived in the same house for 5 of the past 8 years and buy a new house to use as a principal residence between Nov. 6, 2010 and April 30, 2010, closing by June 30, 2010. Taxpayers do not need to sell their current home to qualify. The extension bill raises the income limits for new buyers to the same ones as those for existing buyers.

More info: <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=204671,00.html>

- **Sales tax on vehicles.** If you bought a new car, pickup truck, motor home or motorcycle between Feb. 16, 2009 and Jan. 1, 2010, you can deduct the sales tax you paid on up to \$49,500

of the cost. This deduction is available both to those who itemize deductions and to those who do not.

If you do not itemize, you can add the sales tax paid to your standard deduction. Next year this provision will be available only to those who itemize deductions. This benefit phases out for single taxpayers with incomes between \$125,000 and \$135,000 and married couples between \$250,000 and \$260,000.

More info: <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=204519,00.html>

- **Property tax.** New in 2008 and continuing in 2009, taxpayers can claim a deduction for property taxes even if they do not itemize deductions. This provision allows single homeowners who do not itemize to increase the standard deduction by a maximum of \$500 and those married filing jointly up to \$1,000. To claim it, you must file Schedule L.
More info: <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p530.pdf>
- **Unemployment benefits.** The first \$2,400 of unemployment benefits are tax-free for 2009. This benefit ends with the 2010 tax year.
More info: <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=219191,00.html>
- **Job searches.** If you are looking for a job, you can deduct job search expenses, which can include travel, lodging, phone calls, resume preparation, and career counseling. These can be deducted even if you don't get a job offer.
More info: <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=210523,00.html>
- **Classroom supplies.** Educators are allowed to deduct up to \$250 in classroom supplies they purchase themselves. This deduction is scheduled to end with the 2009 tax year.
More info: <http://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc458.html>
- **IRAs.** Employees covered by a pension plan at work who earn less than \$55,000 as a single or \$85,000 married filing jointly are allowed to take a full IRA deduction of \$5,000 if they are 49 years old or younger; \$6,000 for 50 years and older. The deduction is phased out for single taxpayers who earn \$75,000 and married taxpayers filing jointly at \$109,000.
More info: <http://www.irs.gov/publications/p590/index.html>
- **Filing extensions.** Don't drive yourself crazy over your taxes. If you're not close to having your return ready, apply for an extension to ask the IRS for more time to file your return. The filing deadline is April 15, 2010. If you cannot meet it, file Form 4868 to extend the deadline for six months, to October 15, 2010. This is a filing extension only, not an extension on tax payments. If you owe money, but do not have time to prepare your return, file Form 4868 and at the same time pay the tax that you estimate is due for 2009 in order to avoid penalties.
More info: <http://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc304.html>

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