

## WEEK 35

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](http://www.neamb.com).

### **Teaching Techniques**

#### **Groundhog/Shadow Day**

"Turn Groundhog Day into Shadow Day: a day during which the parents take their children (and maybe a few friends) to work and let them be their shadow. The children get to experience a day at work and see firsthand how their schoolwork applies to the real world. We are making it a school wide event, hoping all will be able to participate."

### **Content**

#### **Greek Drama Masks**

"My students staged a production of Antigone and made Greek masks from Plaster of Paris. We used Plastercraft and Plaster of Paris impregnated gauze cut into strips. We wet the strips and applied them to our faces where it hardened. We painted the dried masks with exaggerated facial expressions to convey the emotion depicted by the characters according to the conventions of Greek drama."

### **Getting Organized**

## **Special Class Labels**

"I make labels on the computer that say lunch, gym, music, library, etc. to stick in my plan book. This saves a lot of time and looks very impressive if done in different colors. I also typed up the names of special classes and printed them on brightly colored paper to hang on our time schedule. This way, I can change them daily and the young students can easily see what's on the agenda for the day."

## **Managing Your Classroom**

### **Helping Other Teachers**

"As a special education teacher who works with first grade, I am always looking for ways to promote goodwill between regular and specialists. One of the complaints voiced in our building is that regular teachers have all of the homeroom duties and specialists get assigned [only] door duty, etc. This year I decided to take my turn with homeroom duties. Each month I treat one of the regular teachers who welcomes me into their rooms. When the bell rings I collect their students from outside, get them settled and help with the roll call and cafeteria orders. I also take this same class downstairs when it is time for lunch. The homeroom teacher gets a few more minutes for preparation in the morning and a chance to sit down a little longer at lunch. This simple gesture has smoothed the way for a lot of cooperation in the classroom between us.

## **Relationships**

### **Substitute Box**

"I teach a hands-on program that is not always easy for a substitute, so I have a substitute box in my room. I include promotional copies of science magazines that publishers send out. I make up reading lessons with work sheets. These are items I would like students to read but do not otherwise have room for in an already-overcrowded schedule."

## **Using Technology**

### **Dear Abby**

"Once my keyboarding students begin composing, there is no stopping them! An activity which takes them out of the textbook involves writing a letter to Dear Abby regarding a question or problem they have. Instead of using their names, students sign the letter with appropriate nicknames like 'Upset and Unhappy' or 'Please Help' and their letters are given a number when they are handed in for grading, to protect their anonymity. After a week or so the letters are handed out for another composition session. This time students become Dear Abby and answer a letter written by one of their peers. If there is more than one keyboarding class, this works even better as students won't know who answered their letter. The number assigned will help in getting the letter back to its originator."

NEA Member Benefit Article of the Week:

## 20 Ways to Upcycle Before You Recycle

Date published: Thursday, April 01, 2010

By Stephanie Rogers

Don't toss that junk! Yesterday's jelly jar and unwanted mail-order catalog could transform into Martha Stewart-caliber kitchen canisters or cute patterned gift bags with naught but some spray paint and glue. These easy upcycling ideas go far beyond classroom crafts—create elegant eco-friendly housewares, décor and more that barely costs a cent.

You're probably wondering, "what's upcycling?" [Upcycling](#) is often better than mere recycling, because it means you're transforming a product into something that's even more valuable without the energy-intensive processing required to recycle.

### Glass jars

- **Organization:** Open your refrigerator door and you'll likely see an array of glass jars in all sorts of shapes and sizes—perfect for organization. [Pretty up the lids](#) with scraps of patterned paper, or spray paint them to match your décor. Printing out your own customized labels is easy, too, with [free downloadable labels](#) in a range of styles and colors.
- **Bath salts:** You can also use those spiffed-up jars as pretty, natural, low-cost gifts by filling them with [a scented salt blend](#) that's simple to create at home with some Epsom salts, baking soda and essential oils.
- **Candles:** Jar candles can cost a pretty penny at the store, but all it takes to make one yourself is a glass jar and a few candle nubs. [A tutorial from Design Sponge Online](#) uses a double boiler, essential oil for scented versions and even crayons to add subtle color.

- **To-go cup:** A mason jar filled with iced tea is a summertime staple in the South, and it's easy to see why: Jars make ideal spill-proof to-go cups for cold drinks! They're perfect for keeping the bugs out during a picnic.

## Junk mail

- **Envelopes:** Hardly a day goes by without at least one piece of annoying, unsolicited junk mail crammed into our mailboxes. But did you ever notice the pretty images and patterns in those calendars and catalogs? All it takes is a few folds and some tape to [turn those pages into sturdy envelopes](#) and send them right back out into the mail.
- **Gift bags:** [Download a pattern](#) that fits perfectly on most junk mail pages and use it to transform them into personalized gift bags. Scissors, glue, string and a hole punch are the only tools required.
- **Handmade paper and Easter basket grass:** But what about those unattractive circulars covered in ads? Shred 'em and either [blend them up into pulp for handmade paper](#) or use them as eco-friendly Easter or other gift basket grass—a great alternative to the plastic stuff. Shredded junk mail also makes great bedding for small animals, or mulch for the compost bin.

## Egg cartons

- **Seed starting:** Give your garden a head start by [sprouting seeds in the cups of a paper egg carton](#), which are perfectly sized and biodegradable, too. Transplanting is so easy—just cut out each cup and place it directly in the ground once the weather warms.
- **Organization:** Any egg carton, including the foam and plastic varieties, can be used to contain and organize small household items like jewelry, beads, buttons, screws, paper clips and push pins.
- **Packing cushion:** Got delicate holiday ornaments? If an egg carton can protect eggs, it can protect those heirloom glass globes just as well. They're also great for containing any small, delicate knick-knacks during a move.
- **Fire-starting kit:** A cardboard egg carton filled with a mixture of sawdust and wax makes an extremely effective [fire-starting kit](#) that keeps for a long time and comes in handy for camping.

## Plastic bags

- **Doggy bags:** Even the greenest of the green sometimes forget their reusable bags at the store and end up with some excess plastic bags. Use them to clean up after your dog while you're out on walks, or donate them to your local dog park if you're not a pet owner—many have receptacles to collect them.
- **Painting protection:** Plastic bags are especially handy for painting projects. When spray-painting small items, place them inside a plastic bag to contain the spray. Plastic bags can also be used as sleeves to slip over and line paint trays for quick and easy cleanup, or wrapped around wet paintbrushes to keep them from drying out in between painting sessions.
- **Stuffing and packing:** Plastic bags make a great alternative to fiberfill for throw pillows, and are perfect for stuffing holiday lawn décor like [floating sheet ghosts](#). They also make great padding for shipping boxes in place of those pesky styrofoam peanuts.

- **Crocheted crafts:** Plastic purses? Why not! Strips of intertwined plastic bags can be quickly and easily [turned into yarn](#) and crocheted into [a surprising array of items](#) including handbags, hats and even clothing.

## Cardboard toilet paper rolls

- **Cord organizer:** You can wrangle those unsightly power cords with a toilet paper roll—and it will look a lot better than you think. [This tutorial](#) uses a leftover scrap of wrapping paper to satisfy the pickiest aesthetes.
- **Seedling planter:** Seedlings that will quickly outgrow egg carton planters can be moved up into roomier cardboard rolls. Just one toilet paper roll makes two compact, biodegradable planters with [a few snips of your scissors](#).
- **Crafts for kids:** Dragons, lions, fairies and bears: The [list of creatures](#) that can be created with toilet paper rolls is practically endless. You could even use junk mail in place of construction paper, and add popsicle sticks to make puppets.
- **Document storage:** Keep important documents like diplomas and certificates from getting creased or damaged by simply rolling them up inside cardboard tubes and storing them all together in a shoebox.