



Neat Freak News

Bimonthly organizational tips for home, work and life.

www.neat-freak.com

NEAT FREAK NEWS: August 2006

I'm on a bit of a recycling kick. I've always tried not to be wasteful and have recycled when it was convenient, but lately, I'm obsessed. Sustainability, global climate change, the future health of our planet—all of these topics have been prominently featured in the media this year. I decided I should/could/had to do more

So our family of four decided to go cold-turkey on shopping. We're taking six months off from purchasing unnecessary items, trying to see what it's like to live with less. Will we save money? Will we create less garbage? Will we drive less? Will we teach our young children some important lessons about the difference between "want" and "need?" We started in early July—so check back in January for the answers. In the meantime, you can read more about our consumer-free journey on my blog: <http://neatfreak.wordpress.com>.

Okay, enough shameless self-promotion! Living with less also has a lot to do with getting organized. One of the most important things I do with clients is help them discover what they need, use and love in their homes. But what do you do with the rest? I'm going to share with you a few clever ways to get rid of unnecessary, yet perfectly good and usable items without filling the landfill.

****FREECYCLE (www.freecycle.org)****

Freecycle is a local Yahoo! group (they're in most major cities—just check out freecycle.org to find a group near you) that posts items people want to get rid of, or items people need, and everything is free—no selling, no bartering—all give-aways. I'm constantly amazed at what people offer and what people take! We unloaded a working 17" computer monitor in less than 20 minutes (and no one wants that toxic waste filling the dump!). Commonly listed items on Freecycle include moving boxes, scrap lumber, kids toys, computer parts...and some extremely random stuff like deer repellents for your car, or a lovely burgundy lycra dance dress with fishtail skirt. If you're not concerned about getting a tax receipt for donations, Freecycle is the place for you!

****CRAIG'S LIST (www.craigslist.org)****

You're probably familiar with Craig's List as a local alternative to eBay. It's basically a free classified service serving most major cities in the US. However, Craig's List also has a great Barter and Free section. I've helped clients get rid of moving boxes, furniture, and mattress and box spring sets on Craig's List. You'll also find unusual items, free for the taking. Just today in the free section I saw a listing that said "Jesus needs a home" (who could resist clicking on that?) and found a framed picture of Jesus with a flock of sheep.

Naturally, Jesus is not for sale! Again, if you want to unload some stuff but don't need a write off, check out Craig's List in your area.

****SWAP IT!****

Finally, if you don't want to throw or give an item away, consider making a swap! Were you given a gift card to "All Things Meat" but you're trying to go veggie? Consider making a swap for a more suitable gift card. Here are a number of swapping resources available online so you can give a little AND get a little.

Gift Cards:

www.swapagift.com

www.thegiftcardtrader.com

www.cardavenue.com

CD's and DVD's:

www.lala.com

www.peerflix.com

Books:

www.paperbackswap.com

www.frugalreader.com

Anything!

www.swapthing.com

I promise not to get evangelical about living with less. But if I've kept you from throwing away just ONE thing this week, I'll feel that I've done my job. And if you have your own stories about recycling or simplifying life, please feel free to share!

FREAKIE FREEBIES

It's back to school time, which means you're probably making your to-do list, and checking it twice. Here are some quick and easy tips for getting from to-do to all done!

1. Write it down—common sense I know, but this doesn't just pertain to your daily to-do's and grocery list. Have lists for long term goals, places you want to visit, gifts you want to purchase, friends you need to write or call. Writing something down means you're likely to remember it and get it done!
2. Estimate the time to do each task. Having a long list of things to do may make you feel important, but if you only accomplish half of the list, you'll end up feeling like a failure. Beside each item, estimate the amount of time it will take you to complete the task. If the total time surpasses the time you have available, scratch a few items off your list and get to them tomorrow.

3. Keep it fun! Pepper your list with things you love to do. Stop for coffee, swing by the library and pick out a book, take a 10 minute walk, plant a few flowers. Who wants to spend their entire day doing meaningless tasks? Build in rewards to keep life fun.