



# Neat Freak News

Bimonthly organizational tips for home, work and life.

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NEAT FREAK NEWS: February 2007

Happy New Year (yeah, I know, it's already the middle of February—but best wishes nonetheless!). If getting organized was one of your goals for 2007, I hope you're successfully sorting, purging, and decluttering your way through the year and feeling fantastic about the results. If you have tips and strategies that have helped you get and stay organized, please send them my way. I love a good success story.

## ECO-FRIENDLY ORGANIZING

I recently took an Ecological Footprint test and realized that if everyone lived like me, it would take 3.5 Earths to support the human race. (You can view your own Ecological Footprint by visiting <http://www.earthday.net/footprint/index.asp>). So I'm now on a mission to ease up on the earth and I aim to practice what I preach in my organizing work as well.

Whether you consider yourself a carbon-a-holic (like me!) or you're living off the grid, here are a few eco-friendly organizing tips that might simplify your life, improve your organization and help mama-earth along the way.

**REDUCE:** The idea is simple...attempt to live with less! But I'm here to tell you, that's easier said than done. The following questions may help you think before you buy:

- \*Do I really need this?
- \*Where was it made and how did it get here?
- \*Can I recycle the box or the packaging?
- \*Would I buy this if it were NOT on sale?
- \*Do I look fantastic in it?
- \*Where am I going to put it once I take it home?

Hmmmmm, do I know how to suck the fun out of a trip to the mall, or what? But by simply asking yourself these questions, you might find you purchase a little less and have less STUFF to organize.

**REUSE:** Here are a few of my favorite reuse ideas for getting a second life out of everyday items:

\*Use empty tissue boxes to hold plastic grocery bags you accumulate, then reuse your bags for quick cleanups around the house.

\*Reuse old t-shirts or cloth burp cloths as cleaning rags rather than paper towels—they're more absorbent and they're reusable!

\*Baby food jars make great containers for small items such as thumbtacks, screws, nails or rubberbands.

\*Use the "free" address labels you receive from non-profit solicitations to mark books that you loan to friends, or to label casserole dishes and serving pieces you take to a potluck dinner.

\*Turn this year's holiday cards into next year's gift tags by cutting colorful squares from the cards, punching a hole in them and voila...you're ready to tag gifts in 2007!

RECYCLE: My favorite new way to recycle...host a swap party! This is a great way to recycle items you no longer need but still have good life left in them. I recently attended a book swap night and swapped out 5 books I read and loved for 5 new books I couldn't wait to crack open. No money exchanges hands—you just swap a few items and everyone leaves happy. In addition to books, you could host a clothing or purse swap, a sports equipment swap or an "unusual wedding gift" swap.

#### FREAKIE FREEBIES

Tax time is here...how is your file system looking?

I suggest keeping a fairly simple system that makes it easy to get your hands on what you need, when you need it. First, I like to color code my file system: Green for money, Yellow for home, Blue for business, Red for blood (health). Other categories can go in plain old manila-vanilla folders. Another suggestion is to start with big categories and only subcategorize as necessary. Many people like to have file systems with REALLY specific files, but it makes it harder to find that specific piece of paper you're looking for. Once a file is over one inch thick, it's time to subcategorize. Finally, purge annually. Tax time is the ideal time to assess the files you have and figure out what you can get rid of. Have questions about what to keep and what to shred? Contact me!