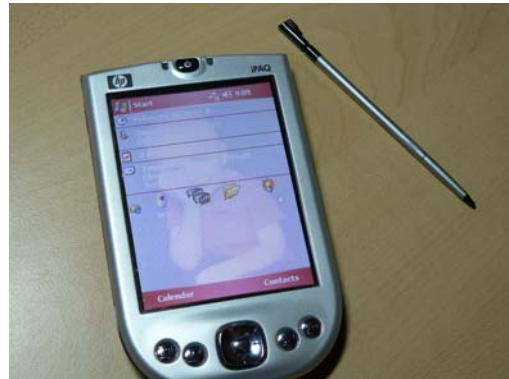


## **Organization in the PALM of Your Hand**

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Sitting in staff meeting one morning, our administrator reminded us of an upcoming event. A colleague sitting right beside me quickly grabbed a pen and began writing the date down on the inside of his hand and said, "Let me write this down in my PALM!" Of course he was hinting at me since I had my Pocket PC out and open to the calendar. We both laughed, but somehow I had more reassurance that my reminder would be effective since it wouldn't be washed clean by the next day.



I have been using a PALM and now a Pocket PC for six years, and I don't know how I would organize my teaching without it. I'll just share some of the ways I utilize these little devices to help me be a more effective teacher.

### 1) Gradebook

The first reason why I use a PALM is for entering grades. Having the ability to synchronize files between the computer or handheld device has many advantages. It has freed me to enter grades right on the spot during class, in the music room, in the gym, at home or on the road. To ease the worry of losing data, I make sure I synchronize each day. All of the information is backed up. With the Pocket PC it has a feature that allows you to synchronize to more than one computer. This allows me to have three locations for the data: my computer at home, the server at school, and on the Pocket PC.

### 2) Lesson Plans

After getting familiar with my device, I've realized many other bonuses that come with these organizers. I've utilized the "Memo Pad" for PALM or the "Word Mobile" for the Pocket PC to enter in all kinds of information. I like to type out my daily plans, and it was quite easy to enter this data in a format that works well with these features. I then print off the hard copy (which I teach from most of the time), but it's also on my handheld which I can pull up anytime anywhere in the school. The portability of this information is great.

### 3) Teaching Information

I've also started organizing the folders to allow for other kinds of information. Teachers get all kinds of paper work, notices, faxes, four-square rules and hill sliding procedures laid before them every day. Before I lose all of this information, I enter it in on my handheld and it becomes synchronized to my computer. There have been countless times when I've been in a staff meeting where others were wondering what we did the previous year for awards day or what the website address and teacher password was for a teaching resource and I've been able to pull it up in a matter of seconds. I'll enter in how I've

grouped students for projects or to keep track of whose turn it is to get popcorn or use the computer for free time. This kind of thing comes in handy when I'm teaching a class outside of my classroom where I can't create and post organizers on the walls.

#### 4) Anecdotal Records

Both PALM and Pocket PC have the ability to be password protected so that private records can't be retrieved if someone else gets their hands on your device. I've been able to keep easy running records of specific student's behaviors or problems as they happen. It stays private and is easily shared with my administrator through email when needed.

#### 5) Contacts & Emergency Information

The "Contacts" feature on these devices has been one of my favorites. I've started to enter in all of my students as contacts. Here I can organize their home phone numbers, emails, parents' work numbers, emergency contact information etc. Once I have taken the time at the beginning of the year to enter this, it becomes so useful on trips or even at the school or at home when I need it. They all have search capabilities so that I can just start to write the name of a contact and their information pops up.

#### 6) Calendar

My first four years teaching we didn't have a bell system for the elementary schedule. I was just starting out and needed a reminder when to switch to the next class. I programmed my PALM to go off at certain times of the day as my own personal bell system. I still use this for specific reminders and important events.

These are only a few of many ways these devices can help organize teaching. I hope that this will aid someone who has been looking for ways to become more organized.