

Tools for a *Paperless* Classroom



As more and more classrooms move toward becoming paper-free, the need for tools that can help teachers successfully manage that transition increases as well. Luckily, there are a variety of products out there that can help teachers save trees, reduce waste, and minimize clutter.

Lose the textbook

Science moves fast—textbooks don't. With just an Internet connection, Chromebooks and tablets allow teachers to stay on top of changes and discoveries in whatever area they teach. They also enable students who are interested in a particular topic to—with guidance—delve deeper into that subject. Additionally, students who are struggling can be led to more information and resources to better understand a subject. Concepts like flipped classrooms and blending learning benefit from having resources available to students wherever they are, whenever they want to access it.



With each student armed with a Chromebook or other device, teachers can ditch more than just the textbook. Homework, feedback, assessments, and reports can all be done completely online and paperless.

Yes, there are challenges when it comes to paperless classrooms, including one fairly obvious one: the technology. Access to the Internet and devices both cost money, as do a number of apps or systems available to help manage digital classrooms. And even after the initial outlay, upgrades, hidden fees, and replacements need to be factored into the budget. In addition, there is a technological learning curve to be addressed—is there time for teachers to learn the new technology? Are they willing and able to?

Tools you can use

There are a variety of tools and software available to help teachers go paperless while still maintaining all the “paperwork” necessary to keep track of students’ progress, create reports, etc. Google Classroom is a free suite of productivity tools that includes email, documents, and storage. Classroom was designed collaboratively with teachers to help them save time, keep classes organized, and improve communication with students.

DocHub is a free, robust, downloadable PDF editing tool that can be used to convert lesson materials to Google Docs without losing the formatting. Teachers upload the PDF to a Google Drive and then share the document via Google Drive with students. Students open the PDF with DocHub, and they can write, draw and highlight on the PDF. Students can share these documents with their teachers via Google Drive for grading. Teachers can also create their own unique lesson materials, save as a PDF, and then share via Google Drive with their students.

Evernote is another free app that can help with note taking and organization. “Notes” in this instance can be text, web pages, photographs, audio, or handwritten copy that can be sorted into notebooks, tagged, annotated, shared, and searched.

Gizmos go great with paperless classrooms

ExploreLearning Gizmos are a natural fit for a paperless classroom. Correlated to standards, these online simulations don't require expensive chemicals and equipment, and they don't require pens and paper either.

In addition to the simulations themselves, Gizmos' numerous features are also perfect for a paperless classroom. The screenshot feature can be used by teachers and students to create reports and papers, even virtual science fairs—no more tri-fold display boards! Gizmos also provide teachers with the chance to do quick online checks for understanding to assess students' knowledge of current material, as well as provide online reports.

Gizmos can be hyperlinked to online curriculum maps and pacing guides, making it convenient to access the Gizmo correlated to the current unit of study and lesson materials can be converted to PDFs through the aforementioned DocHub.

By using the right tools and processes, a paperless classroom can offer students an interactive, practical educational experience and help prepare them for a world full of new and changing technologies.

To go paperless with Gizmos, try them out with a free account at www.explorelearning.com.



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