

PAPERMAKING:

A Skill From the Past to Learn Today

Paper is traditionally made from a milkshake like mixture of water and either rags, wood pulp, or a combination of the two. The fibers are held in suspension in the water by constant beating and blending.

You can try to make paper yourself with things found in your home. The only special equipment you'll need is a deckle which you can also make. Here is what to do:

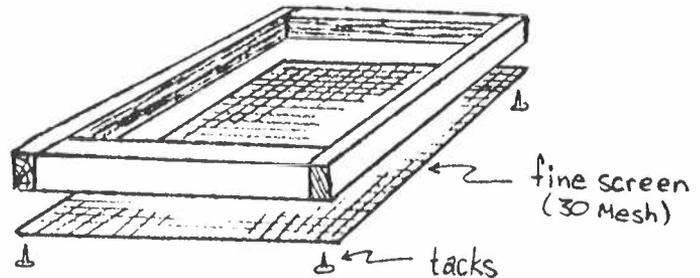
YOU WILL NEED:

Wood frame or canvas stretchers, approximately 9" by 12"
Fine fiberglass mesh screening (30 mesh)
Thumbtacks
Scissors
Water
Electric blender or mixer
Scraps of notebook paper, paper towels, construction paper
Lint from the dryer
Laundry starch—dry or liquid
Blotter paper
Rolling pin



(Optional: Pieces of fabric, yarn, thread, food coloring, glitter, sawdust, clippings of plant materials like moss or carrot greens)

1. First you must assemble your deckle, the frame on which the paper is made. Here is how. You can use an old, sturdy picture frame or make your own with canvas stretchers or wood from the lumber yard. Ask your teacher or parents for help. Then you must cut a piece of fiberglass screen to a size a little bigger than that of your frame. Using thumbtacks, firmly attach the screening to the frame.



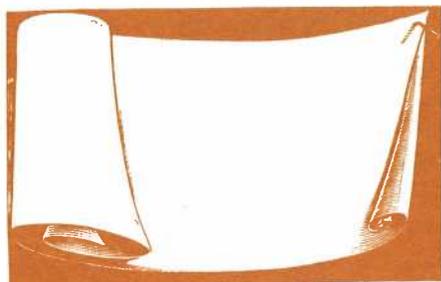
2. Now you can prepare your paper solution. Be sure to get permission to use either a blender or an electric mixer before you start. Tear up different kinds of paper into tiny pieces and set aside. You may wish to add dryer lint or very small pieces of fabric, yarn, or plant clippings to your paper pile at this time. They will add interesting color and texture to your paper. If you plan to use a blender, pour two cups of water and two tablespoons of laundry starch into the beaker. If you use an electric mixer, put the water and laundry starch in a big bowl. Then, slowly add materials from your paper pile, blending on low speed all the

while. When the consistency of the mixture is like a light gravy you are ready to make your paper. *Note: This recipe will make enough solution for several sheets of paper.*

3. Place your deckle in the sink or bathtub, or go outdoors to do this next step. With a steady arm, pour your “paper gravy” evenly over the screening. Use just enough to cover the surface of the whole screen with a medium coat about an $\frac{1}{8}$ of an inch thick.

4. Let any extra water in your newly formed sheet of paper drip through the deckle for a few minutes. You can let the paper dry while still attached to the frame, or, if you want a smoother finish, you can do the following. Carefully remove the tacks that attach the screen to the frame. Place the screen, with your paper attached, between two sheets of blotter paper. Draw a rolling pin over it to squeeze out excess moisture. Let it sit in a warm, dry place until it is dry. Depending on the humidity and the thickness of your paper it should be ready in two to six hours.

5. Remove your homemade paper by gently peeling it from the blotter paper and the screen. Do this slowly so as not to tear the paper. Your paper will have a ragged edge, known as a deckled edge. This is one of the marks of handmade paper.



Note: Making paper takes practice. You may have to make several pieces before they come out evenly. Experiment with different materials when you make your next pieces of paper.