

PAPERMAKING

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Making pulp:

Supplies: Large tub, such as a plastic dishpan, blender, plastic buckets, mold and deckle, strainer or colander, jars for storing excess pulp, pulp can be made with recycled paper or cotton linters, which are ready made sheets used specifically for papermaking.

Easier - Paper is a sheet material made from fibers of wood, grass, or cotton. It can be used for writing, printing, and packaging.

Harder - Paper is made from cellulose fibers that are found in all plant cell walls. The fibers may come from any one of several plant sources such as wood, bamboo, cotton, esparto, hemp, jute, sugar cane, wheat, or rice.

1. If using recycled paper, be sure to remove all traces of glue and take out staples.
2. Tear the paper into small squares, about 1 inch (using pre-shredded paper makes the job easier).
3. Put the torn paper in a bucket of water and let it soak for at least 2 hours. If using cotton linters, soak for just a few minutes.
4. Put batches of the paper into a blender, making sure there is plenty of water--about 1/3 pulp with 2/3 water.
5. Fill a rectangular plastic tray with about 2 inches of water and pour in a blender full of pulp. The amount of the pulp in the water will determine the thickness of the sheet of paper.
6. As sheets of paper are made, keep refilling the plastic tray with pulp, and water if necessary.

Making a sheet of paper:

Supplies: large sheet of plastic or plastic table covering, white felt squares, kitchen cloths or interfacing (not the iron-on kind), and a sponge to mop up spills. Optional: laminated boards.

1. Spread plastic covering over a table; place a layer of felt, and then a kitchen cloth the middle.
2. Give the pulp a good stir and place the mold so that the mesh is face up, and put the deckle on the top. Grip the two firmly, holding them by the shorter edge.
3. Slip the mold and deckle at an angle into the pulp mixture, then straighten them up so that they lie flat beneath the surface of the liquid.
4. Keeping the mold and deckle level, pull them straight up out of the liquid. Hold the mold and deckle level--the water will drain back through the mesh.
5. Gently shake the mold and deckle backward and forward, and side to side. This will help the fibers settle and mesh together.
6. Take the deckle off the mold. Put one edge of the sheet of paper on the kitchen cloth and gently press the sheet of paper onto the felt. This is called "couching". Sponge off excess water.
7. Put another piece on kitchen cloth or interfacing over the finished sheet and continue. You can layer several sheets.
8. To keep paper flat when dried, press between 2 laminated boards (shelves from a home supply store works very well). Layer with felt to absorb moisture.