



**GILPIN COUNTY**  
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION

SIMPLE NATURE  
CRAFTS:

Papermaking

## **MATERIALS:**

- scissors
- blender
- spoon
- sponge
- large bowls
- shallow tray
- picture frame
- window screening
- natural coloring, e.g. tea
- dish towels
- scrap paper
- leaves (or similar)

### **1. Prepare for Paper-Making**

The key bit of equipment you need for making paper is the sheet mold. You can make a simple mold with a 4" x 6" or 5" x 7" picture frame and a piece of plastic needlepoint canvas cut to fit inside the frame. If you want to give the surface of your finished paper a finer texture, cut a similar-sized piece of plastic or wire window screening and lay it on top of the plastic canvas in the frame.

### **2. Shred Some Scrap Paper**

Many kinds of scrap paper work well for making the basic paper pulp, including office paper, newspaper, junk mail, greeting cards, envelopes, wrapping paper and unused napkins or paper towels. For the whitest result, use white paper with no ink on it. Remove any staples or bits of plastic. Run the paper through a document shredder or cut or tear it into thin strips or small pieces. Place the

pieces in a large bowl of warm water (2 handfuls of chopped-up paper scraps make a sheet of finished paper).

### **3. Soak the Scrap Paper**

Use separate bowls for soaking different paper colors. Let them soak for at least 15 minutes (for soft paper, such as newsprint or construction paper) to an hour or more (for hard paper, such as greeting cards) to soften the paper.

### **4. Blend the Pulp**

To prepare a basic pulp, place a handful or two of soaked paper and about 2 cups of water in a blender. Put on the lid and blend the ingredients for 15 to 30 seconds, until the pulp has a texture something like runny oatmeal. If the mixture is thick and pasty, add more water and blend for another 10 to 15 seconds.

Basic pulp is usually grayish, beige or pinkish, depending on the paper you start with and what kind of ink was on it. Add some color with shredded construction paper, a few drops of food coloring or a handful of berries to the soaked paper and water before blending. Or, instead of using water as the liquid, use tea, coffee or a colorful fruit juice.

### **5. Customize the Pulp**

To add texture, blend plant parts into the basic pulp to add an interesting fibrous texture to homemade paper. Leaves with long fibers, such as those of yuccas, hostas or ornamental grasses, work very well. Onion skins, fruit peels and fresh or dried corn husks also produce interesting results. Cut the pieces into 1/2- to 1-inch-long sections, then use 1 or 2 handfuls of chopped plant parts for each 1 or 2 handfuls of soaked paper when blending the pulp.

To give your paper a nice scent, add a few drops of your favorite fragrance, such as perfume, cologne or an essential oil made from herbs, before blending the soaked paper and water. You can also sprinkle a little fragrant spice, such as cinnamon or curry powder into the pulp.

## **6. Set up Your Workspace**

Paper-making can get a bit messy, so set up your workspace outside if you can or on a table with a waterproof surface. Place a shallow dish or tray (such as a baking dish, foil pan or cookie sheet with sides) directly in front of you that's large enough to hold the sheet mold. Spread a dry dish towel next to the dish or tray.

## **7. Pour the Pulp**

Pour about half of the blended pulp over the screening in your sheet mold, then use the back of a spoon to spread the pulp evenly. Take it all the way to the edges of the frame if you want your paper to have straight sides, or leave the edges ragged if you like the rustic look. Add more pulp as needed to fill in any thin spots. When the screen is covered, lift the mold and tilt it a bit to let more of the water drain off.

## **8. Remove the Screening**

Set one side of the sheet mold on the dish towel, then flip the mold over completely. Lift the frame of the mold, leaving the screening in place, and set it aside. Starting from the middle and working out to the edges, press firmly on the screening with a sponge to flatten the paper and draw out more of the water, then remove the screening.

## **9. Let Paper Dry**

With one hand at each end, pick up the dish towel holding the damp piece of finished paper, and set it in an airy spot. After a few hours, gently peel the sheet of paper from the towel, then set it on a drying rack or hang it on a clothesline to finish drying. If the paper curls or warps as it dries, place some heavy books on it to flatten it.

## **10. Rinse Excess Pulp**

Between creating each sheet, rinse any cleaning pulp off of the mold frame and screening. It's a good idea to set a bowl or pan in

your sink to catch the rinse water, because paper pulp can easily clog the drain. When you're finished, dump the rinse water and any remaining pulp outside on your compost pile or in your garden.

## **11. Make Petal Paper**

Use your finished homemade paper for notecards, invitations, scrapbooking, bookmarks or ornaments, or frame it as artwork. To create petal paper, gently stir in a handful of colorful flower petals before pouring the prepared pulp into the sheet mold. For best results, stick with flat petals or very small whole flowers. Tear or cut larger flowers into small pieces so they won't pop out of the finished paper surface.

Here is my piece of paper still drying.

