

Grade 6 Informational

Making Paper

Have you ever wondered where paper comes from? Paper has been around for a very long time. It was first made in China from tree fibers and cloth scraps. Most paper today is made in factories from trees grown especially for that purpose.

You can make homemade paper by recycling used scraps of paper. It is easy to do, and it is a project you can do with a friend. You can use your homemade paper for writing letters or for a scrapbook. Just follow the instructions below.

YOU WILL NEED

- An old window screen
- Used pieces of paper (used envelopes and writing paper are best)
- Measuring cup
- Bucket
- Small or medium mixing bowl
- Food blender (hand or electric)
- Water
- Plastic tub or dishpan
- Sponge
- Small towels
- Food coloring (if you wish)

MAKING THE PAPER

1. Tear the used pieces of paper into small scraps and collect enough to make about two cups of scraps. (It is best to use paper that was used for writing. Newsprint and magazine pages do not work as well.) Soak the scraps in a bucket of water for several hours or overnight.
2. Put a small amount of the soaked paper into a small or medium mixing bowl and then add more small amounts of soaked paper a little at a time. Ask an adult to “mash” the paper with a hand mixer or a food blender. The mashed paper (pulp) should have the texture of mush or oatmeal. After mashing, transfer each batch of the pulp to a plastic dish tub about half full of water. When all of the paper is in the tub, mix it thoroughly with your hands.*
3. Set the window screen over a bathtub or a large kitchen sink. Spread the wet paper pulp, one handful at a time, on the screen, allowing the water to drip into the tub or sink. Try to spread the pulp as evenly as possible so that it is all the same thickness.
4. When the water has finished dripping, flip the screen over onto several layers of small towels. Use a sponge or more small towels to soak up any excess water. Carefully remove the screen. (You may have to peel the pulp from the screen if it doesn't fall away on its own.)

5. Place more small towels on top of the sheet of pulp. Press on the towels, soaking up as much remaining water from the pulp as possible.
6. Carefully lift the pulp from the towels and place it between fresh towels.
7. Let the paper dry overnight. (You may dry it in a microwave oven for one to four minutes. If you do this, ask an adult to help you.)
8. When your paper is dry, cut it into sheets of any size you like.

Enjoy your new paper!

*You may ask an adult to help you add food coloring at this step in making your paper.

HELPFUL HINT

Use a kitchen strainer to scoop leftover paper pulp out of the water in the tub. Put this leftover pulp into the garbage, not down the drain. Water left in the tub can go down the drain or into the garden.

Grade 6 Narrative

Working Together

My sister Lindsey and I grew up to the sound of shuffling steps, swirling colors, and our dad's deep baritone voice calling out the next square dance move. Twice a month—sometimes as often as twice a week—we packed up the truck with our sound system, music CDs, and a huge garment bag filled with brightly patterned western shirts for Dad and me and matching dresses for Mom and Lindsey.

Mom will tell you that Lindsey and I were square dancing before we could walk. As proof, she opens the photo album to a picture of six-month-old Lindsey in a baby carrier strapped to Dad's chest. Mom and Dad are caught mid-step: eyes shining with laughter, a blur of colors surrounding them. Baby Lindsey, in a red dress just like Mom's, flashes a drooling smile. I came along two years later and joined the rest of the family. In addition to the many square dance outfits in my closet, I've heard Dad's calls so many times I could sing them in my sleep. In other words, square dancing is part of my life.

We moved to a larger town a few years ago. Mom and Dad quickly found a group of people who enjoyed square dancing, so our family traditions have continued. The trouble is, I'm involved in quite a few activities now that I am in middle school, so I do not have a lot of extra time to participate in square dancing.

For physical-education class, we're having a school-wide Fitness Fair. Mr. Rodriguez assigned students to work together on this project. We must come up with an idea that promotes "health and well-being." Mr. Rodriguez told the class to brainstorm ideas. Lee and I are working together, so we spent those last ten minutes of class considering options, but we were unable to make a decision. As students were funneling out the classroom door, an idea entered my mind. I shouted so I could be heard above the commotion in the hallway, "Lee, can you meet me at the community center tonight at 6:30?"

Lee heard me and considered the invitation for a short period of time, then he responded, "Sure, I'll see you there."

When Lee arrived at the community center, I explained that my dad was teaching a beginner's square dancing class tonight. Hesitant new dancers asked if they were in the correct place. Experienced dancers greeted the newcomers warmly and assured them they would have a good time. Lee looked skeptical. The music amplified, and toes started tapping.

"Dancing is fantastic exercise," I said. "It helps keep your body healthy and it's fun. Maybe we could integrate dancing into our 'health and well-being' project."

"Hmmm," said Lee. He was studying the dancers as they moved around the floor.

I could sense that Lee was hesitant about making a decision, but Lindsey came by and assigned both of us to a group and a dance partner. I thought Lee might have a better understanding of square dancing once he had the opportunity to learn a few basic square dance steps—Allemande Left, Do-Si-Do, and Grand Right and Left. It was reassuring to see Lee grinning when we finally left the dance floor.

“I have an idea,” he said before he slipped out the door. “Meet me in the art room after school tomorrow.”

The next afternoon, I found Lee sitting at a table, surrounded by colorful paintings of happy, active square dancers. “Did you make these?” I asked. “When? How?”

Lee dipped his brush into a container of paint. “I thought maybe I could use my artistic abilities to help promote our project. I could paint posters portraying people square dancing. The posters would advertise the healthy benefits of square dancing.”

“I think your idea is great!” I said. “Let’s also try to create an activity in which people could participate to gain an understanding of the enjoyment of square dancing.”

After pondering for a few minutes, Lee and I decided we would inquire whether my parents would be willing to demonstrate a few basic square dance steps at the school-wide Fitness Fair. My parents were thrilled about being asked to teach people the basics, and they readily agreed to help.

Confidently, we went to tell Mr. Rodriguez our idea for the Fitness Fair.