

Make Your Own Recycled Paper

Making paper is an art. When you make paper at home or at school, you do essentially the same thing as commercial paper manufacturing plants by mixing old paper with water to create recycled paper fiber. You can use a blender; they use gigantic hydropulpers.

Here's a basic "recipe" that's simple to do and takes less than an hour:

Ingredients:

- Used paper
- Screen on a frame
- Tub or bucket
- Blender or hand mixer
- Magnifying glass
- Water
- Old newspapers
- Optional: rolling pin, cloth (two tea towels work well), dried flowers and leaves, bleach, liquid starch

Steps:

- Tear paper into 1-inch squares. Soak in water several hours or overnight.
- Scoop out 1/2-cup of paper and put into blender, add about two cups water from the soaking container. Blend about 30 seconds.
- Blending breaks the paper into pulp. After blending, dip your fingers into the pulp and look at them with the magnifying glass. You'll be able to see the individual wood fibers that, when bonded together, make paper!
- Over a sink, pour the pulp onto the screen and let the water drain out. Place a layer of newspaper over the pulp and gently press out the excess water.
- Turn the screen and newspaper over (so the newspaper is at the bottom) and set it on a table (cover the table first!).
- Carefully lift the screen off the paper.
- Place another layer of newspaper onto the wet paper and gently press out more water. Turn it over and remove the layer of newspaper. Repeat this step a few times.
- Gently peel off the damp, recycled paper. Place it on a newspaper or table to dry overnight. You can also use a rolling pin to help flatten or press the paper. If you want, put the paper between two cloths (two kitchen tea towels work well) and gently iron on your iron's lowest setting until dry.

Other Things To Try:

- Try using different types and colors of paper.
- Vary the amount of water you use. Less water makes thicker paper
- Try de-inking the paper by adding a teaspoon of bleach (be careful not to get any bleach on your clothes!) after blending.
- Add a teaspoon of liquid starch after blending to create a finish on the paper surface.