

These notes include do-it-yourself instructions for making paper.

Making pulp from old newspapers

- Tear/cut/shred about 15 double spread pages of newspaper.
- Add warm water and leave to soak overnight.
- Drain excess water and then put the paper through a liquidiser.
- Add more water to the pulp if necessary.

Making pulp from straw

- Cut the straw into 1 or 2cm lengths.
- Boil for about 2 hours in a mixture of washing soda and water (200g soda crystals: 1 litre of water).
- Leave to cool and then wash through a sieve.
- Liquidize the mixture. (The paper will be brownish in colour.)

Dying

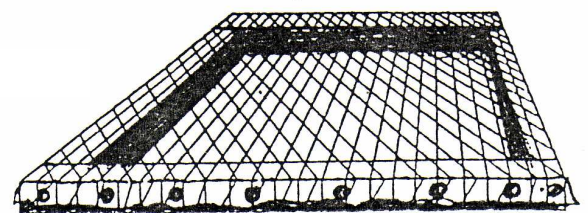
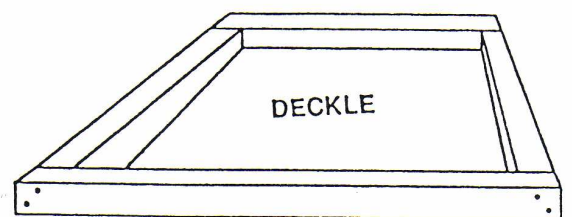
Food colour, powder colours or even natural dyes from plants can all be used to experiment with changing the colour of the paper.

Scenting

Scented paper can be made by adding ground up lavender seeds or mint.

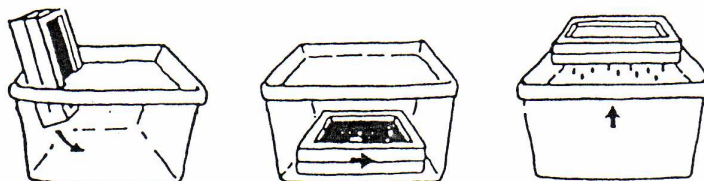
Making a mould and deckle

- Make two identical wooden frames, 15cm X 20cm.
- Nail and glue the corners. (Use waterproof glue and rust proof nails.)
- Paint with waterproof preservative to prevent rotting.
- Leave one frame uncovered. This is the deckle.
- Cover the other frame with nylon mesh to make the mould. (Nylon net curtains with 5 – 8 holes per cm, coarse screen printing material or perforated zinc can also be used.)
- Stretch the mesh tightly and fix (with glue, staples or drawing pins) to the sides rather than the face.



Making the paper

- Mix the pulp with water in a washing-up bowl (about 90% water to 10% pulp.) and use this as a vat.
- Add dye or scent to the mixture at this stage if desired.
- Put the deckle on top of the frame and grip tightly together.
- Lower the mould and deckle vertically into the pulp/water mixture and level out once under the surface.
- Raise the mould and deckle out of the mixture, keeping it horizontal.
- Remove the deckle.



Couching (pronounced 'cooching')

The wet paper needs to be supported until dry on a 'couching block'. This can be made with two tabloid-sized pieces of newspaper torn in half and soaked for a few minutes, squeezed and then stacked. Two pieces of j-cloth need to be laid on top,

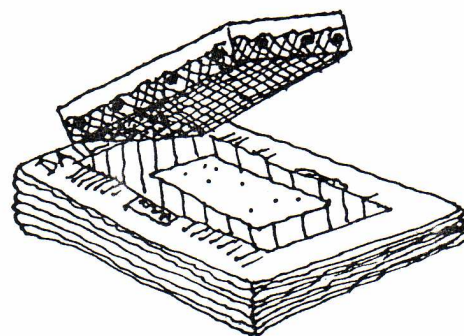
Turn the mould over onto the couching block.

Press the mould at the top and bottom, and then from side to side so that the wet paper clings to the j-cloth.

Lift the mould.

The damp paper should remain on the j-cloth.

Another j-cloth can be laid on top of the paper so that -another sheet of paper can be couched onto this.



Pressing

Press the pile of j-cloths and paper in a book press, flower press or by placing a flat piece of wood over the top and carefully standing on it. Carefully peel the paper off the j-cloth. Leave to dry or place between two sheets of clean drawing paper and dry with a warm iron.

Sizing

The paper will take pencil, biro or felt tipped pen but watercolours will run unless the paper is sized first. Commercial size can be added to the pulp in the vat but this is expensive. Alternatively use ordinary household gelatine – 3 teaspoons dissolved in a litre of warm water. Pass the finished and dried sheet of paper through a shallow bath of the solution, or brush on using a large brush.